

Saunders Now Claiming Credit for Promotion Raises

In her 16-November-2010 news story (<http://www.studentprintz.com/fedora-receives-35-000-raise-1.1778264>) for *The Student Printz* entitled "Fedora receives \$35,000 raise," reporter Mary Margaret Halford questioned multiple USM administrators about the recent one-year contract extension and \$35,000 raise given to USM head football coach Larry Fedora, one that bumps Fedora's "base pay" up to \$685,000 per year. This raise, approved by the Mississippi IHL in August-2010, has drawn the ire of many in the USM and wider communities. When approached by Halford to address those who are concerned about the large raise awarded to Fedora, USM president Martha Saunders stated, "I would tell them I understand their concern. As part of our normal business activity, we continue to renew contracts." Sources contacted by USMNEWS.net for comment on Saunders' statement to Halford noted the patronizing way in which Saunders replied to the community's concerns, almost as if to say "I'm sorry you feel that way." If anything, they note, anger over this \$35,000 increase in Fedora's base pay will only heighten with Saunders' remarks.

Sources also tell USMNEWS.net that it appears as though Saunders wanted to add insult to injury in this particular instance, noting that she went further in her interview with Halford by pointing out that pay was raised for other USM employees, not just those in the athletics department. In going further, Saunders told Halford that "[w]e also provided raises to faculty . . . this year through tenure, promotion, and equity raises." Sources note several issues with this comment, particularly its salty tone, suggesting that Saunders and her executive cabinet are intent now on being combative with those in the local community who would criticize their actions in any way. For one, raises do not come with the granting of tenure at USM. Thus, Saunders' remark is, on its face, false. Second, those raises that come with promotion to higher ranks, such as to associate professor and professor, are stipulated and provided by the Mississippi IHL, the governing authority over USM and the other public colleges and universities. Sources tell USMNEWS.net, though, that Saunders apparently wants Halford and *TSP* readers to believe that promotion raises are purely discretionary, and provided only through the benevolence of the USM executive cabinet. Lastly, any evidence of so-called equity raises has yet to surface, leading sources to note that their existence is purely fiction at this point.

USMNEWS.net readers and other followers of events at USM are increasingly pointing out that the Saunders administration is spiraling downward. Saunders' recent interview with Halford appears to do little, if anything, to disabuse those in the USM community of this belief.