

Is Lucas a Thamesian?

Interim President Looking More Like Controversial Former President Every Day

A Guest Column

When USM faculty were, in the eyes of many, being terrorized by the Shelby Thames administration of USM (2002-07), current interim president Aubrey Lucas sat on the sidelines, occupying the **paid** title of *emeritus president*, and did virtually nothing, again in the eyes of many, to blunt the pain being felt across USM's two campuses. Many USM faculty were left wondering why Lucas would sit idly by and not even criticize Thames before a faculty body (or the media), especially given that so many hoped Lucas would work with the IHL to sideline Thames. None of it was to occur. Not at any point during the five years.

Now, over the first four months of Lucas' current interim presidency of USM, many of those same faculty [are learning that](#) Lucas does not believe that the *USM Faculty Handbook* applies to administrators. Sound Thamesian? Many would say it does, and it should. Of course, Lucas' comments about the frivolity of shared governance came just four days [after hyping](#) Cynthia Easterling's merchandising/retailing text. Long time readers of USMNEWS.net will certainly recall that Easterling was a favorite of Thames among those high-level executives at USM during Thames' 2002-07 administration. Seeing Lucas cozy up to her (see below) leaves a bad taste in the mouth, particularly now (after Lucas' recent comments).



To quote [@fakEllisJohnson](#), none of this is a coincidence, is it? Not likely. Lucas' recent behavior confirms exactly what USM faculty have long since struggled to grasp, and must now be doing so the hard way. Whether it's leasing airplanes during the 'great recession' or awarding Thames *emeritus* status without following protocol, it seems that rules, or even common sense, do not apply to USM's *ruling class*. There's an old line that locals use to describe USM. To paraphrase, it goes something like - "USM ain't nothing but a paycheck." To locals, you see, USM is not so much an institution about higher learning. It's more of a taxpayer-filled trough that the well-connected in and around Hattiesburg seek access to in lieu of earning a real living like the tens of thousands of other citizens of the Pine Belt. Lucas may wear a bow tie and speak softly, but the stick he carries for bad behavior is just as big as that wielded by Thames and USM's other controversial leaders.