

Martha's Memo

USM constituents are having a fear fest of sorts regarding the [diminishing level of communication](#) from USM president Martha Saunders, a so-called communications specialist. Reporters at USMNEWS.net thought it might be helpful to provide readers with a copy of the early July-09 memo sent by Saunders that details USM's latest response to the 2008-10 budget crisis facing the state. That memo is the source of some of the concern currently being articulated by various USM constituencies.



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Office of the President

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July 7, 2009

Dear Southern Miss Colleagues,

I am writing to bring you up to date on the university's budget for the coming year. As you may know, the legislature was late approving the IHL appropriation and we have been on hold until now.

Today, the IHL Board of Trustees approved an allocation for Southern Miss of \$90,633,607 for FY10. This amount is slightly less (0.1%) than our '09 appropriation.

Projected necessary increases to our current expenses total approximately \$4 million. With no increase in tuition to offset these increases, we will be forced to implement our planned 4.5% budget reduction agreed upon earlier this year. Furthermore, in anticipation of a prolonged period of declining appropriated funding, I have directed the Provost to work with the Academic Planning Group to identify areas for additional reductions by September 1.

I ask that you not be too discouraged. Not all the news is bad. There are other sources of revenue available to us. If we experience increased enrollment, we will realize increased revenue. In addition, we are redoubling our efforts to increase external research funding and are focused on philanthropic giving. We have reason for encouragement in these areas. Admissions applications are strong for fall. The stimulus funding has yielded several lucrative research opportunities and the multi-million dollar private gift we received last year will fund much-needed scholarships this year.

I will keep you informed as we work our way through our fiscal challenges. Remember, we have weathered far greater crises in the past. As always, I appreciate the good spirit and able contributions you provide every day.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Martha Saunders'.

Martha Saunders
President

Besides the content and tone of the memo, it is also worth noting the "new" e-mail address put in use by Saunders (see upper left of insert above). That new e-mail address – president@usm.edu – is very reminiscent of the one United States citizens (and others) use to communicate electronically with the POTUS. The fact that Saunders is going this route to profess her own importance is, according to sources, very telling.