

## ‘Strategic Fencing of the University’ IRON AND BRICK FENCE SOON TO ENCLOSE USM CAMPUS

In her 4-June-2010 report to the USM faculty senate, USM president Martha Saunders informed senators that a wrought iron and brick pillared fence will soon surround USM’s Hattiesburg campus. According to Saunders, construction on a “wrought iron and brick pillared fence” will soon begin as part of a plan “for ‘strategic fencing of the university.’” Saunders also told senators,

“This [fence] will be . . . an extension of the [Centennial] Gateway. The reason for [the fence] is . . . well the justification is it helps us direct pedestrian traffic. We have concerns about 4<sup>th</sup> Street when we open the new residence hall across 4<sup>th</sup> Street, that students won’t necessarily use the crosswalks. But it will also help us define the campus. It will be a very attractive fence. . . .”

Opinions about the new “strategic fencing of the university” program will almost certainly vary. Sources say that the look of a large black wrought iron fence enclosing USM from Hardy Street might be off-putting to many who travel up and down, east and west, along that heavily travelled road. It is also possible that some will view this project as something that is really intended to separate USM from declining neighborhoods that are approaching the campus from various directions. If so, USM will resemble other colleges and universities that are located in urban areas that are known to have concerns about student safety, a situation that may put the institution in a negative light to the prospective students and parents who visit the campus throughout the year.<sup>1</sup>

Some also point out that this project will be seen by USM faculty and staff as another example of how the administration’s attention is not as focused as it perhaps should be on the institution’s crippling financial problems. As long-time USMNEWS.net readers are aware, USM cut \$12 million from its FY 2011 (2010-11 academic year) budget, and is now facing another \$15 million to \$20 million in cuts for FY2012 (2011-12 academic year). As part of the former cut, the CoB’s economics programs and faculty were eliminated, and five economics professors were forced into retirement. To deal with the upcoming cuts, many expect other faculty terminations to occur in the CoB, as well as other USM colleges. Reports indicate that as many as 100 USM faculty could be eliminated.

Watch for more on this project, as additional details come out, here at USMNEWS.net. As always, readers’ responses, via letters to the editor, are welcome.

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<sup>1</sup> Some say that USM’s cross-town rival, William Carey University, faces this same situation.