

Is Martha Saunders Using *The Hattiesburg American* as Part of Her Campaign to Become Provost of the University of West Florida?

Curiously, if you run a Google search or check the local Pensacola newspapers or the University of West Florida website, you will find no mention of the individual candidates for the position of Provost at the University of West Florida. However, on [October 19](#) and [October 20, 2012](#), *The Hattiesburg American* ran two very flattering reports/advertisements concerning Martha Saunders' efforts to become provost at University of West Florida. The reports/advertisements couldn't have portrayed her in a more positive way if she had written them herself. Nowhere in the reports is there any mention of the [scandals](#) that rocked the University under her administration; nowhere in the reports is [any mention](#) of her [spendthrift](#) and [mismanaged](#) activities as [president](#) of the University of Southern Mississippi.

The *THA* reports/advertisements obviously focused on public relations spin to help her get her next job:

“I have tremendous respect for the university and for the president (Judith Bense),” Saunders said.

When asked, she added she has been approached by several universities regarding open positions, among them open president positions.

“I will have to have a heart for a place to leave Southern Miss,” Saunders said.

However, has everyone forgotten that in April 2012 Saunders [unexpectedly "resigned"](#) her post as president of Southern Miss, [declaring](#) “I'm just tired. It's a tired that I've never felt before.” Yet, now she is ready to take on the demanding job of provost at another University. Does that strike anyone else as odd, to say the least? Or more to the point, does her sudden recovery from her overwhelming exhaustion just in time to seek a new job as provost strain credulity?

Public relations is defined as “the professional maintenance of a favorable public image by a company or other organization or a person.”

The *Hattiesburg American* reports appear to be little more than an attempt to reconstruct Saunders' reputation, rather than objective, balanced news reports about Saunders or her history as president of Southern Miss. *The Hattiesburg American* need not be an arm of Saunders' public relations machine. That's what Saunders has done and continues to do.