

The ECO Terminal

A Newsletter Relating to the Elimination of Economics Programs

And the Beat Goes On

Once again *The Hattiesburg American's* higher education reporter Ed Kemp was on the scene, this time to cover the 24-Aug-09 verbal appeals of the Saunders administration's \$8 million budget cuts, and to observe the USM students' silent protest of the termination of the CoB's 9 tenured/tenure-track economists. According to Kemp's [25-Aug-09 article](#) entitled "USM students protest possible cuts," USM students have set up a 230-member Facebook group called "Petition to Delay the Removal of USM's Economics Department." An actual petition delivered to USM president Martha Saunders on 20-Aug-09, however, contained only about 70 signatures. Finally, and what may be the most telling aspect of the protest, according to Kemp only nine USM students showed up on 24-Aug-09 for what was called a "peaceful gathering" to support ECO that was held in front of the Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building.



University of Southern Mississippi students Meghan Snyder, left, Caitlyn Bach, center, and Coralie Rose talk to reporters about their protest against a proposed layoff of nine members of the College of Business Economics faculty. (george clark | Hattiesburg American)

According to Kemp, the student protesters expressed dissatisfaction with the decision to eliminate the CoB's economics majors. John Dietrich, a senior MIS major, said he wanted to get some answers about the cuts, presumably from the Saunders administration. Dietrich then went further in stating that the administration acts *unethically* if it chooses to eliminate ECO without first having open dialogue. Ironically, sources tell USMNEWS.net that if Dietrich's protest works to save ECO, then Dietrich's home unit, MIS, will likely be eliminated. That speculation comes from information CoB dean Lance Nail shared with the news media in recent days. Nail has said that the number of students in MIS is stagnant, and that the unit was near ECO territory as far as cuts go.

The protest's organizer, junior IB major Patrick Laughlin, came across a little softer when he told Kemp that pushing administrators to hold an open forum doesn't equate to "rescuing" the economics department. Laughlin conceded that there is a very real possibility that Saunders et al. are correct in coming to the conclusion that ECO should be eliminated. Finally, some protesters

expressed surprise at the low turnout, and have since decided to hold a picnic protest, tentatively scheduled for noon Thursday (27-Aug-09) on the AKLAB lawn.

Did Student Protesters Get the “Saunders Shuffle”?

According to *The Hattiesburg American’s* higher education reporter Ed Kemp’s [25-Aug-09 article](#) entitled “USM students protest possible cuts,” at one point during the silent protest (of the elimination of the economics major at USM) a few USM student protesters walked through the Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building, where the oral appeals (of the \$8 million in budget cuts) were being heard. That small parade “prompt[ed USM] President Martha Saunders to come outside and ask one of the protesters . . . [about] the reason for their presence,” according to Kemp. One student told the president that they were protesting for an open forum in which USM constituencies could voice their concerns about the decision to eliminate the economics major at USM. According to Kemp, upon hearing this explanation Saunders turned around and headed back inside the AKLAB. She later told *THA* that there are no plans to hold such a forum, or an event of the kind, in order to discuss the cuts.



Christopher Bostick
University President Martha Saunders addresses a group of student protestors led by economics major Zach Mansell in front of the administration building Monday.

Interestingly, *The Student Printz’s* Christopher Bostick snapped a photo of Saunders outside the AKLAB, as shown above. Bostick’s photo accompanies *TSP* reporter Jesse Bass’ [24-Aug-09 story](#) about the protests entitled “Groups torn on budget cuts.”

All About Dakhliya?

It seems to people who have been contacted by USMNEWS.net at least that CoB associate professor of economics Sami Dakhliya is using the current budget crisis and termination of ECO to make a public case about how good he is in the classroom and how attractive he might be on the job market. From discussions about him that quickly devolved over at *Economics Job Market Rumors*, to the latest reports from Ed Kemp of *The Hattiesburg American* and Jess Bass of *The Student Printz*, the whole episode seems to some to be turning into the Sami Dakhliya Show.

According to Kemp, at least one student who attended the 24-Aug-09 protest outside of the AKLAB mentioned Dakhliya by name. Meghan Snyder, a senior international business major, told Kemp that if USM gets rid of the economics professors, it loses a large part of its b-school. Snyder also predicted that cutting ECO would lead to an explosion in class sizes as a result of having fewer professors. Snyder then told Kemp that one of her professors, Sami Dakhliya, would spend two to three hours after his international economics (ECO 336) and intermediate microeconomics (ECO 340) classes to answer students' questions. Relatedly, USM Faculty Senate president Jeffrey Evans told *The Student Printz* that some of the faculty slated for termination are his friends, and that one of them is his daughter's favorite professor. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the odds that this unnamed faculty is not Dakhliya must be miniscule, and that Evans was probably supposed to say his (Dakhliya's) name. Of course, what all of these stories are missing is the fact that Dakhliya was, to use CoB economics professor George Carter's term, "canned" by the University of Alabama just a few short years ago. That decision was reportedly made on the basis of Dakhliya's relatively poor performance in academic research. Reports here at USMNEWS.net [show](#) that Dakhliya continues to lag in this important academic area.