

Is Your Department Bigger than Airplane Operations?

A Campus-Wide Comparison

Much has been made around the USM campus, Hattiesburg, and Mississippi, as well as on the pages of USMNEWS.net, *The Hattiesburg American*, *The Student Printz* and other media outlets about USM president Martha Saunders' decision to sign a \$2 million lease of a Beechcraft airplane (for USM) during the worst economic period since the Great Depression. To add to the plane lease news, one [recent report indicates](#) that USMNEWS.net staffers have so far found the names of *at least* eight different (co-)pilots of Saunders' airplane, one short of the nine required to field a faculty/staff softball team at USM. This particular report examines each academic department at USM, in order to locate the names of those that employ as many, if not fewer, faculty (at ranks above instructor) as there are (co-)pilots in USM's new Airplane Operations auxiliary. Those departments found to have eight or fewer faculty are listed, by college, in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Academic Department	#of Faculty	# of Pilots in AirOps
<i>Arts & Letters</i>		
Aerospace Studies	2	8
<i>Business</i>		
Finance & Real Estate	7	8
Tourism Management	2	8
<i>Education & Psychology</i>		
Library & Information Science	7	8
Technology Education	7	8
<i>Health</i>		
Community Health Sciences	8	8
Medical Technology	3	8
Nutrition & Food Systems	7	8
Social Work	7	8
<i>Science & Technology</i>		
Economic & Workforce Development	7	8

As Table 1 above indicates, one department in each of *Arts & Letters* and *Science & Technology* has eight or fewer faculty, while two departments in both *Business* and *Education & Psychology* are similarly situated. One college, *Health*, has four departments with eight or fewer faculty. Regular readers of USMNEWS.net will recall that *Health* is led by dean Michael Forster, [a vocal supporter](#) of the Saunders administration. Sources say that at least Forster is making the largest sacrifice - having the most departments that are staffed at levels beneath the Airplane Operations auxiliary - so that Saunders can have what many are calling *an extravagance* in the form of the USM airplane. Examining Table 1 further also reveals two or more departments that suffered significantly from the most recent round of program/faculty cuts from Saunders' executive cabinet. Having academic units give way to a relatively large cadre of

airplane pilots seems, to sources at least, like a prime example of mismanagement on the part of USM's central administration.

How many pilots will ultimately be discovered? USMNEWSnet readers will have to await future updates to the Mississippi Open Records series on the USM plane for the answer to that question. A large number of USM's academic departments employ nine faculty, so the discovery of only one more (co-)pilot on campus will significantly expand Table 1 above. Stay tuned to USMNEWS.net to see if this occurs.