

DEAR USMNEWS.NET

In the wake of *The Hattiesburg American* article, [Auditor: USM has 3 weeks to gather tablets](#), usmnews.net has been receiving comments from readers concerning the “Tabletgate scandal” at Southern Miss. For those of you new to the story, a [timeline of events](#) as provided by USM faculty senate president Timothy Rehner at the faculty senate’s December 2, 2011 meeting may be illuminating. However, the short version is: after passing out an estimated \$400,000 worth of Samsung Galaxy Tab™ Tablets to a handful of privileged students, faculty, and administrators and shipping one off to IHL Commissioner Bounds, three senior administrators were suspended. The suspensions came when it was revealed that the transaction should have, but did not get, IHL approval. Now, we are told, all Southern Miss has to do is inventory the “gifts” as state property.

Readers’ comments follow:

Then, what was all the uproar about? This latest information makes the entire scenario idiotic!!

Note the costs alone: about \$600/tablet and now they are worth under \$200 w/tax. I will grant you it has been 6-8 months, I guess. Could be more USM “discounts” that make you suspect. More about entitlement, greed, and arrogance. I would love to know who and what really started all this. This is more than simply stupidly sending one to Hank Bounds. If only 20 cannot be found, they are lucky. Riddle me this: are the replacements owed at book cost (I assume the current USM method) or replacement cost? I am sure Martha has it all under control, like usual.

Avoiding or ignoring state bidding requirements is a sport at USM. I think some FOIA requests might bring a mountain of violations that would be embarrassing to them. I have heard for years that if the bid requirement is \$250K, they will break the items up into multiple sub-\$250K parts, even if it makes no sense. Perhaps it is urban legend.

Editor’s note to reader: by the way, the new rules prohibit breaking up bids to avoid the threshold amount.

Reader’s response: But that only applies to those who care about following the rules. Clearly that seldom applies locally. They only follow rules when

they can get someone they want to get by following rules or by saying they are following rules to do so.