

## *Dear usmnews.net*

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Here we go again. Southern Miss just announced yet another in a series of increases in tuition. In ten years, tuition has increase by more than 60 per cent. (I'd like a job that would give me pay raises like that!) Today [January 25, 2016], Southern Miss [announced](#) that President Bennett is once again adding to one of [Martha] Saunders' photo op boondoggles. Bennett's is going to cost \$854,560 in taxpayer and student money. It's supposed to provide a "safe route" for students to walk. Saunders called hers a fence. Bennett calls his a pedestrian pathway, but it's all the same waste of money.

Name withheld

Dear Name withheld,

After usmnews.net received your email, we went back and took a look at prior reports concerning these fences/pedestrian pathways.

On January 22, 2012, Ed Kemp at the [Hattiesburg American](#) reported:

The University of Southern Mississippi intends to build **a fence** along the Hardy Street side of its campus, with pedestrian safety cited as the key factor in the **brick-and-mortar** upgrade.

[T]he fence will be **wrought iron, with brick columns** that for most of the project will **match the brick of the Centennial Gateway entrance**, unveiled in 2010. The fence itself will be 7 feet tall, with the columns slightly taller - between 8 to 10 feet - to match the gateway height.

Physical Plant Director Chris Crenshaw was quoted as saying, "The **style and design** of the fencing and **brickwork** will blend with the **aesthetic beauty** of our campus."

Kemp also quotes President Saunders as saying "It's a very helpful device to channel pedestrians to a safe crosswalk."  
"

(Emphasis added.)

As reported in [It's not President Saunders' money. Why should she care how she spends it?](#)

However, Commenters on Kemp's article were near unanimous in considering Dr. Saunders' project ill-considered:

#1: "I have so many concerns about these 'projects.' ..."

#2: "What a waste...."

#3: "I don't get this...."

#4: "Talk about a waste...."

#5: "maybe they can add some video cameras, search lights and razor wire to finish the look...."

On 4 June 2014, [The Hattiesburg American](#) reported MDOT Southern Transportation Commissioner Tom King delivered a \$683,560 check for yet another pedestrian walkway. Since there is no claim that Mr. King was personally contributing the funds, we are left to assume that the check was your tax dollars.

Mr. King explained to THA, "We just feel like this particular project will further enhance our school here," said King, a Southern Miss alumnus." Nothing in the article suggests how it would "further enhance our school" But, was what appeared to be little more than an afterthought intended to trump any concerns about the waste of money, "It's safe," he added later. "That's what it's all about." At an estimated cost to taxpayers of nearly \$900,000 (\$683,560 of your tax dollars delivered by Mr. King and with the balance coming from tuition and tax dollars), did Dr. Bennett or Mr. King consider less costly opportunities? alternative "helpful devices to channel pedestrians"? If they did, why not report the alternatives, if they considered any? Did they ask whether this waste improves the quality of our students' educations?

Do any politicians and administrators ever wonder why citizens are fed up with administrative bloat and administrative extravagance at their expense?

The same questions apply to the most recent iteration the "pathway." Has anyone been injured using existing sidewalks? Has anyone complained of feeling unsafe using the existing facilities? Were any less alternative choices considered? Did anyone care if this improves the quality of students' education? Has anyone considered the impact of increasing tuition on the precipitous decline in student enrollment?