

# The Farm

## News Briefs from Southern Miss

3-Nov-2010

### Budget Cuts Appeals Ongoing

As pointed out in Jonathan Andrews' 1-Nov-2010 [story](#) for *The Student Printz* entitled "Programs fight to stay alive," [the appeals process](#) for eliminated academic programs and terminated tenure and tenure-track faculty at USM is now underway. USM provost Robert Lyman explained to *TSP* that the [appeals](#) process has two parts, one for programs and another for faculty, and that the appeals must be submitted in written form and as an oral presentation. Recently-terminated associate professor of religion, Daniel Capper, has become [a focal point](#) for the campus regarding the \$15 million [budget cut](#) that the Martha Saunders administration just completed. Capper told Andrews that he is [optimistic](#) about religion's appeal, stating that the [financial value](#) of USM's religion program may have been "miscalculated" by the University Priorities Committee and Saunders' executive cabinet. Believing that their voices "carry a lot of weight," Capper is also happy that the religion department's [chair](#) and the CoAL's [dean](#) are planning to [support](#) religion's [appeal](#).

It is still, however, too little, too late for USM religion major Colby Lambert from Raleigh. Lambert relayed to Andrews that he has [lost faith](#) in USM's administration, stating, "I'm just really upset and kind of [disillusioned](#) with the administration here. I love a lot of things about this university but I'm hurt about how the students, professors and people here are [being treated](#) in this process." Lambert, who understands USM's religion department is preparing an appeal of its elimination, told Andrews that he will transfer to USM's cross-town [rival](#), William Carey University, in January (2011). As Lambert put it, "I'm [changing my entire life](#) after spending two and a half years here [at USM]." As reported previously, a number of USM students are planning to follow Lambert's lead.

### Editorial Board Backs Miles' Proposal

In its 2-Nov-2010 [opinion essay](#), *The Student Printz*'s editorial board (EB) backs [Daniel Miles' proposal](#) to cut the tuition-funded portion of the USM athletics department by one-half, taking \$3 million of tuition-funded revenues from athletics and injecting it into the academic affairs side of the university. As the EB points out, the current tuition tax provides 38% of the athletics department's total annual budget – an [astounding figure](#), at least according to sources. And, as the editorial adds, this is the same athletics department that [considers itself](#) "self-sustaining." USM president Martha Saunders informed the EB that the University Priorities Committee suggested that the USM executive cabinet re-evaluate the [tuition tax](#), though Saunders did not indicate to the EB whether she would follow the UPC's suggestion. However, according to the *TSP* editorial, USM chief financial officer/human resources director/vice president for academic affairs [Russ Willis](#) stated that the tuition tax is slated for re-evaluation by the USM administration. Meanwhile, 307 of the 391 USM students polled by *TSP* support Miles' plan, with another 18 stating that they *might be* in favor of the idea. Thus, 325 of 391 USM students polled are open to supporting Miles' budget recommendations.

## Campus Graffiti Episode Remains Hot Topic

The 29-Oct-2010 graffiti outbreak across the USM campus remains a hot topic. In his 2-Nov-2010 [news story](#) for *The Student Printz* entitled “Campus reacts to vandalism,” Earvin Hopkins points out that USM police continue to search for three males in connection with the “Impeach Saunders!” messages that were written, using chalk and water-soluble shoe polish, on nine campus buildings. USM officials, such as USM vice president for student affairs Joe Paul, also continue to refer to the removable messages as “vandalism.” According to Paul, “[w]e value responsible freedom of expression at USM but not vandalism.” Paul also told Hopkins that when USM students disagree with USM administrators, the students should “. . . not hide in the shadows and vandalize university property; these actions were immature and cowardly.”



Freddie Lance Newman (*The Student Printz*)

SGA president Kasey Mitchell echoed Paul when she informed Hopkins that [her reaction](#) to the news of the “vandalism” was one of “shock and sadness.” Mitchell added that she feels “ashamed and sad” for the perpetrators, and that “if” the actions of “the suspects” were motivated by the USM budget cuts, the suspects should know that USM president Martha Saunders “is not responsible for the budget cuts our university is being required to make.” One has to wonder, according to sources, whether Mitchell would win the SGA presidency on a pro-Saunders platform were she able to run again in the future.

## USM’s *A Show of Hands* Faces Budget Axe

USM’s American Sign Language show choir, *A Show of Hands*, is, according to Michelle Holowach’s 2-Nov-2010 [report](#) for *The Student Printz* entitled “Cuts may stop singers from singing,” in jeopardy due to the recent cut of \$15 million from USM’s operating budget. The choir has been with USM since 1988, and its current director is assistant professor of speech and hearing Gerald Buisson. When asked by Holowach if the cuts put the choir in jeopardy, Buisson informed *TSP* that they do, adding that *A Show of Hands* falls under the auspices of USM’s deaf education program, which was recently eliminated by the Martha Saunders administration. Like other eliminated programs, however, deaf education is preparing an appeal of its situation. Still, Buisson warns the USM family that if the appeal fails, USM will lose a major public relations and recruiting arm in the form of this show choir.

Two USM deaf education majors – Mary Bergens and Malone Thornton – were interviewed by Holowach, and they spoke of uncertain futures should USM stick with its [decision to eliminate](#) deaf education. Buisson, however, sounds optimistic about the appeals process, telling Holowach that (1) USM has the only deaf education program in all of Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas, (2) USM’s deaf education department is self-sustaining, (3) all of USM’s deaf education majors find jobs upon graduation, and (4) USM has one of only 33 deaf education programs in North

America that is accredited by the Council on the Education of the Deaf. As Buisson concluded, “[f]or USM to cut [deaf education] is really a [shame](#).”

## **USM Now Throwing \$300 Out for Capture of Alleged Vandals**

Hoping to deputize USM’s 16,000 students, the USM administration is [now putting up](#) a \$300 reward for information leading to the capture of the three males accused of “vandalism” and “malicious mischief” relating to the 29-Oct-2010 campus graffiti episode, wherein “Impeach Saunders” messages were placed on 10 campus locations. The alleged perpetrators apparently used chalk and water-soluble shoe polish to accomplish their mission. Despite USM police chief Bob Hopkins’ [public statements](#) indicating that [no permanent damage](#) occurred during this particular episode, unnamed USM officials are now claiming that the alleged vandals “caus[ed] several hundred dollars in damage and cleanup costs.”



Sources tell USMNEWS.net that any expense on USM’s part would likely fall in the “cleanup costs” portion of the above statement. The cleanup costs would likely be measurable, given the cleanup crew’s expected status as [a USM auxiliary](#). Sources also admit to being surprised that USM can afford to allocate \$300 to such a *Quixotic* enterprise as “tracking down” and “bringing in” these “[water-soluble graffiti]villains,” particularly given that the USM administration has found it necessary to deliver termination notices to almost 50 tenured and tenure-track faculty since August of 2009.