

Down and Dirty

A Guest Editorial by Susan Greene-Lewis

Sometimes the bedfellows-ism at USM is stranger than strange. Such is the case in the new photo posted on the front page of usm.edu, wherein USM president Martha Saunders is shown with Jimmy Buffett and a number of USM Gulf Coast Research Lab scientists, including Jay Grimes, a former USM provost. That photo, along with a portion of the front page at usm.edu, is inserted below. The accompanying story/press release discusses how Buffett is seeking to work with USM scientists in mitigating the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

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President Saunders met with the Southern Miss alum and members of her Oil Spill Response Team at the GCRL

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The next insert, below, is a copy of the Buffett-Saunders-Grimes photo, without the surrounding details on the main page at usm.edu. Each of the three is identified in gold font below the insert, with Saunders in between Grimes, at left, and Buffett, at right (identification of the others in the photo is available at usm.edu).



Jay Grimes

Martha Saunders

Jimmy Buffett

The controversy at issue here is that Grimes has been [implicated](#) in the recent [scandal](#) involving the USM Research Foundation's Pinion Properties. The ongoing allegation is that Grimes approved of then-Pinion Properties executive Richard Hadden's decision to spend almost \$1 million in USMRF/Pinion Properties funds to purchase shares of Saone Corporation, which was/is owned by Hadden and Helene Hadden, Richard's wife.

The idea that these kinds of encounters at USM are almost unavoidable is disturbing at best. Several Mississippi agencies/officials are now investigating the deal between Hadden's Saone Corporation and the USMRF's Pinion Properties that was signed off on by Grimes. Now, in an effort to generate some positive PR involving famed USM alumnus Buffett, Saunders is pictured next to Grimes, with both looking as happy as kids at Christmas about the recent gathering. After this, what's next?