

President Martha Saunders Under Oath

Are You Listening, Mr. Bounds, Mr. Lucas? Do You Approve?

Part 10

“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. 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. Click for [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#), [Part 7](#), [Part 8](#) and [Part 9](#).

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. And where were Hank Bounds and Aubrey Lucas? With millions being spent to try to fire DePree, you can bet they knew. And, you don't have to take anyone's word. Observe it for yourself. Her deposition continues below:

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

Part 38

Q. Do you know when Mr. Hooks [of the law firm Adams and Reece] was employed concerning efforts to terminate Dr. DePree's employment and tenure? [Keep in mind that another external law firm, Mayo and Mallette, as well as USM internal attorney Lee Gore and several other state employed attorneys sought DePree’s termination.]

A. I don't know when Dr. Hooks was employed or the reasons why he was employed.

Q. Was he employed prior to August 2007?

A. I don't know.

Q. Do you know any other president sought funding to have Mr. Hooks attempt to find a mechanism to terminate Dr. DePree's employment?

A. I don't know.

Q. Do you know who authorized Mr. Hooks and Mr. Gore to meet with the accounting faculty?

A. I don't know that they met with the accounting faculty.

Q. Dr. Saunders, I don't believe you've reviewed Dr. Jackson's deposition have – or Dr. Jordan's deposition, have you?

A. No.

Q. I'm going to give you Dr. Jordan's deposition. I would like for you to go to page 37 of the deposition.

A. All right.

Q. If you would, go to line 12: Okay. [Attorney reading questions to Jordan in his deposition.] So you're telling me that nobody came to you and said look we're getting ready to take action against DePree and we need you to write a letter in support of us taking action against Dr. DePree. And what did he answer?

A. [Saunders reading Jordan's answer.] I had -- I had talked to legal counsel earlier in the summer.

Q. Okay. When did you speak to legal counsel?

A. [Saunders reading Jordan's answer.] I do not recall the date.

Q. Can you tell me the month?

A. [Saunders reading Jordan's answer.] It seems like it was early July, late June.

Q. And to whom did you speak?

A. [Saunders reading Jordan's answer.] With my legal counsel.

Q. And who is that?

A. [Saunders reading Jordan's answer.] John Hooks and Lee Gore. [Hooks was outside counsel hired by USM and Gore is USM's internal counsel.]

Q. I'm going to show you -- since we seem to have lost it -- your Response to Request for Admission Number 4 filed in this case. Would you read the Request for Admission, Dr. Saunders?

A. Yes: Admit that John S. Hooks and/or Lee P. Gore met with certain faculty members of the college of business of the University of Mississippi --

Q. Southern Mississippi?

A. Southern is not in there.

Q. Okay.

A. -- to discuss matters related to Dr. Chauncey M. DePree, Jr. prior to August 2007. Response: Objection. This request invades the attorney-client privilege. Without waiving the objection, the request is admitted. [This is Saunders' sworn affidavit which contradicts her testimony above. This lesson is learned over and over. Saunders, and other administrators, will lie and get away with it unless they are forced to read their own prepared sworn statements and forced to recognize their misconduct.]

Q. Normally, do your counsel go meet with faculty without your knowledge and consent?

A. I don't always know what counsel does when they are preparing for a case.

Q. Were they preparing for a case in June or July?

A. I don't know.

Q. Can any faculty on campus go to counsel, university's counsel, and seek advice?

A. Yes.

Q. Including Dr. DePree?

A. Yes.

Q. Anytime they need advice?

A. Well, if they can find the time with the counselors. They do.

Q. Would you look at faculty handbook -- well, let me back up. Who does university counsel work for?

A. University counsel reports to the president.

Q. Okay. And who is he supposed to advise?

A. The president. He is -- has responsibilities for advising the executive cabinet on a variety of matters including contracts that we're considering, any -- you know, it's a very broad spectrum of activities.

Q. Would you look at faculty handbook paragraph 2.8?

A. (Saunders looks at document.) I'm sorry. Which one?

Q. 2.8.

A. (Witness looks at document.) All right.

Q. Does faculty 2.8 tell you who the university counsel advises?

A. The university counsel and attorney at law advises the president, the vice-presidents and the director of intercollegiate athletics.

Q. You can stop there.

A. Okay.

Q. Does it say that they advise the faculty?

A. It does not.

Q. And are there any documentation you're aware of that authorizes university counsel to advise the faculty?

A. I'm not aware of any.

Unless Saunders is forced to read the documents that she prepares under oath or works from as guidance, she will lie. And when caught? She doesn't care because she is not accountable, not to the faculty, not to the Institutes of Higher Learning, not to the taxpayers of Mississippi. Does she believe she is immune from accountability to the extent she can mislead, dissemble, lie, even under oath?

Part 39

Q. Dr. Saunders, yesterday we talked about the letter that Dr. DePree had written Dr. Cannon as part of the investigation, and you said you did not recall whether you reviewed it or not?

A. I don't recall reviewing it. That's correct.

Q. I'm going to have this marked as the next exhibit and ask you if you've ever seen this letter?

(Saunders looks at document which proves Ombudsman Cannon's investigation was seriously flawed.)

Q. Have you previously seen this letter, Dr. Saunders?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did [Ombudsman] Dr. Cannon provide you any documents other than his written report to support his finding?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Is there a file which would contain those materials if they exist?

A. Well, if they exist, there should be.

Q. Okay. And have you checked to see if they exist?

A. No.

Q. So you don't know if they exist, and you don't know if you reviewed them?

A. I don't recall reviewing them or not.

Q. Okay.

A. (Saunders looks at document.)

Q. Do you have any recollection of having reviewed that?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Do you believe the contents of that letter would have been helpful to you in making any decisions concerning Dr. Depree?

A. It would have.

Q. Do you intend [to] review it now?

A. This minute?

Q. No, at any point?

A. I may.

Q. When will you decide whether you will review it?

A. I don't know.

Q. Is there any other information that might be helpful to you in reaching a decision that you have not yet reviewed?

A. I don't know.

Q. We've covered the depositions. Would those be helpful to you in making a decision?

A. They could be.

Q. The letter that Dr. DePree wrote Dr. Cannon could be helpful?

A. It could be.

Q. I believe you said talking -- in your earlier deposition (**Two years earlier**) -- talking to prior presidents might be helpful?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you talked to those prior presidents?

A. No.

Q. Do you intend?

A. I may.

Q. And when will you decide?

A. I don't know.

According to the USM Faculty Handbook

8.2.3 Guiding Principles. At The University of Southern Mississippi, the fundamental principles that guide all personnel evaluation policies and procedures are that rigorous, documented standards for excellence are fairly and consistently applied by each advisory body and each decision-making authority at every level of the evaluation process and that evaluations are conducted in an atmosphere of fairness and professional integrity.

Dr. Saunders testified under oath that she did not know the evaluation and disciplinary standards, did not know when she would know them, or whether she would apply them if she ever came to know them.

Since Saunders did not review extensive evidence, including that which Dr. DePree offered to Ombudsman Cannon, sworn depositions of Dr. DePree's accusers who recanted their accusations, what is the basis for Saunders' decision to fire Dr. DePree and to spend millions trying (unsuccessfully) to find any reason with which to implement her decision.

More than the truth, more than the spirit of inquiry and scholarly integrity Saunders honors the principle of "I don't know." Again and again throughout her deposition she repeats, "I don't know." Even worse, she blithely admits that she does not know when she will know. The extent to which she repeats "I don't know" when it is her duty to know brings disrepute upon the office of President of the University of Southern Mississippi and corrupts the standards to which every faculty is entitled.