

Dr. Lyman & “Mr. Kemp”

A Guest Editorial

At the 1-Oct-2010 USM faculty senate meeting, USM provost Robert Lyman stated that “Mr. Kemp” – referring to *The Hattiesburg American’s* higher education reporter Ed Kemp – had done a number of “jobs” on USM in his reporting of the latest financial crisis to shake the 100-year old institution. With the support of at least one USM faculty senator, Lyman denigrated Kemp’s reporting work on [USM athletics funding](#) and other issues related to USM’s management. What was ironic about the whole two-person exchange between Lyman and the other faculty senator is that Lyman had just finished “jobbing” the USM faculty senate in painting USM’s support for athletics as moderate by using only the \$1 million in E&G transfers to athletics and *not* also the \$6 million in transfers generated from student tuition fees. Lyman’s sketchy presentation, which didn’t escape the discerning ear of at least a third faculty senator, was simply the latest in the USM-based public relations (propaganda) attempt to contain the fallout associated with almost 50 ill-advised faculty terminations since 2009, when the first of \$25 million was shaved off of the university’s operating budget. Lyman’s behavior raises the question: Who’s jobbing who here?

The facts point out that it is difficult to “job the jobsters.” Lyman represents the same university that rolls out *duplicated headcount* statistics to paint rosy pictures of student enrollment. He also represents what USM president Martha Saunders says is *the* research university of the Gulf South, and one wherein “professional achievements for our faculty [\[are up\]](#).” None of this, of course, is based on any *real* evidence. Lyman represents the same institution that counts tickets issued, not actual “butts in seats,” to establish attendance figures for its sporting events. Let us also not forget that it was Lyman who reported to the USM faculty senate that Saunders’ Beechcraft King Air would cost the university \$200,000 per year. A recent USMNEWS.net study indicates, however, that the plane tab ran up to \$600,000 in its first 17 months, a figure that comes to about \$425,000 per year – *more than twice* Lyman’s number. Lyman and Saunders also told the USM family and the Hattiesburg community that the plane would be used to transport faculty to conferences, yet still be there for local citizens to enjoy, at their own expense. Of course, none of this has come to fruition, as Saunders and a host of friends, subordinates, and politicians have been using the plane to fly to football games and baseball tournaments.

Yes, USM is the mother of all jobsters, and Lyman is often at the helm of the good ship Jobber. What’s next for this crowd? They’ve already tried to job the UPC by blaming it for the latest 29 faculty terminations. One can only imagine how badly, in their eyes, that “the USM faculty” will bungle the forthcoming appeals process.