

The Farm

News Briefs from Southern Miss

14-Jan-2011

Program Appeals Done; Saunders Contradicts Herself

As higher education reporter Ed Kemp [indicates](#) in his 13-Jan-2010 story for *The Hattiesburg American* entitled “Appeals process under way at USM,” the nine-member USM appeals committee has essentially completed its hearings on program cuts enacted by USM president Martha Saunders (during Fall-2010) in an effort to address an expected \$15 million cut for FY2012. The committee’s report on the program cuts is headed to Saunders, while the committee is now gearing up for appeals of individual faculty terminations. Long-time readers of USMNEWS.net will recall that Saunders has delivered nearly 50 terminal letters to tenured and tenure-track faculty in response to FY2011 and FY2012 cuts, with 39 of those coming in the latest round.

While the appeals process, which is being described as “sad,” is hitting the halfway mark, news from Jackson suggests that USM’s FY2012 cut may be limited to 3%. In her interview with Kemp, Saunders points out that some of the cuts made in the fall may no longer be necessary if that less gloomy scenario actually materializes. In that case, Saunders notes that the \$3 million in savings from the [retirement incentive program](#) will be able to handle much of the burden, as will the \$3.25 million in savings from faculty/staff furloughs. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Saunders’ more optimistic approach puts furloughs at the forefront, thus contradicting her past statements to the effect that [short-run solutions](#), such as furloughs, are not the answer to structural problems with the budget. They also remind USMNEWS.net readers that the USM president has stated that furloughing is the last thing that would be considered in addressing budget shortfalls. Thus, Saunders’ waffling may be an indication of [the strain she is facing](#) after almost four years of managing the institution through some [tough times](#).

Chats with Saunders Causing Minor Discomfort, an Editorial by Victoria Tyler

It is not too difficult to tell that USM president Martha Saunders’ new video blog/chat series is leading to some minor discomfort for members of the “USM family.” That new series began with [Saunders chatting with USM’s starting quarterback](#) Austin Davis about life around the Golden Eagles football team, a subject that many USM faculty believe is Saunders’ favorite. A more recent installment is [Saunders’ interview with USM history professor](#) Bo Morgan, the author of *Treasured Past, Golden Future: The Centennial History of The University of Southern Mississippi*. The first few seconds of this particular video blog introduces visitors to a new word created by Saunders – “Sin • tee • knee • al” – which means “of or relating to an age or period of 100 years.” Of course, this particular video chat is partially about football as well. The [Saunders video blog with](#) Mary Libby Payne is all about “Pappy,” Payne’s grandfather Joseph Anderson Cook, the university’s first president. Finally, [the most recent video chat](#) is a tables-turner, as USM public relations executive Jana Bryant interviews Saunders about the past, present, and future of USM. This one is interesting in that Saunders sounds as if she’s angling to become the next dean of USM’s CoB. She talks about “launch[ing] careers,” and “clos[ing] the loop,” phrases that will likely remind many readers of former CoB dean Harold Doty (2003-07), who developed the CoB mission “Developing Careers,” and former CoB MIS professor [Donna Davis](#),

whose job was (2006-07) to “close the loop” during the CoB’s 2007 AACSB reaccreditation efforts, which ultimately [failed](#). Doty shouldn’t get off the hook on [that one](#) (i.e., the failed 2007 AACSB effort) either, given that the AACSB visit team noted that the two-word [catch-phrase](#) above was vacuous, and should be [jettisoned](#). The angst over “Saunders’ new hammer” (i.e. the video blog series) is quite evident in the *USM Forum*, where [USM faculty are discussing](#) the series. It’s also evident in the kinds of discussions that USMNEWS.net’s *GH Chatter* series often covers. With the first four video chats now out on the web, it’s easy to see why support for Saunders is drying up fast.

Spreading the Good Word about Southern Miss

The public tirade from USM head basketball coach Larry Eustachy continues to warm the hearts of many in the USM family, as pictures and videos of his behavior at the 8-Jan-2011 basketball game in West Virginia against Marshall University continue to spread (see example below, at left). The outburst continued after three technical fouls were called in a matter of seconds, culminating with Eustachy being ejected from the game and escorted away from the action by MUPD. The least-discussed element of the game, given Eustachy’s behavior, is the fact that USM suffered a *30-point defeat* at the hands of the Thundering Herd.



Coverage of the episode has, however, led to [public apologies](#) from Eustachy and USM athletics director Richard Giannini. While Eustachy’s concluded with, “[i]n the future, I will set a better example for our student-athletes and fans,” Giannini’s was much weaker, referring to Eustachy as “an excellent coach,” and [crediting him](#) with “bringing the [USM men’s basketball] program back.” Sources state that the last part of Giannini’s excerpted apology above has Eagles fans irate, given Eustachy’s [overall record at USM](#) of only 108-97 (after almost seven years). Finally, readers remind USMNEWS.net that Eustachy has behaved badly, and apologized for his actions, [in the past](#), when he was the head coach at Iowa State University (see picture above, at right).