

The Farm

News Briefs from Southern Miss

21-Oct-2010

Lucas *Emeritus* Gets Big Raise

At its Oct-2010 meeting, the Mississippi IHL [renewed the contract](#) of Aubrey Lucas as president *emeritus* of USM. In doing so, the IHL also raised Lucas' annual salary to \$100,000. It was only recently that USMNEWS.net reported that Lucas was earning between \$70,000 and \$80,000 per year to serve as its *emeritus* president. Thus, in giving Lucas this \$20,000 to \$30,000 raise, it increased Lucas' E&G-supported salary by *at least* 20%.

Weathersing the USM Storm

Recently retired Forrest County District Attorney Jon Mark Weathers [has been hired](#) to succeed Lee Gore as USM legal counsel. According to [USM](#), Weathers, a USM alumnus, will take on these duties beginning 15-Nov-2010, though Gore will remain on at USM until 31-Jan-2011. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the 1970 USM graduate will have his hands full managing the legal details at the Hattiesburg-based university. The pages here at USMNEWS.net are full of reports and editorials about USM's involvement in numerous legal proceedings over the past several years.

Looks Like She's Doing Stuff

According to her 18-Oct-2010 blog, USM president Martha Saunders points out that the executive cabinet [has approved](#) a USM faculty senate request to provide Career Services support to all USM faculty who were terminated by the Saunders administration in dealing with FY 2012 budget cuts totaling \$15 million. Additionally, the executive cabinet has extended tuition reductions for up to three years for children of these same terminated professors.

Grand Gesture

USM president Martha Saunders dispatched an "all faculty/staff" email on 15-Oct-2010 (see below) informing USM employees that she decided to "clos[e]" the USM campuses at 3 p.m. that same day so that they could begin their Fall Break 2010 early.

From: all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu [all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu] On Behalf Of USM Mailout [usmmailout@usm.edu]
Sent: Friday, October 15, 2010 8:40 AM
To: all-facstaff@usm.edu
Subject: [All-facstaff] Southern Miss Campuses Close at 3 p.m. Today

I am closing the campuses at 3 p.m. today to give employees a head start on their fall break weekend. I appreciate all you do for our university and students.

Martha D. Saunders, President

“Simple math” says that Saunders’ decision resulted in an extension of Fall Break 2010 by a whole two hours.

Another “Johnson Rod”?

At its Oct-2010 meeting, the Mississippi IHL [spent](#) \$2 million in taxpayer funds to “perform energy reduction retrofits on lighting, mechanical and control systems on various buildings throughout the Hattiesburg campus.” Direct beneficiaries of such largesse do not include USM faculty, only the design professionals at Watkins & O’Gwynn.

What does von Herrmann Know, Anyway?

Even though dean Denise von Herrmann [may not realize](#) that her own College of Arts & Letters is home to USM’s renowned Center for Writers, USM president Martha Saunders [has released news](#) that the USM CfW will be hosting acclaimed poet Michael Dumanis on 22-Oct-2010. In fact, Dumanis’ visit will be *the third* in the CfW’s 2010 Visiting Writers Series. Again, sources say events surrounding USM’s CfW call into question von Herrmann’s competence when it comes to leading USM’s CoAL.

The New “Back 40”

USM [will soon](#) be using \$110,000 in “unexpended plant funds” in order to purchase a 1,246 square ft. residential property at 507 N. 37th Avenue. According to the Mississippi IHL, the property will be used to house “university activities” until “the property is needed for future expansion of the Hattiesburg campus.” Sources say these funds could have been used to extend the life of USM’s religion program.

Centennial Homecoming Weekend Meltdown

Much has [already been written](#) about the disaster that was USM’s 43-44 Centennial Homecoming game loss to East Carolina. What hasn’t been pointed out heretofore was that the gridiron loss was only one piece of the athletics meltdown that occurred over the Centennial Homecoming weekend. More of that story is told below:

Date	Sport	Opponent	Outcome
Fri, 8-Oct-2010	Soccer	Rice	Lost 0 to 2
Sat, 9-Oct-2010	Volleyball	Houston	Lost 1 to 3
Sat, 9-Oct-2010	Football	East Carolina	Lost 43 to 44
Sun, 10-Oct-2010	Volleyball	Houston	Lost 1 to 3
Sun, 10-Oct-2010	Soccer	Houston	Tied 1 to 1

As the table above indicates, besides losing to ECU in football, the USM Lady Eagles volleyball team dropped two matches to Houston, while the Lady Eagles soccer team dropped one game to Rice, and tied Houston in the other. Thus, USM’s sports teams went 0-4-1 (wins-losses-ties) over the Centennial Homecoming weekend. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that sports weekends like this occur relatively often during the academic year at USM, particularly during the spring semester. If so, are weekends like these what the Martha Saunders administration protects when saying that the USM athletics department cannot afford drastic budget cuts?

Some Undersubscribed Programs Only Sleeping, if not Still Awake

Though USM president Martha Saunders [has decided](#) to “delete” the institution’s B.S. in social and rehabilitative services, she is requesting only that the IHL “suspend” USM’s M.S. in recreation and leisure management. Even better, Saunders has also decided to “continue with stipulation” USM’s (1) M.S. in sports and high performance materials, and (2) M.S. in forensics. The first of these two continuations will likely come as a surprise to many USM faculty, as this program was reportedly eliminated by the Saunders administration on 1-Sept-2010. Sources add that this news makes it appear as though there was some sort of backdoor appeals process that preceded the official appeals process that began on 18-Oct-2010.

“Love & Light”

USM will soon [settle](#) a number of pending lawsuits. These are (1) *Amacker v. USM, et al.*, (2) *Fitzgerald v. USM, et al.*, (3) *Fox v. USM, et al.*, (4) *Agrusa v. USM, et al.*, (5) *Krell v. USM, et al.*, and (6) *Pinion Properties, LLC v. Hadden, et al.* These lawsuits are so numerous that sources say many USM faculty likely know someone involved in at least one.

Bower Back on the Sidelines?

According to [a report](#) on espn.com, former USM football coach Jeff Bower is a leading candidate to replace Todd Dodge, who was recently fired, as head coach at the University of North Texas. As the report states, Bower was forced out as head coach at USM after the 2007 season. What was left *unstated* is that Bower was forced out by current USM president Martha Saunders.