

Special Report

Rehner's Gavel

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the Tim Rehner administration of the USM faculty senate (2011-12) [ended with a thud](#) recently, when [the faculty senate voted](#) 23 to 0 (with 4 not voting) in favor of a resolution supporting the hiring of Jeff Hammond as permanent [athletics director](#). Hammond is the interim athletics director at USM, and he is currently being accused of harassment by two high-ranking (one former) AD officials ([Sonya Varnell](#) and [Diane Stark](#)). Thus, as sources point out, the faculty senate's resolution is surprising on two counts: first, coming to the support of a USM administrator (Hammond) before the facts of an [alleged harassment of two females](#) are known is uncustomary for a faculty senate, and second, devoting such a relatively large measure of attention to an AD hire is unusual ground for the faculty governance body. At least one of these points was also [recently made](#) by a USMNEWS.net reader.

As *The Hattiesburg American's* higher education reporter Ed Kemp points out (see link above), the resolution supporting Hammond was not the only show of support for outgoing USM president Martha Saunders at the 1-June-2012 faculty senate meeting. According to Kemp, "S[aunder]s received two standing ovations from faculty members, one when she entered the Trent Lott National Center conference room where the meeting was held, and the other upon [a Saunders commendation] resolution's completion." The pro-Saunders resolution, read aloud by Rehner, commended the outgoing president for restoring trust in the office of the president and for supporting shared governance and academic freedom. Sources remind readers, however, that Saunders delivered almost 50 pink slips to tenured and tenure-track faculty in 2009 and 2010, all in an effort to deal with budget cuts in Mississippi. They also point out that multiple USM faculty were suspended without due process in recent years for allegedly being a danger to the campus community. Reports on these and many other egregious episodes occurring during Saunders' 2007-2012 reign are housed in USMNEWS.net's Archives.