

Is Saunders' Decision-Making Process Like a Roulette Wheel?

Provost Lyman's Remarks Suggest It is So

USM has released the appeals committee's recommendations regarding more than 20 of the academic programs that were cut by USM president Martha Saunders in response to the expected FY2012 budget cut of \$15 million. That release brought a flood of media coverage and Internet discussion about the matter, including Ed Kemp's 20-Jan-2011 [story](#) for *The Hattiesburg American* entitled "USM programs may be saved." One particular quote from USM provost Robert Lyman that appeared in Kemp's report on the appeals is already receiving a lot of attention from USM faculty and other members of the USM community. Addressing the public release of the appeals committee's report, Lyman tells Kemp:

"We think, in the interest of transparency, we want folks to know what the committee is recommending. Then, of course, they can gauge the president's response in comparison to what the committee found."

Readers of USMNEWS.net are also closely following these events, including Lyman's quote above. One remarked that Lyman is telling the USM family that he is now essentially "out of the loop," and that he is seeking to distance himself from the ultimate decision. Another reader adds: "I interpret this as [Lyman's] public announcement that he is a short-timer and ready to go back to Tuscaloosa . . . He is setting Martha [Saunders] up to take the brunt of the decisions that she has always made."



Though these comments on Lyman's quote above are intriguing, and their sentiments entirely plausible, another reader wrote to point out that Lyman's best comment is elsewhere in Kemp's article. Kemp's reporting of that comment appears below:

"He [Lyman] said that, while it's anybody's guess as to how Saunders will rule on the recommendations, he expects at least a few of them to stick."

By stating that "it's anybody's guess as to how Saunders will rule on the recommendations," Lyman indicates that Saunders' decision-making process is characterized by randomness, and is thus unpredictable even to seasoned academicians and academic administrators. Of course, if *Lyman* is incapable of predicting Saunders' actions with any reasonable degree of certainty or consistency, then the general public is completely out of its depth in attempting to forecast USM's immediate future. Thus, in his own way Lyman has characterized his boss as a human roulette wheel.