

Editorial

Presidential Search Process Part 3

Buried in a recent [Hattiesburg American](#) article, “USM creating ‘a more pedestrian-friendly campus’ ” appears to be a response to our recent articles about the delay in selecting a university president. On a matter to be discussed in future reports, let us mention the main theme seems shortsighted. USM administrative concern for ‘a more pedestrian-friendly campus’ might take a back seat to ‘a more cost-friendly campus’ for students. And that’s a common failure of *Hattiesburg American* -- a failure to ask questions. Too often *Hattiesburg American* seems more like an extension of USM’s public relations department than an independent newspaper.

Here’s an example of what I mean. Input about the topic, campus building projects, seem to be made by some amorphous constituency: “campus feedback.” “Campus feedback” is not questioned by *Hattiesburg American*. What alternatives was the “feedback” based on? For example, was the constituency asked, “Should we, USM, spend money on more building projects or reduce tuition and fees for students?” Given such alternatives, the feedback might look considerable different.

We’ve focused much of our reporting at usmnews.net on administrator and faculty waste, which creates a very **cost-UNfriendly** campus for students. We’ll continue encouraging IHL-USM to stop squandering student and taxpayer money and resources. But let’s get back to the content of *Hattiesburg American*’s “pedestrian-friendly” article.

According to the *Hattiesburg American*, “The presidential announcement is expected to come this spring. The state College Board interviewed candidates this week to replace Martha Saunders, who resigned in April.” We are pleased that IHL took the opportunity to address [our recent articles](#) about the delayed hiring of a new president. Note that we have reported IHL frequently visits usmnews.net. IHL visits daily, sometimes more than once daily:

Since our recent reports on the delays finding USM’s next president, the [IHL has updated](#) its webpage with regard to its “Presidential Search Process.” The IHL seems to have skipped from step 8 to step 12, “First-round interviews are conducted.”

Although the *Hattiesburg American* claimed the interviews have started, the IHL reported that [recent meetings](#) were about the discussion of “personnel issues,” not interviewing president-candidates: “[T]he purpose [was to discuss] personnel issues concerning the search for the next president of the University of Southern Mississippi.”

Discussion of “personnel issues” appears to be IHL-speak for dealing with problems. So, what are the “personnel issues”? The IHL said that its meeting was governed as “An

Executive Session ... in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.” That’s IHL-speak for its secret, it’s none of your business even though you’re paying for every penny of it, which adds up to millions of dollars in a hurry. Let’s be very clear, when it comes to money, hiding what’s done promotes corruption.

USM also is still asking for help on the front page of its website. “Institutional Executive Officer [President] Search: The IHL Board is seeking your input on the search for the next institutional executive officer of The University of Southern Mississippi. Contribute your ideas and opinions online.”

Secrecy with regard to a “Presidential Search Process” produces absurd reports and, for USM, one failed presidency after another. But Mississippi leadership chooses to look absurd rather than discarding secrecy. Opening the “Process” to public scrutiny would provide it with valuable advice—“*Wisdom of Crowds.*” (See, James Surowiecki.)