

GH Chatter

It's not surprising that the "disarray" of Mississippi's higher education system is a popular topic of conversations among CoBers. For readers outside of Mississippi, it was recently discovered that the former interim president of Mississippi State University in Starkville authorized MSU workers and equipment to be used to provide landscaping services at the Jackson residence of Thomas Meredith, the head of Mississippi's central higher education board (the IHL). After an investigation by Mississippi's State Auditor verified the misdeed, MSU's interim president resigned his office and retired. Two days later, after previously (and erroneously) claiming vindication, Meredith resigned his position as well. Some CoBers (and USMers) have pointed out that it was interesting that USM president Martha Saunders spoke to the press shortly after the Auditor's report was released, saying that she was relieved that the episode was over. Well, the episode was in many ways only beginning at that point. The lack of sophistication of Saunders' statement was of interest to some, as was the idea that it was strange of Saunders to insert herself into the episode. Some are now speculating that Saunders' (possibly temporary) relief may have stemmed from the fact that she fears further fallout in the way of increased taxpayer scrutiny of public officials' use of state funds. That makes sense, especially given that Saunders is now the beneficiary of a \$330,000 [boudoir renovation](#) over at the USM president's mansion. Another aspect of the scandal was also brought up in recent conversation. That involves the fact that the further you get away from Mississippi the less able people are to distinguish between the three most prominent Mississippi public universities (i.e., Mississippi, Mississippi State, and Southern Mississippi). With that in mind, do you think that people in Wisconsin are talking about how Saunders was forced to resign after it was discovered that she sent physical plant workers up to Jackson to work on Meredith's yard?

The stories about CoB accountant Jim Henderson's retirement are all over the board. It does appear, however, that his status will change after December of 2008, and that change of status will involve his retirement (either full or phased). Whether or not any of this resulted from the recent test proctoring scandal in the SAIS is not yet known for sure, but some are speculating as much.

Is new CoB dean Lance Nail already searching for b-school dean's job #2? There have been conversations to that effect, and academia is, in many ways, a small world. How strange would this be? If true, it would probably be a good hint about USM president Martha Saunders' management style.

GH Chatter is a series at USMNEWS that provides a glimpse at what CoB students, and sometimes CoB faculty, are discussing throughout the corridors of Joseph Greene Hall and beyond.