

## From Cowbells to “Lymanese”

### One Major Theme from the Oct-2010 USM Faculty Senate Meeting

Unlike what is going on at USM, where athletics appears to be draining the institution’s tuition pool and general education fund, the athletics department at Mississippi State University is giving back to the academic side of its institutional home. According to Libby Sander’s 30-Sept-2010 [news story](#) for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 406 MSU faculty members each recently received a bonus of \$2,500 ( $406 \times \$2,500 = \$1.015$  million) that was made possible by a \$2 million fund consisting of \$0.75 million from the institution’s athletics department and \$1.25 million from private supporters. The balance of the \$2 million fund, or \$0.985 million, was then set aside for student scholarships. According Sander, MSU president Mark Keenum “dreamed up” the idea of this program last year, his first as university president. According to Keenum, “I felt like there needed to be some [of our ESPN revenue] . . . to come back and support our campus – to support our students, through scholarships, and our faculty.” Sources say that this is exactly the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that former IHL board member Bill Crawford was talking about in his [recent editorial](#) for *The Hattiesburg American* that praised Keenum, Ole Miss president Dan Jones, and their respective predecessors, Doc Foglesong and Robert Khayat. Sander also reports that another round of MSU faculty bonuses is on the docket for 2011, and that Scott Sricklin stated that the MSU partnership could continue beyond 2011. The MSU partnership comes on the heels of a program at the University of Georgia, wherein \$2 million in athletics funds were set aside to support student scholarships and professorships.

USM president Martha Saunders was informed about the MSU partnership program at the 1-Oct-2010 faculty senate meeting. She was then asked if she knew whether USM athletics officials had given any consideration to such a plan or something resembling it. Saunders’ answer – “No.” Sources say this single word describes the mood among faculty on the Hattiesburg and Long Beach campuses of USM. When describing USM’s support for athletics later in the Oct-2010 faculty senate meeting, USM provost Robert Lyman was careful to describe USM’s “direct” support for athletics as being in the middle of what the 120 Division 1 football schools provide. What he neglected to say, and what one faculty senator picked up on, was that USM also adds several million dollars in student tuition fees that go to support athletics. Sources say that, at least in “Lymanese,” this portion of the institution’s support of athletics qualifies as “indirect.” The USM faculty senator who alluded to Lyman’s parsing of words cited Ed Kemp’s [recent article](#) about athletics funding for *The Hattiesburg American*. Only when confronted with Kemp’s data did Lyman relent and admit that millions of dollars of student fee monies were being transferred to athletics, although Lyman did attempt to make the case that these transfers also put USM about in the middle of Division 1 football schools. Later, another USM faculty senator defended Lyman by suggesting that “Mr. Kemp did a job on us [USM].” To that Lyman responded by saying that “Mr. Kemp has done several jobs on us [USM].”

The discussion about athletics funding ended with Lyman’s comment above. No other USM faculty senators challenged Lyman’s argument. In fact, there was some supportive chuckling in response to Lyman’s final comment about Kemp, and Lyman also exited the meeting to applause. To sources, at least, this is all a visible sign that the USM faculty senate has ceased to be an effective advocate for USM faculty.