

# The Cautionary Tales

*A Guest Editorial by Susan Green-Lewis*

Pennsylvania State University (PSU) is a Tier 1 (*U.S. News & World Report*) national institution. PSU was founded in 1855, and it is now home to more than 45,000 students. Simply put, PSU is one of America's finest public universities. Today, however, PSU is mired in what is arguably the greatest scandal it has ever faced. One would have to have been on another planet the past 10 days or so to have not heard about what is going on in University Park, PA. The world is now learning that former PSU assistant football coach, Jerry Sandusky, allegedly sexually molested numerous young boys, dating back at least as far as the late 1990s. On a number of occasions, PSU officials were supposedly informed of these deplorable episodes, yet no sufficient action was ever taken against Sandusky, at least not until about a week ago when he was arrested by Pennsylvania law enforcement officials.



As the national media descends upon University Park, we are learning more and more about the sick details of Sandusky's alleged activities. According to testimony in the case, revered PSU head coach, Joe Paterno, was informed of such behavior at least as early as 2002, yet Paterno chose to simply inform the PSU athletic director, Tim Curley. Apparently, nothing was ever done, and Sandusky was seen on the PSU campus, where some of his despicable activities allegedly took place, as recently as one week before his arrest. Reacting to what appears to have been an administration-led cover-up, the PSU board of trustees fired PSU president Graham Spanier and Paterno last week. These firings came after the suspensions of Curley and PSU vice president Gary Schultz, the two PSU officials who were charged with perjury involving some of their testimony in the case against Sandusky. The latest news coming out of University Park is that PSU assistant coach, Mike McQueary, gave Paterno full details about the 2002 incident involving Sandusky and a young boy that allegedly occurred in the PSU Athletics showers. For many days, people in Paterno's camp have claimed that the revered coach knew only vague details of these events. So, what appears to have occurred in PA since the late 1990s is a cover-up of Watergate proportions, and the reputation of a 156-year old university hangs in the balance.

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) is a bottom-tier national institution. It was founded in 1910. USM is simply *not* one of America's finest public universities. USM just recently suffered through what many believe to have been its worst presidency since 1910. Of course, that was the Shelby Thames presidency (2002-07). Thames' successor, Martha Saunders, has also seen her share of self-inflicted controversies and scandals, including a \$2 million lease of a Beechcraft airplane in the midst of America's worst economic situation since the Great Depression. Her record also includes a USM funds-financed

\$330,000 renovation to the *master bedroom suite* of the USM president's mansion. Since taking over USM, Saunders has eliminated economics, along with a number of other important academic offerings. Administrative bloat is now running rampant on campus, and USM professors are being "suspended" at alarming rates for "fear of danger" coming from their students and/or colleagues.

Still, even less can be said about two *regional* universities in east Texas – the University of Houston at Victoria and the University of Texas at Tyler. Saunders' counterpart at UT-T, Rod Mabry, is up to his eyes in controversy and scandal as well. His business school dean, Harold Doty, the former "nightmare dean" of the CoB at USM (2003-07), fired a number of faculty back in 2009, and after a course of bullying, is now facing two legal defendants who were forced out at UT-T. Reports are that other lawsuits are coming. In a highly controversial move, Mabry dismissed the faculty advisor of *The Patriot Talon* after reports and editorials critical of his administration were published from 2009 through 2011. That publication has been effectively neutered since then, at least when it comes to serving as a watchdog against administrative malfeasance. The same thing was done by Saunders last year, when an outsider was brought into USM to essentially silence *The Student Printz*. Over at UH-V, former USM provost, Tim Hudson, was reportedly forced out as president in August-2010 after evidence of inappropriate travel (to China) was reviewed by the UH-System office. These reports also implicate current UH-V business dean, Farhang Niroomand, in that situation, while there are plenty of reports here at USMNEWS.net to indicate that Niroomand is a bit loose with travel funds wherever he goes.

The lesson here is more for rank-and-file faculty than anyone else. The PSU story indicates that there really is *nothing* that university officials will not do to protect their way of life and their legacies. While what is going on at USM, UT-T, and UH-V might not rise to the level of the bad behavior at PSU, university faculty should always remember that, despite calling themselves "colleagues," university administrators will go to great lengths to further their own agendas. UT-T and UH-V are shining examples of two regional schools that are off the rails and heading toward disaster. USM has flirted with that situation time and again during Saunders' administration. If all eyes aren't watching after what has been uncovered regarding PSU, then they never will be.