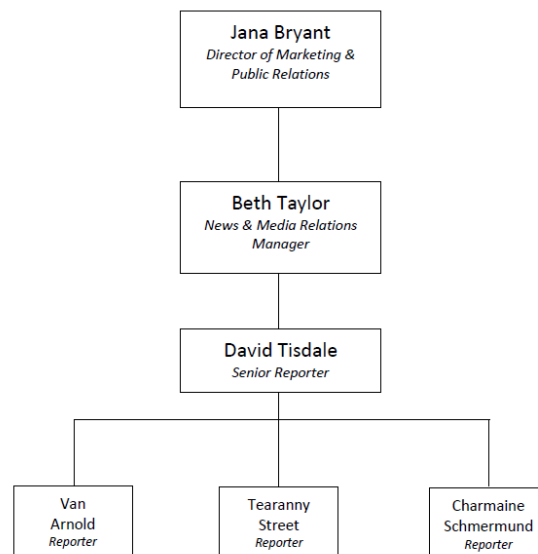


Saunders' Spin Machine

Regular readers of USMNEWS.net, and followers of happenings at USM, are well aware by now that USM president Martha Saunders is an image-shaper, a self-anointed public relations queen. As reports and editorials here at USMNEWS.net indicate, Saunders governs in a style over substance fashion, and the 100-year-old institution now confronts many problems as a result of that type of leadership. Of course, Saunders doesn't shape the university's image all by herself; she has help, and plenty of it. The diagram below shows how a portion of Saunders' public relations apparatus is designed, beginning with Jana Bryant, USM's *Director of Marketing and Public Relations*, and ending with some of the public relations writers, though they refer to themselves as "reporters," that USMNEWS.net readers have become so familiar with throughout the years.



Interestingly, a high-ranking member of Saunders' public relations corps, Beth Taylor, [has come under scrutiny](#) in recent days. Sources report that Taylor, USM's *News & Media Relations Manager*, endorsed the new Facebook page, "Ban Patty Magee," whereon *The Hattiesburg American* reporter Patrick Magee [is being ridiculed](#) by various members of the so-called USM family. This particular Facebook page is also calling upon Saunders to revoke *The Hattiesburg American's* press credentials. Sources note that Taylor's endorsement of such a site calls into question her beliefs about The First Amendment.

The USM spin machine is actually much more expansive than what is shown above. And, the USM staffers who comprise that apparatus are probably some of the most secure employees on the USM campus. With Saunders, sources say, it's all about "the message." And with the university dealing with \$25 million to \$35 million in budget cuts in recent years, sources tell USMNEWS.net that the need for many "messengers" by an image-shaper such as Saunders is as great now as it has ever been.