

Is AAUP-USM Falling All Over Itself?

More on how the USM Faculty is its Own Worst Enemy Regarding Budget Cuts

Ashlyn Ervin's 12-Oct-2010 [story](#) for *The Student Printz* entitled "USM professors disapprove of appeals process" included some encouraging information for USM faculty with regard to the latest round of budget cuts at USM. However, it also contained a disappointing note, at least according to sources. The story relays information about the USM chapter of the AAUP, which met on 7-Oct-2010 to discuss the situation facing USM, which recently cut \$15 million from its FY 2012 budget. In addressing that cut, the Martha Saunders administration terminated the employment of 29 tenured/tenure-track professors.



According to AAUP-USM president, Tammy Greer, the local chapter is now concerned mainly with the process for appealing program deletions and faculty terminations, which begins on 18-Oct-2010. As it stands, the nine-member appeals committee [established](#) by Saunders and USM provost Robert Lyman will consist of representatives from the faculty senate, the academic council, the graduate council, and the USM-Gulf Coast faculty council. Other members include the USM ombudsman, and four of the five academic deans. In her interview with Ervin, Greer stated that "[w]e need to tackle the issue of administrators on the appeals committee, because that's inappropriate." Greer also relayed to Ervin that, despite AAUP guidelines for a faculty-led process, Lyman maintains the position that there is no reason to have an all-faculty appeals committee.

Prior reports at USMNEWS.net indicate that, despite [a vocal minority](#), the USM faculty senate seems to be [mired in quicksand](#) when it comes to opposing the Saunders administration's attempt to terminate tenured and tenure-track faculty. Ervin's report also reminds readers that AAUP-USM membership chair Ellen Weinauer, a professor of English, [publicly stated](#) that she believes the Saunders administration is committed to following AAUP guidelines. Based on the resolution passed last week by AAUP-USM, Weinauer has already been proven wrong on that point. As if this setback were not enough for AAUP-USM, Ervin provides new information, via quotes from AAUP-USM secretary Amy Young, who has been tabbed by sources as a part of the vocal minority in the faculty senate that is alluded to above. According to what Young, an associate professor of anthropology, told Ervin, the presence of the academic deans on the appeals committee is not a bad thing. Contradicting the AAUP-USM's own recently-passed resolution, Young, in making the argument that the USM deans' lists of academic expenses did not represent items they

wanted eliminated, told Ervin that “[t]he deans didn’t want to cut academics.” Of course, this flies in the face of what, according to sources, has been the constant complaint of rank-and-file USM faculty that the [deans' lists](#) are highly correlated with what Saunders’ executive cabinet ultimately decided upon with regard to the \$15 million budget cut. Young’s sentiments [also](#) appear to [ignore](#) the summer 2010 [flap](#) in her own college (the CoAL) regarding the dismantling of the highly-acclaimed USM Center for Writers.

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Ervin’s report for TSP details an unfortunate turn for rank-and-file USM faculty with regard to the FY 2012 budget cuts. With another \$10 million in cuts expected for FY 2013, it now seems to some as though USM faculty governance bodies are, one-by-one, becoming ineffective in dealing with the USM administration. All of this means that the administration’s advantage over the faculty is only getting bigger with each passing crisis. Only time will tell if the diminishing level of faculty representation will result in another big termination of tenured and tenure-track members of USM’s faculty ranks.