

## How Many USM Students Are Attending the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl?

It's not hard to see that USM is conducting an all out public relations blitz over the past couple of weeks to gloss over what sources have characterized as boneheadedly stupid decisions on the part of USM administrators. usmnews.net has reported about some of them -- the Samsung tablet scandal, for example, and the resulting administrative leave of the provost and other upper-level administrators.

Interestingly in August 2011, when the decision was made to buy and distribute the Samsung Tablets, President Saunders was a key player in the public relations bonanza. She commented to numerous media outlets and reveled in the attention, even being photographed handing out the Samsung Tablets as if she was Ms. Santa Claus. In the picture below, President Saunders seems so excited to be giving away Samsung Tablets and collecting the kudos from the recipients, she's not thinking about her responsibility to review the legality or appropriateness of the transaction. Be that as it may, we'll return to the Samsung Tablet fiasco in later reports.



The USM media blitz discussed in this report glosses over the nonsensical decision to accept a Christmas Eve bowl game in Hawaii against an inferior, unrated team. As usual, the PR blitz attempts to make a stupid decision appear wonderful.

The blitz unfolds in a *The Hattiesburg American* story entitled “[About 600 Hawaii Bowl ‘Tickets for Troops’ sold.](#)” The article came complete with the smiling picture of former major general, currently Interim Athletic Director, Jeff Hammond. And, it offers the following lead: “A University of Southern Mississippi ticket promotion called Tickets for Troops is filling up the stands with U.S. soldiers for the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl on Dec. 24.”

How could anyone be critical of USM's salute to our men and women in the armed forces? And that's exactly what it's meant to do -- quiet criticism of a dumb decision by wrapping it in the American flag. Be clear, I do not question the salute to our armed forces. I object to the cynical attempt to divert attention from a very expensive, very bad decision. As a former Captain in the US Marine Corps, I know and respect the sacrifices made by our young men and women who have volunteered to serve their country. But a stupid decision shouldn't be legitimized by shrouding it in the American flag. And that is exactly what USM administrators are trying to do. That, I find, disgusting.

In part, USM administrators rationalize the extravagant spending on football by invoking student desire for a big-time football team. Now, the question is, USM administrators have identified six

hundred non-students, whom they are subsidizing to attend a USM football game. Can they identify the number of USM students who will attend the USM football game in Hawaii? USM administrators collect involuntary fees from students to support the extremely expensive USM football team; so what have President Saunders and Interim AD Hammond done to provide opportunities for them to see the game in Hawaii?

It seems a fair question. According to Dr. Saunders, it is the students' team and is important to the collegiate experience. So, President Saunders and Mr. Hammond, tell us how many of USM's [approximately 17,000 students](#) will be attending the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl game on December 24? Of course, I expect that both Saunders and Hammond will be enjoying a trip to Hawaii at the expense of taxpayers and students.