

# The Farm

## News Briefs from Southern Miss

19-November-2012

### **Anonymous Insider Predicts Tough Times Ahead for UWF, Saunders**

According to predictions from a USMNEWS.net reader, tough times may lie ahead for the University of West Florida and [its new provost](#), Martha Saunders, the former USM president. This particular reader's past opportunities to closely observe Saunders as a university president makes the reader more of an insider when it comes to Saunders' leadership capabilities. According to this anonymous insider, ". . . Saunders . . . enters into the [U]niversity [of West Florida] with considerable baggage. A provost is the chief academic officer[, and someone] who should be conversant [in the institution's] policies and procedures . . . [However,] she is not a thinker . . . [, she is] a delegator, [which is something that is] not good for her new position [as provost]." Asked by USMNEWS.net to elaborate, the insider added that Saunders "does not have a clue [about] being . . . [p]rovost which[,] at a[n] . . . institution like UWF[,] she will[, for example,] have to write her own tenure and reappointment recommendations . . . [T]his will mean being up to speed on institutional policies . . . [P]rovost . . . is a demanding position [that is] really not suitable for [someone] who always appeared lost in the maze . . . She will soon learn that there is a huge difference between a president and provost. The former can delegate work to the provost or anyone else on the campus but the provost cannot delegate work to the deans. She has to do the heavy lifting. She probably will have associate[s] and assistants but they will soon learn how incompetent she is . . ."

### **Stark Files Suit, Names Hammond and Saunders**

According to Jesse Bass' 17-Nov-2012 [report for The Hattiesburg American](#), former USM athletics administrator Diane Stark's complaint against USM athletics director Jeff Hammond and former USM president Martha Saunders is now moving over into the judicial arena. Stark has, up until 6-Nov-2012, [attempted to seek redress](#) through the auspices of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), however that avenue failed [to produce](#) a conclusion deemed satisfactory.



*Diane Stark*

On 6-Nov-2012, Stark, through her attorney Kim Chaze, filed suit in the Forrest County Circuit Court. This action was said by Chaze to be forthcoming should the EEOC process [not render](#) what he regarded to be an appropriate judgment. According to Bass' report, Stark's current court filing states,

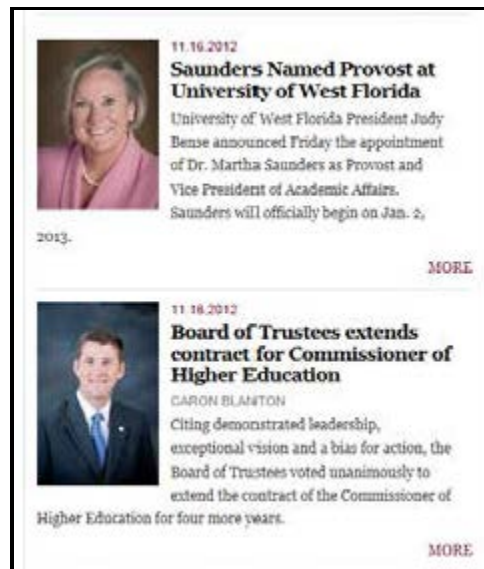
"Mr. Jeff Hammond has used his position to threaten, intrude upon, frighten, attempt to extract funds from, act outrageously, intimidate, insult, disrespect, yell at, confront and threaten violence towards plaintiff . . . Mr. Hammond .

. . . wrongfully insisted that plaintiff make monetary contributions plaintiff did not wish to make. Upon becoming an administrator at USM, Mr. Hammond let it be known, in very clear terms, he was capable of using violence and willing to use violence to accomplish whatever he wanted . . . At one point, Mr. Hammond angrily and inappropriately leaned over the desk of plaintiff, inches from her face, and began yelling and screaming at plaintiff while verbally attacking her and attacking her character. He was in a complete rage . . . USM allowed him to continue it with impunity. Indeed, USM actually promoted Mr. Hammond in spite of his past misconduct at USM.”

Finally, Bass reports that Stark’s suit “argues the environment became so intolerable that Stark had to leave her position and that the university refused to provide ‘the requisite and entitled funds and benefits’ it owed her,” and that Saunders told her (Stark) “. . . that she [Stark] deserved or needed the alleged mistreatment.”

## Timing is Everything

The 16-Nov-2012 news that former USM president Martha Saunders was [named the new provost](#) at the University of West Florida reverberated throughout the Hattiesburg and Long Beach communities. As sources indicate, it was the latest piece of the story representing [the political battle](#) that Saunders and her supporters (e.g., USM athletics director Jeff Hammond, former faculty senate president Tim Rehner, etc.) have [been fighting against](#) the Mississippi IHL, and in particular IHL commissioner Hank Bounds, IHL president Ed Blakeslee and IHL board member Douglas [Rouse](#), who are all joined by various members of the Hattiesburg business community and, perhaps, current interim USM president Aubrey Lucas.



What may have gone unnoticed in the USM community is that Bounds was reappointed, by unanimous vote of the IHL board, to another term (4 years) as the state’s higher education commissioner. In doing so, the IHL board gave a resounding stamp of approval of Bounds’ job of forcing Saunders out of the USM presidency back in April-2012. As long-time readers of USMNEWS.net are aware, Bounds was joined by Blakeslee and Saunders on 27-April-2012 for a presser where Saunders announced that she was “resigning” as USM’s president. However, reports [based on documents](#) obtained via open records laws emanating from WDAM-TV prove that Saunders was forced out of the job by Bounds, Blakeslee and other members of the IHL board.

## Johnson Crushes Seniors' Farewell to USM

The moderator of [www.fireellisjohnson.com](http://www.fireellisjohnson.com) explained it best. With just under three minutes remaining in Saturday's (17-Nov-2012) game against UTEP, and trailing 27 to 34, USM scored a touchdown to bring the score to 33 to 34. At this point, new head coach Ellis Johnson rolled the dice and went for the go ahead two point conversion. That attempt failed, sending USM's seniors out with a loss – their 11<sup>th</sup> on the season – on Senior Day at M.M. Roberts Stadium in Hattiesburg. That loss set off both [www.fireellisjohnson.com](http://www.fireellisjohnson.com) and the [@fakEllisJohnson](https://twitter.com/fakEllisJohnson) Twitter account, each of which updated the bad news on their own way late in the evening of 17-Nov-2012 and in the early hours of 18-Nov-2012. Examples of these reactions are shown below.



With this latest loss, to a three win UTEP team, the Eagles fall to 0-11 on the 2012 season, and with only a post-Thanksgiving trip to Memphis remaining. With Larry Fedora's 2011 team putting together a 12-2 record, including a Conference USA Championship and a victory over Nevada in the 2011 Sheraton Hawaii Bowl in Honolulu, the 2012 campaign represents one of the more epic collapses in NCAA football history.