

Hudson's Future Crib

ASU Trustees' Approach to Public Mansions Differs from Saunders' Model

The recent announcement that Tim Hudson, the former USM provost who also became the president of the University of Houston-Victoria, has been named as the second chancellor of Arkansas State University has many in the USM, UH-V, and Texas Tech University communities buzzing.ⁱ A small part of the announcement that generated all of the aforementioned buzz notes that Hudson will, on 1-May-2012, assume the keys to the ASU chancellor's residence on East Nettleton Avenue in Jonesboro (see photo below).



Hudson's future residence in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

In Sept-2010, then-ASU System interim president Robert Potts identified [several areas of need](#) regarding the 70 year old house. According to Potts, the house needed (1) a new HVAC system, (2) new plumbing and electrical wiring, (3) exterior repairs to trim and brick, (4) a new roof, (5) refinished hardwood floors, (6) a remodel of the newest addition, (7) more public parking, (8) new landscaping, and (9) a new addition for public gatherings.ⁱⁱ A report from *The Jonesboro Sun* estimated that the costs of making the ASU chancellor's home *inhabitable* by way of the changes listed above easily reaches into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the same time, the ASU Board of Trustees came to a consensus that state dollars should *not* be used for the repairs and additions. Thus, the ASU community turned to private donors. In addition to this decision, the Trustees also wanted to make the repairs when the home was vacant, as it was in 2010, in order to avoid the obvious conflict of interest in having a sitting chancellor-resident support funding for the repairs and additions.

As long-time readers of USMNEWS.net are aware, after assuming the USM presidency in 2007, Martha Saunders [spent hundreds of thousands of dollars](#) on the USM president's mansion in Hattiesburg. As reported here, [these monies came from taxpayers](#), and they were used to provide work on the USM president's mansion *after* Saunders had moved into the residence. The first evidence of the expenditures appeared during the Mississippi IHL Board's Feb-2008 meeting, or about 9-10 months after Saunders assumed the USM presidency and moved into the mansion on Jamestown. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the contrast between how the ASU trustees handled the 2010 renovations to the ASU chancellor's mansion and how Saunders and the IHL handled the 2008 renovations to the USM president's mansion speaks volumes about the differences in how higher education is often managed from one setting to another. Saunders moved into the USM president's mansion and decided that the master bedroom suite and other areas did not live up to her expectations. She thereafter directed more than \$325,000 in *taxpayer funds* be used in making her requested changes. On the other hand, the ASU trustees saw fit to

seek private funds for repairs to the ASU chancellor's mansion, and it did so during a period in 2010 when that house was unoccupied. The more that various issues involving higher education are examined here at USMNEWS.net, the more we learn. This particular story offers a valuable lesson in higher education (mis)management.

ⁱ The last institution is listed because Hudson now serves as the vice chancellor there, though he has held that post only since 1-Aug-2011. USM is buzzing largely because Hudson served near the top of arguably the most tumultuous time – during the Shelby Thames administration – of the 100 year old institution. Finally, the UH-V family is abuzz given the cloud under which Hudson vacated the presidency there in 2010, and subsequently moved into the UH-System office and under the watchful eye of that System's chancellor and president.

ⁱⁱ An earlier article in *The Jonesboro Sun* indicated that the home consists of 6,000 square feet of living space and sits on 10 acres.