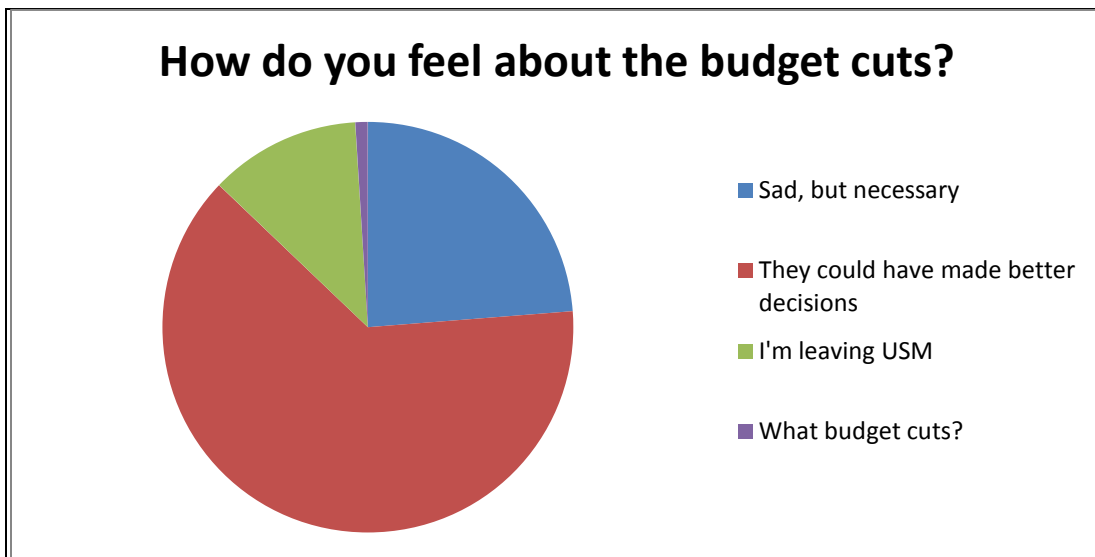


New Interim CFO to Lead Q&A on Budget Crisis

Recently appointed to USM's chief financial post (on an interim basis), Russ Willis begins his duties by moderating a Q&A session on the USM budget crisis. According to the 2-Sept-10 [issue](#) of *The Student Printz*, the session is scheduled for 9:30am on 7-Sept-10, and will begin with a presentation of the details surrounding the recent \$15 million cut for FY2012 that led to the Martha Saunders administration's decision to terminate the contracts of 29 tenured and tenure-track professors. Sources note that it is interesting that Willis will lead this Q&A, especially given that he [recently received](#) a 28.4% raise when he was promoted from human resources director to interim CFO. This came at the same time that outgoing CFO, Joe Morgan, was demoted to director of internal operations in the alumni affairs office. Yet, Morgan was allowed to retain his CFO salary despite the demotion. These decisions by Saunders indicate that USM is now spending 12.4% *more* for the *continued employment* of both Willis and Morgan.

Sources also tell USMNEWS.net that the time of the Q&A – 9:30am on the day after Labor Day – is not conducive to attendance for many faculty. First, it's the day after a three-day weekend, and faculty will be scrambling to get back into "the swing of things" during the morning of 7-Sept-10. Second, and more importantly, 9:30am on Tuesday is a popular time for scheduling classes, while Tuesday/Thursday teaching schedules are highly prized by many in academe. It is also likely that Willis' pre-Q&A presentation will "drone on," thus stifling the ability of the gathering to be a productive one.



The scheduled meeting comes at a time when faculty and students are feeling the strain of Saunders' budgetary decisions throughout both 2009 and 2010. An online survey conducted by *The Student Printz* reveals much of the angst felt by USM students regarding the current situation. As the results above point out, 64% of respondents believe Saunders et al. could have made better decisions, compared to only 24% indicating that the cuts were necessary. Interestingly, only 1% of respondents indicated that they knew nothing of the situation, while a

full 12% noted that they were leaving USM as a result of the administration's decisions vis-à-vis the budget situation.

Finally, concerned faculty interested in attending the Q&A should note that Saunders is not scheduled to appear, though that could change. Since delivering the news of the 29 tenured/tenure-track faculty terminations, Saunders has been focusing on the upcoming Centennial Homecoming parade, to be held in downtown Hattiesburg. It has also been reported that she attended USM's 2-Sept-10 football game in Columbia against South Carolina. USM lost that game 13-41, marking the third straight loss for the Eagles, dating back to Nov-09. In the midst of this losing streak, head coach Larry Fedora was awarded a \$35,000 raise, bringing his *base pay* up to \$685,000.