

# “It’s Not Gonna Happen”

## *The Saunders Administration’s Behind-the-Scenes Fight against Shared Governance*

At the 27-Jan-2012 USM faculty senate meeting, senate president Timothy Rehner reported to the faculty senate that the Martha Saunders administration has moved a significant portion of the institution’s student retention apparatus from academic affairs to student affairs. As Rehner indicated, this move was done without his knowledge, and even more importantly, without any oversight from a legitimate faculty governance group. Rehner conveyed to the senate his opinion that reducing academic affairs yet again, and without any shared governance or faculty vetting in this case, is problematic at best. As Rehner put it, having more and more decisions made by USM’s managerial staff that impact instruction is ill-advised because of the problems such a practice creates when it comes to doing business on the academic affairs side of the institution.

Rehner’s concerns generated some discussion among the USM senators about historical efforts to have some faculty senate representation on the university’s *executive* cabinet, which is often referred to as the “inner cabinet” by faculty senators and other governance bodies. Some senators reminded the larger group that having faculty senate representation on the executive cabinet was one of the topics discussed at the faculty senate’s most recent annual retreat. After only a few minutes of discussion, the faculty senate came to the conclusion that a resolution advising Saunders to allow the faculty senate president to participate in executive cabinet meetings is now necessary. A motion to begin work on that resolution was passed.

A representative of the Saunders administration informed the senate that passing and forwarding to Saunders such a resolution was a prerogative of the senate. However, he warned the senate that such a resolution would be dead in the water once it lands on Saunders’ desk. In fact, the administration official stated “[i]t’s not gonna happen” in referring to the likelihood that the USM president would agree to such a proposal or recommendation. When pressed for some explanation, the faculty senate was told that the administration would most likely point to hypothetical situations requiring confidentiality in denying the faculty senate president a place at the executive cabinet table. To that, one faculty senator expressed his opinion that such an excuse is nothing short of insulting, adding that there is no reason to believe that overpaid administrators at USM show more discretion regarding sensitive issues than would a USM faculty senate president. It was at this point that the view that the central administration could get around the presence and oversight of the faculty senate president by calling executive sessions to handle various issues. This point was then countered by the opinion that the Saunders administration would likely misuse executive sessions in order to have an executive cabinet meeting outside of the view of the senate president.

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that it is clear from discussions like that recounted above that there is a growing chasm between the USM faculty and the USM administration. Surely the seemingly unending administration scandals have promoted this division. Now, it seems that Saunders’ growing penchant for subverting shared governance – often playing the proverbial *emergency* card in doing so – is a major factor in the increasing distance between Saunders and the faculty.