

It's Simple . . . Martha's Plane May Cost Jobs

*A Guest Editorial by **Victoria Tyler***

Maybe, just maybe, as a result of USM president Martha Saunders' decision to spend \$2 million in taxpayer funds to lease a Beechcraft plane, there's a pilot out there who is now considering membership in the Hattiesburg Country Club. That's nice. However, there are at least seven CoAL faculty out there now, some tenured, who can blame Saunders for their terminal contracts, should they come as expected on 1-Sept-09, that are the result of financial exigencies. While Saunders is looking like a joke these days due to her inept handling of the USM budget crisis, former USM president Shelby Thames is looking like quite the opposite for his decision to reduce the number of USM colleges to the five current ones – CoAL, CoB, CoEP, CoH and CoST. Now the university has only five deans (and their respective staffs) draining its budget, and not the larger number that existed prior to January of 2003.

President Saunders' plane hit USM to the tune of \$2 million, which, if spread across the five colleges, comes to \$0.4 million per college. The USMNEWS.net report [Shaking the Trees on USM's Budget Crisis](#) reported that the CoAL's multi-pronged response to Saunders' demand that it reduce its budget by \$2 million includes a line-item that eliminates seven existing faculty, some of which are tenured. According to CoAL dean Denise von Herrmann, that line-item comes to about \$0.45 million, or about the same amount as the CoAL's "share" of Saunders' Beechcraft. Thus, viewed this way Martha's plane may cost the CoAL seven existing faculty – some tenured, and all of whom have families to care for/people depending on them. It's a real shame that Saunders can't connect the dots, and that almost all of the USM Faculty Senate gave Saunders a free pass (publicly at least) on the issue when it arose weeks ago.