

Grin and Bear Her

Saunders Already Bored with \$15 Million Budget Cut Issues

It has been mere hours since the Martha Saunders administration of USM announced that at least 29 faculty would be losing their jobs thanks to a \$15 million budget cut, and already Saunders' mind is back on USM's centennial celebration. As David Tisdale [explains](#), Saunders held a downtown press conference to announce that the USM centennial homecoming parade will once again be held in downtown Hattiesburg. The change from its usual Hardy Street route marks a return to the past, as Saunders told press gathered downtown that she remembers being taken there as a child to witness the "glamorous" homecoming parades of yesteryear. This latest news event highlights what College of Health dean Michael Forster [wrote about](#) in his 29-Aug-2010 blog entitled "Incongruities abound." Even online readers of *The Hattiesburg American* [picked up on](#) this aspect of the timing of the press conference, with one ("pishposh") stating - "Great! Perhaps we can parade all of the fired [USM] employees through the streets. Great timing on this news release. Southern Miss. To the top!"



Time and again the USM president appears oblivious to how her verbal *and* non-verbal communications are received by those affected by her decisions. Consider the photos above, taken during Saunders' 30-Aug-2010 afternoon press conference, wherein she informed the Hattiesburg and surrounding communities that USM would be terminating the employment of at least 29 faculty, and possibly later subjecting the remaining faculty to a one day per month furlough during the 2011- 12 academic year. The non-verbals simply do not match the verbals in this case. Yet, we must move on, we are told, back to the "Sweet 100th" that USM has been celebrating since January of this year. Back to Centennial Gateways, strategic (wrought iron) fencing projects, homecoming parades, nationally televised football games in South Carolina, and all the rest. In case you haven't figured it out yet, Saunders is reliving her college (and earlier) days, only this time the way she wished then they would have been. Using taxpayer dollars, she's creating an alternate universe for herself, wherein she's really part of the "in crowd," - the popular bunch - and, thus, is at times the epicenter of attention at social and other functions, both on campus and around the community.