

Is that Panic in the Offices of the IHL and USM's President?

On 19-June 19-2013, [WDAM reported](#):

Wednesday morning, the president of the University of Southern Mississippi [Rodney Bennett] announced that the current athletic director's [Jeff Hammond's] contract would not be renewed beyond June 30, 2013...

Deputy Athletic Director Jeremy McClain will serve as interim director during the search process but will not be candidate, said Bennett.

Why unseat Hammond while looking for a permanent AD? Why the hurry to get Hammond out the AD's door? After all, Bennett proclaimed there was an unspecified place in his administration for Hammond. Similarly, in May-2013, Bennett allowed he had authority to extend Hammond's contract on 30-day increments for as long as it took.

This question is reminiscent of why the IHL abruptly dumped Martha Saunders as President while they looked for a new one. As [usmnews.net](#) reported at the time, had Saunders announced her intention to resign in Aug-2011 or Sept-2011, she could have remained as president through 30-June-2012, as she announced at the time of her resignation. A new permanent president could have been at the helm the next day, 1-July-2012. In USM's case, Interim President Lucas held the reins during the 2012-13 academic year. IHL and Saunders words at the [public announcement](#) included, from Saunders, "I'm just tired. It's a tired that I've never felt before." But low and behold, she immediately went looking for another job.

These abrupt "departures" or "firings" signal panic leadership. And, too often, the public announcements are inventions that imply IHL/USM leaders' assumption that citizens are stupid. Or worse. Maybe they also think citizens have no choice but to swallow their public relations pabulum.

And, as we all now know, Saunders did not voluntarily resign, the IHL Board [forced Saunders' resignation](#) and drafted an agreement whereby she would publicly claim that she was stepping down voluntarily. We can speculate about, and will eventually learn, the real reasons Hammond was shown the door before a new AD was selected.

More reports to follow.