

## **Martha Saunders, Under Oath**

*"Don't count her out yet. There are plenty of low level colleges where she could rise again."*  
[Name withheld](#)

If there is a chance that Martha Saunders can repeat her incompetence as an administrator at another college or university, its faculty and administrators should have a clear picture of her conduct as president of Southern Miss. This series provides a rare opportunity for the Southern Miss family, as well as potential employers, to consider Martha Saunders' words, under oath.

Martha Saunders didn't just squander millions of dollars in student and taxpayer money on an airplane, or hundreds of thousands decorating the Presidential mansion's bedroom, or hundreds of thousands on a misguided, illegal computer tablet give-away scheme, or at least a million in mismanagement on athletics that we know of, etc. She spent approximately two and a half million dollars trying and failing to fire me for opposing and exposing the questionable conduct of USM faculty and administrators.

It's your money -- your millions and millions of dollars. Taxpayer and students' money. If you care to understand just how incompetent Martha Saunders is, take a front row seat at her deposition. You don't have to take anyone's word. Observe it for yourself.

### **Part 1**

**Questions directed to President Martha Saunders at her deposition in *DePree v. Saunders, et al.* on April 12 and 13, 2010--Q is question; A is President Saunders' answer.**

Q. What investigation of the facts and circumstances of this matter have you undertaken since your [first] deposition in May of 2008?

A. Would you repeat the question?

Q. Surely. What investigation of the facts and circumstances of this case have you undertaken since your deposition in May 2008?

A. None.

Q. None at all?

A. None at all.

### **Part 2**

Q. You indicated you had not reviewed the depositions of the other defendants [Jackson, Munn, Jordan, Posey, Anderson, Pate, et al.]?

A. That's correct.

Q. Do you think those would be helpful to you in your understanding of this matter?

A. They maybe.

Q. And when did you plan to review them?

A. I don't know.

Q. And you've had what, a year and a half to review them?

A. Probably more than that.

Q. Did you ever entertain the notion that the allegations contained in those letters [from the other defendants she depended upon to punish DePree] might be false?

A. Yes.

Q. And what investigation did you undertake to confirm that the veracity of the allegations [in the letters]?

A. I called for an investigation by the ombudsman [which was completed in 2007—[see Series Gordon Cannon, Ombudsman](#)].

Q. Anything else?

A. No that was the first action.

Q. And you did not read the depositions [of the other defendants which contradicted their own allegations.]?

A. No.

Q. Did you ever take any steps to determine the allegations against Dr. Depree were true or false?

A. I called for an investigation by the ombudsman .

Q. Did the ombudsman tell you if the statements [in the allegations by DePree's accusers] were true or false?...

A. On the matter regarding an attempt to sabotage the re-accreditation of SAIS by AACSB, he [ombudsman] indicated that he couldn't determine whether it was his [DePree's] intent to sabotage. But I'm paraphrasing here that he -- but the result could have been that and he

did say this could conceivable interfere with the university's to obtain research funding or biased acceptance by peer research funding.

Q. I think you indicated that his [Ombudsman Cannon's] statement says he's been accused of, he may have, he could have?

A. Uh-huh (affirmative).

Q. What further action did you take to confirm or disconfirm?

A. None.

Q. Anything else in here where the ombudsman confirmed or was unable to confirm the truthfulness of the statements [by DePree's accusers]?

A. Well, the next item has to do with being accused of being disruptive and of creating an atmosphere that is not conducive to learning.

Q. Yes?

A. And he went on to say that such actions as placing fliers in a colleague's class without his or her permission is undoubtedly disruptive to teaching effort and completely unacceptable behavior.

Q. Let me stop you there?

A. All right.

Q. Dr. Cannon confirm that Dr. Depree had actually done this?

A. Well, that's the implication.

Q. Did he confirm it or did he just say he was told this?

A. Has been reported to place fliers. There is no confirmation...

Q. Was he able to confirm Dr. Depree's volatile temper?

A. Impossible to substantiate.

Q. Was he able to confirm that Dr. Depree had ever threatened anybody?

A. (Witness looks at document.) I don't see that.

Q. You don't see it?

A. I mean, I don't see his confirming that.

Q. In fact, he says that no faculty member told me [Ombudsman Cannon] that Dr. Depree had ever threatened them in in anyway?

A. What line is that.

Q. It's paragraph four, line one, two, three, four -- toward the end of the fourth line?

A. Correct.

Q. And you did not again, read the depositions of the witnesses?

A. I did not.

Q. Do you think reading those depositions would have been helpful?

A. They may have been.

Q. Anything else in here where Dr. Cannon was able to confirm the allegations contained in the letters?

A. That is the end of those points.

When your career is on the line, will Dr. Saunders ignore evidence so that she can punish you for speech or any other behavior she and/or others don't like? Of course, if Dr. Saunders ignores evidence that does not support the conclusions she wants to reach, she can continue to punish any of us while Mississippi taxpayers pick up the tab.

### **Part 3**

Questions directed to President Martha Saunders at her deposition on April 12 and 13, 2010--Q is question; A is President Saunders' answer.

Q. What evidence today do you have that their [DePree's accusers] fear is factually justified?

A. I don't have any.

Q. You have none?

A. Correct.

[In Saunders' first deposition (2008), she testified under oath that Dr. DePree "was not a danger to students or otherwise." But she still held out fear as a reason for her action in

2008 and her continuing efforts to terminate Dr. DePree's tenure and employment in 2010.]

Q. Thank you. Are there any other reasons that you removed Dr. Depree from teaching and service?

A. That's the one that stands out in my mind.

Q. And no other reason?

A. That I can recall.

Q. Nothing else at all?

A. No.

Q. Just that this group of faculty [Alvin Williams and some accounting faculty] said they were afraid?

A. That led me to the action that I took [in August 2007].

Q. Did anything else support your action?

A. Did any --

Q. Any other facts, information, evidence known to you on August 21st support that action?

A. No.

Q. As we sit here today, do you have any facts or evidence supporting the letter writers' claims of fear?

A. Beyond the ombudsman's affirmation of their fear, no.

Q. Did the ombudsman give you any reason to justify their fear?

A. No.

Do good science, good research, and justice require objective evidence? Taking Dr. Saunders' testimony at face value, she does not agree. If you are considering a position at the University of Southern Mississippi or are a current member of the faculty, be forewarned. Accusations without a shred of proof may be the means administrators at the USM attempt to terminate your hard earned tenure and promotions.

Q. As of today, as we sit here, what information do you have supporting your decision to remove Dr. Depree from teaching and service in the college of business?

A. Say that again.

#### **Part 4**

Q. As we sit here today, what information do you have supporting your decision to remove Dr. Depree from teaching and service in the college of business?

A. I have the same information that I had in the beginning.

Q. You have collected no other information?

A. I have not.

Q. Have you made any effort to collect any additional information?

A. If you're referring to my original decision, no.

Q. Well, that's a continuing decision isn't it?

A. It is.

Q. And as we sit here with that continuing decision, do you have any additional information?

A. No.

President Saunders had no evidence and still does not. Roughly two and a half million dollars later and we are witness to a level of squandering Mississippi taxpayers' money deserving of a full scale state investigation.

One more thought. You don't think this is the only example of Dr. Saunders' reckless and wasteful behavior, do you? Just two more examples - [her plane](#) and the [costs associated with remodeling her boudoir](#).