

How do we Know Enrollment Didn't Go Down? More on the "Duplicated Headcount" Nonsense

Just today USM officials [released news](#) that USM's enrollment had increased by 3% this fall semester 2008. According to Jana Bryant's 17-Sept-08 presser, the total "duplicated headcount" at USM now stands at 16,016 students, 13,093 of which are undergraduates. USM president, Martha Saunders, summarized the increase by stating:

"It's clear that the news is out about Southern Miss. We have recovered from the worst disaster in our nation's history and bounced back with record enrollments in our freshman class and on the Gulf Coast. That speaks volumes."

USM VP of Student Affairs, Joe Paul, relishes chiming in each fall with the new numbers, and he took the opportunity to do so again via Bryant's presser. According to Paul, the number of incoming freshmen is up this fall by 10%, while the number of transfer students is up 6%. Bryant's presser also contains a table showing the "duplicated headcounts" from fall 2007 and fall 2008. The overall data from that table are as follows:

<u>Locations</u>	<u>2008 Enrollment</u>	<u>2007 Enrollment</u>
All (duplicated*)	16,016	15,538

**These figures represent duplicated headcount, a number that reflects students by location, so some individual students may be counted twice if they are enrolled in two or more places.*

As some might say, "the devil is in the details," which in this case are contained in the footnote of Bryant's table, which explains that some students may be counted twice if they are enrolled in two or more places. USM offers classes in almost 10 different locations: Hattiesburg, Gulf Park, Stennis, GCRL, Jackson County, Meridian, and abroad. The chances are decent that a student is enrolled in multiple locations.

Let's assume that the 2007 "duplicated headcount" enrollment of 15,538 *students* represented only 14,738 *people*, and that 800 of them enrolled in courses at two separate USM locations. As stated above the "duplicated headcount" is 15,538.¹ Now, let's assume that USM's *actual* enrollment declines to 14,591 *people* in 2008. Let's also assume that 1,425 of these enrolled in courses at two separate USM locations. These figures produce the 2008 "duplicated headcount" of 16,016.² Thus, while the number of "duplicated headcount" students at USM is

¹ The 800 dual-enrollees represent 1,600 students by themselves. The remaining 13,938 each represents a single student. Thus, the "duplicated headcount" is equal to 13,938 plus 1,600.

² The 1,425 dual-enrollees represent 2,850 students by themselves. The remaining 13,166 each represents a single student. Thus, the "duplicated headcount" is equal to 13,166 plus 2,850.

up by 3.08% (i.e., $[16,016-15,538]/15,538$), the number of actual *people* attending USM is down by 1.0% (i.e., $[14,738-14,591]/14,738$).

Looking at this example, some might say that getting the general public (i.e., Mississippi taxpayers) to focus on the “duplicated headcount” figures is a way for USM to dupe the general public (i.e., Mississippi taxpayers).