

President Martha Saunders Under Oath

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

Part 8

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

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 Dr. 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 32

Q. Now, did you review Dr. Jackson's [Interim Director of Accounting] deposition?

A. No.

Q. Did you review his letter [Jackson’s letter to Saunders recommended DePree be fired]?

A. Which letter?

Q. To you that supported your letter dated August 21st, 2007 [in which Saunders banned DePree from the business building and advised him he was being processed for termination]?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you, please, look at that? I believe it's an exhibit to your deposition of May 2008.

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

Q. Did Dr. Jackson in his letter say that Dr. Depree had a destructive impact?

A. (Saunders looks at document.) I don't see those words exactly.

Q. Is there anything in there that suggests -- let me pull my copy of the letter. Would you look at the second literary paragraph?

A. Yes.

Q. And I believe there he says that: Dr. Depree, one person, Dr. Depree has a --

A. I see it now.

Q. -- destructive impact?

A. I see it now. Thank you.

Q. Dr. Saunders, I'm going to hand you a copy of Dr. Jackson's deposition. Once again, I have turned to the page where I would like for you to begin looking (hands over document).

A. (Saunders looks at document.)

Q. I believe it's page 21. And, of course, you're welcome to look at any other pages. And commencing the question [to Dr. Jackson]: Did you observe anything which led you to believe that he, Dr. Depree, was having a destructive impact on the college of business or in the school of accountancy? And what was his answer to that question?

A. No.

Q. That's inconsistent with his letter to you, isn't it?

A. It is.

Clearly, President Saunders made significant decisions during the three years of removing Professor DePree from his classroom and his office while pointedly ignoring the fact that the letters she had relied on in 2007 were admitted by the authors to be false. Even though Dr. She admits that she did not review sworn testimony that had been, for several years, readily available to her she continues to rely to punishment Professor DePree.

This is not just incompetence. This is not just an abuse of authority. She is, in her own words, admitting negligence sufficient to terminate her employment for cause.

Part 33

Q. Dr. Saunders, I'd like to ask you to continue with our review of Dr. Jackson's deposition.

A. (Witness looks at document.)

Q. And I believe we were on page 21.

A. 21.

Q. Would you look at the bottom of the page of 21? I believe the question is -- actually the question is yes and Dr. Jackson begins stating: I was told that the folks thought he was recording conversations. Have you found that?

A. On page 21?

Q. I believe so. I think we're working from different copies?

A. He said: I was told the reason doors were shut?

Q. Uh-huh (affirmative). And why was he told doors were shut?

A. [Saunders reading Interim Director Jackson's sworn testimony] The reason students weren't as active over there, the reasons no one wanted to talk was because of Dr. Depree.

Q. Did he indicate that he ever saw Dr. Depree do anything to make people uncomfortable?

A. No -- yes, he indicated, and the answer was "no."

Q. Would you check to see if Dr. Jackson ever saw Dr. Depree record anything?

A. (Witness looks at document.) I see that question.

Q. What was his answer?

A. No.

President Saunders is making decisions to fire a tenured professor without the least concern for the evidence she had in her possession. She is relying on Interim Director Jackson's letter recommending firing Professor DePree, even though Dr. Jackson's sworn testimony contradicted that letter.

However, a short anecdote about the quality of Dr. Jackson's behavior and Dr. Saunders' lack of concern about that behavior is instructive. A student was driving along side Dr. DePree on 98 West. The student motioned Dr. DePree to pull over. They stopped. The student and a friend had

just been confronted by Dr. Jackson. Dr. Jackson offered a higher grade in return for saying something negative about Dr. DePree. All USM administrators and their counsel were advised, yet none investigated the matter. Did they condone Dr. Jackson's attempted use of student grades to procure termination of Dr. DePree's tenure and employment?

Part 34

Q. Dr. Saunders, have you reviewed Dr. Jackson's 2007 evaluation of Dr. DePree?

A. If it were included in the packet, I did.

Q. Would you go to the exhibit attached to Dr. Jackson's deposition, and I believe that's Exhibit 3 to his deposition.

A. (Saunders reviews the exhibit.)

Q. Do you see where it says service professional development?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you continue [reading Interim Director Jackson's evaluation of DePree's service]?

A. [Saunders reading Interim Director Jackson's evaluation of DePree's service] Your decision to not participate in a constructive manner has led other members of those committees to simply not wish to work with you in committee or team activities given your insistence that you record meetings and use transcripts in a manner that presents a negative representation of other members of the committees and teams.

Q. And would you have relied on this in making a decision whether to affirm the 2007 appeal that you undertook?

A. If it was were in there, yes...

[It was "in there." Saunders was also well aware that "in there" was documentation that DePree had been elected by his colleagues in the CoB to serve on the university grade review council.

From: Dr. Donna Davis [mailto:Donna.Davis@usm.edu]

Sent: Monday, May 14, 2007 10:39 AM

To: 'Benito Velasquez'

Cc: 'Marc.DePree@usm.edu'

Subject: grade review council

Ben – Marc DePree has been elected to the grade review council from the College of Business. The alternative is Ernest King.

Donna Davis]

Q. Did Dr. Jackson say in his sworn testimony that Dr. Depree recorded anyone?

A. I have not read the entire deposition, but the items that you just pointed out, he said no.

Q. If he never saw Dr. Depree record, what would be the basis for the statement?

A: I don't know.

Q. And if he said that no one wanted to work with Dr. Depree because he recorded and Dr. Depree did not record and he had no evidence for that, would that be a false statement?

A: I don't know.

Q. Do you have any reason to believe based on your review of any materials before you that Dr. Depree ever recorded anyone?

A. I don't know to be honest.

Q. Do you have any evidence?

A. I don't know.

Q. Do you have any knowledge?

A. I don't know.

Q. Let me see if I can't phrase this better: If Dr. Depree did not record and Dr. Jackson said he did not record, would it be proper for Dr. Jackson to include in an evaluation a downgrading of Dr. Depree's service based on that false statement?

MR. HOOKS: Object to the form of the question.

THE WITNESS: Would you repeat that?

BY MS. JUDE: Q. Surely. You have reviewed Dr. Jackson's evaluation of Dr. Depree?

A. Yes.

Q. Does he say there that faculty do not want to work with Dr. Depree because he insists on recording?

A. He says that.

Q. Do you know what he relied on in making that conclusion?

A. I don't.

Nevertheless, to this day President Saunders relies on statements that Interim Director Jackson (and others) recanted under oath. Is Dr. Saunders dishonest? I will leave the answer to that question with the readers. Dishonesty is defined as behaving or prone to behave in an untrustworthy or fraudulent way.