

## Miffed Martha

USM president Martha Saunders couldn't hide it – she's completely underwhelmed by the strategic acumen of Mississippi's IHL Board, which recently decided to keep USM's in-state tuition level. We know this thanks to *The Hattiesburg American's* higher education reporter Ed Kemp, who provided some quotes from Saunders in his 19-June-09 [article](#), "In-state tuition will not change." There Saunders states, "I was a little surprised by the board's vote. The idea of a zero tuition hike had not been discussed with the presidents. [A t]hree percent [increase] would have just barely covered our increased costs including a 15 percent hike in utilities, increased cost of minimum wage, and other built in cost increases. It will be much more difficult to build a budget." Clearly, Saunders recognizes that USM's already dire budget situation, facing at least another 4.5% cut for 2009-10, is going to be worse due to the IHL's inaction on in-state tuition. She also clearly contradicts her own "the universe is smiling on us" statement found in [Palmer by Land, Saunders by Air II](#), found here at USMNEWS.net. The IHL's inaction all but leaves faculty and staff raises dead in the water for the near-term, or probably even mid-term, and it puts more pressure on her to perform. Given her penchant for deflection of responsibility and for dodging difficult situations, and her weakness when it comes to spending state monies on the finer things in life (e.g., \$2 million turbo-prop aircraft, \$0.35 million bedroom suite renovations), USM constituents may be in for a bumpier-than-expected ride (flight) over the next few months.