

## Special Report

# USM Community Responds to Tuition Hike

“Where’s it going to end? Where’s it going to stop?”  
USM junior history major Kala Moore on the 2012-13 tuition hike

Ed Kemp’s 7-May-2012 [report for](#) *The Hattiesburg American* concerning the 8.7% tuition increase facing in-state USM students beginning 2012-13 cut to the core of the issue. In quoting junior history major Kala Moore (see above), Kemp’s reporting has members of the USM community fixated on what appears to be a never-ending stream of tuition increases coming out of the Mississippi IHL. The current hike, to which Moore refers, will take USM’s annual in-state bill from \$5,834 up to \$6,336, further straining the pocket books and wallets of Mississippi families. USM’s hike of 8.7% also falls, according to Kemp’s report, at the upper end of the 7.6% to 9% range approved by the IHL at its special meeting on 7-May-2012. Lesser known among the USM community, at least until Kemp’s report, is that USM’s in-state bill *will rise again* before 2013-14 – that time by 6.4%. According to USMNEWS.net’s calculations, that increase will take in-state tuition on the Hattiesburg and Long Beach campuses to \$6,742 annually, representing an additional \$406 for Mississippi families to cover.



Our [recent analysis](#) revealed that if 80% of USM’s 16,000 students pay an additional \$500 each year in in-state tuition, USM’s in-state tuition revenues will climb by **\$6.4 million**. Now, another \$406 payment will add another **\$5.2 million**, for a grand total of **\$11.6 million** across the two separate in-state tuition hikes.

In responding to Moore’s two questions above, USM vice president for student affairs, [Joe Paul](#), offers up (for Kemp) what sources characterize as the same stale response to tuition hikes that the USM and greater Mississippi communities have come to expect from USM administrators. As [Paul](#) asserts, “[t]his tuition increase was necessary to maintain the current level of quality that we deliver our students. It pains us greatly to increase the cost of higher education to our students and their families, but given the state appropriation to higher education and fixed cost increases we simply had no viable alternatives. We will not compromise on quality.” College of Health dean, Michael Forster, essentially echoes Paul’s sentiment, [telling](#) Kemp, “[i]n raising tuition, the university is reacting to increasing costs and a decreasing state allocation. It’s that simple.” Sources counter by reminding readers, along with Paul and Forster, that signing of a **\$2 million airplane lease** at the beginning of the Great Recession of 2008, squandering **\$0.4 million** on the recent Tabletgate scandal, and spending **\$0.3 million** renovating the master bedroom suite of the president’s mansion are just three of the many ways in which the Martha Saunders administration of USM is ripping through the USM budget at neck-breaking speed. These three examples [were covered](#) in a recent

editorial by **Victoria Tyler** here at USMNEWS.net. Both [Paul and Forster](#) are, to sources at least, completely out of touch with [the spending situation](#) at USM since 2007.



Meanwhile, Moore tells Kemp that she is left having to work two jobs in order to make ends meet, all while trying to maintain a 4.0 GPA so that her Phi Beta Kappa academic scholarship, which pays for one-half of her tuition, is not threatened.