

Saunders Administration Plans to Centralize Vacant Lines

More on USM's Plan to Support Signature Programs

As part of USM's new policy to support so-called signature academic programs, the Martha Saunders administration is now centralizing vacant lines. According to information relayed to the USM faculty senate on 4-Mar-2011, vacant lines will now move through the central administration and into those academic units that have been designated by the Saunders administration and the University Priorities Committee (UPC) as top-tier, a designation that was given to certain favored programs and departments during the process of cutting the FY2012 budget. As an example, the line being vacated in the CoB's finance department by the departure of assistant professor of finance Matthew Hood, who is joining the faculty at Texas State University in the fall of 2011, will be transferred to academic affairs in the administration building. CoB dean Lance Nail can request that the Hood line be returned to finance, however a determination by Saunders, USM provost Robert Lyman, et al. may instead send that vacant budget line to another unit, such as English.

Sources remind USMNEWS.net that the most [recent episode](#) exposing the administration's new policy vis-à-vis so-called signature academic programs occurred when Saunders decided to allow the psychology department to use a vacant line to provide a raise of \$3,000 to each psychology faculty who returns to USM for the 2011-12 academic year. Given the information discussed at the faculty senate's 4-Mar-2011 meeting, it is not inconceivable that a line such as that being vacated by Hood in finance could be transferred to a signature unit like psychology in order to support one or more new psychology hires. Of course, it is also conceivable that psychology could, given the recent precedent, "cut up" the vacant line it receives in order to provide raises to all, or only some, of the psychology faculty.

USM faculty senators warned USM administrators that the new focus on so-called top-tier academic programs and units at USM promised to generate even more divisiveness throughout the campus, as programs and units become more self-centered. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that this new centralization of vacant lines seems to fit the description of the type of divisive policy warned against by the faculty senators.