

Special Report

'Good Afternoon, Professor President'

USM President Creates PR Buzz out of Teaching PR Course

The USM public relations department has created, through its [recent video report](#), a public relations coup out of USM president Martha Saunders' decision to teach a fall 2010 graduate level public relations course.



USM president Martha Saunders walks to her graduate-level public relations class.

Reports indicate that Saunders' fall 2010 PR course – Seminar in Public Relations (MC 623) – meets on Monday afternoons from 3:30pm-6:15pm. The course currently has 21 students enrolled.



USM president Martha Saunders takes attendance.

Sources state that Saunders' decision to teach a fall 2010 course, and to make a public relations tool out of teaching it, stems largely from plummeting faculty morale resulting from consecutive years of budget cuts totaling about \$25 million. That total threatens to rise to \$35 million by September of 2011.



USM president Martha Saunders' "teaching assistant" appears to be distributing the MC 623 course syllabus.

Sources also report that former USM president Aubrey Lucas routinely taught during the academic year. This appears to be the first time Saunders has taught since coming to USM in May of 2007.



USM president Martha Saunders takes mid-class break to do an interview with USM public relations team.

Former CoB deans established a no-teaching practice dating at least as far back as the late 1990s. Harold Doty, b-school dean from 2003-07, is reported to have taught only once – a graduate level economic development course. Before Doty, William Gunther's only teaching as USM b-school dean (1998-2003) was done for the University of Alabama's graduate business program.



USM president Martha Saunders' "teaching assistant" appears to be teaching Saunders' MC 623 course while Saunders gives interview to USM public relations team.

It is not known at press time whether USM provost Robert Lyman is teaching a fall 2010 course for USM, or whether he has taught any courses since coming to USM a relatively short time ago.



USM president Martha Saunders' "teaching assistant" appears to be well-equipped to do whatever Saunders needs done in order to get the MC 623 course taught.

It is also not known at press time whether Saunders is being paid for teaching on an "overload" basis -- as former CoB administrators, such as former EFIB chairman George Carter, made famous about five years ago - or absorbing the teaching duties into her base salary.



USM president Martha Saunders gives one of her students a hall pass so that he can do an interview with the USM public relations team.

How will USM faculty and staff react to Saunders' decision to teach a fall 2010 course? That remains to be seen. It is likely, however, that the reaction will not be positive given Saunders' use of her teaching for public relations purposes. Perhaps *The Student Printz* will, in the near future, provide some reporting on this matter.