

# TSP Documents Saunders' Paranoia

## USM President's Remarks Continue to Baffle Public

Tyler Hill's 13-Sept-2011 [story](#) for *The Student Printz* entitled "Saunders highlights USM accomplishments," documents what one USMNEWS.net [editorialist termed](#) "paranoia" on USM president Martha Saunders' part. As Hill reports, Saunders told the crowd gathered on 8-Sept-2011 for USM's Fall 2011 Convocation that "[d]espite our frequent references and shouts of 'Southern Miss to the Top,' some of you do not believe we can get there. If anyone thinks this university cannot get to the top, you are wrong. And you are out excuses."

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ON CAMPUS

## Saunders highlights USM accomplishments

Tyler Hill

Printz Writer

President Martha Saunders delivered the State of the University Address in Bennett Auditorium on Thursday. The fall convocation was open to all faculty, staff and students. This time last year, the University of Southern Mis-

issippi was preparing for a third series of budget cuts. Programs were on the brink of closure, and staff layoffs seemed imminent. But regardless of economic woes, Southern Miss prospered in the most overwhelming times. That was the overall theme of President Saunders's speech.

Instead of focusing on the negatives, she shifted the direction to embrace the positive outcomes.

All public universities in Mississippi were facing major budget cuts from state funding. Southern Miss found \$7.5 million in permanent cost savings. But after the reduction in funding was less than expected, Southern Miss was able to convert those savings into reserves, repairs, renovations and raises.

"We have a lot to celebrate today," Saunders said. "In spite of one of the worst economic climates any of us

can remember, Southern Miss has continued to grow in size, accomplishment and prestige."

This academic year, Southern Miss has not only reached record enrollments, but it's also welcoming its largest, most academically talented freshman class in the history of the university. Saunders continued her address by recognizing the achievement of certain students, including Marie Holowach, a Truman Scholar; Tori Bowie, USM's first NCAA champion, and Garrett Wright, a Pearson Prize recipient.

The visibility of Southern Miss has also increased nationally and worldwide. Southern Miss was named as one of the Top 20 Most Popular Universities by U.S. News and World Report, and it won a Silver Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America for its centennial campaign. According to Saunders, total media hits are up 22 percent, and national media hits are up 48 percent.

Saunders said as a newcomer she found a "spirited, dedicated, persistent group of employees, students, and alums," but also a few occurrences of doubt.

"Despite our frequent references and shouts of, 'Southern Miss to the Top,' some of you do not believe we can get there. If anyone thinks this university cannot get to the top, you are wrong. And you

are out of excuses."

Ryan Kelly, Director of External Relations of the College of Health, had positive words about Saunders address.

"She always does a great job, especially targeting the success that we've had this past year and the traditional success of Southern Miss is a fantastic thing. She did a fantastic job with it."

Kelly also spoke of his vision for the future of Southern Miss. "We want to be the best, not only in the Gulf South, but the Southeast, or even the entire nation. And I think we can get there."

Joseph Kilobit, Interim Chair of the Department of Mathematics, said the most memorable thing Saunders spoke about was quality.

"Quality is really what matters. I'm glad she opened up with that because quality is really the preeminent issue that faces our society."

In her closing statement, Saunders spoke of her time here at Southern Miss.

"This university embraced me, shaped me and encouraged me to have faith in myself and be brave," she said. "As I enter my second term of service, I pledge to you to invest all that I have to give for as long as I'm here: my time, my strength, my money, my influence, and my heart."

To see Saunders' speech, go to [www.studentprintz.com](http://www.studentprintz.com).



President Martha Saunders delivers the State of the University Address in Bennett Auditorium Thursday. J. Scott Sakas/Printz

Who was primarily in attendance at the 8-Sept-2011 gathering? Mainly faculty and staff, and some students. Why would Saunders address such remarks to this group? This question is difficult to answer, particularly because this group has contributed so much to USM's survival the past two or three fiscal years. As sources remind us, academic programs have been cut, staff and faculty have been let go, and students are now paying higher tuition. Saunders, on the other hand, still has her airplane, and the number of central administrators at USM seems to be growing by the month.