

# The Final Lecture

## *Scianna Scolds IHL Board in Front of USM Students*

During the *Campus Listening Sessions* – talks designed to assist the Mississippi IHL Board in selecting USM's next president – on the Hattiesburg campus of USM on 19-Sept-2012, USM alum and CoB benefactor, Chuck Scianna, stole the show. He also appears to have stolen the hearts and minds of USM students, faculty and staff. He did so, according to sources, by standing up to the members of the IHL (in attendance) regarding issues surrounding administrative turnover at USM since 2002. (Counting interims, USM will be, during the 2012-13 academic year, selecting its fourth president since 2002.)

Just what did Scianna say to USM students, and to the IHL Board, during the listening session set up for USM students on 19-Sept-2012? For an answer to that question, check out the excerpt of Scianna's remarks below:

“Just very quickly, I'd like to say to the students here that everyone on this [IHL] Board who is not an alumnus of the University of Southern Mississippi is hoping that the students at their university are as smart as ya'll are to make them as proud [as I am]. Also, since I represent investment and foundations here, I want you to know that we need your input. I'm available. If you don't know how to get in touch with me, you can talk to Bob [Pierce] or Jerry [DeFatta] – they have all of my contact information. So, feel free . . . I know it's difficult at times to get to these meetings [and] to stand up and talk, but everybody wants your input. So, feel free to let me know. . . . We have talked and talked [here] about the [IHL Board's] hiring process and the vetting process to pick a candidate [and] why we have the [presidential] turnover [we have had in recent years. ]It's not just about picking the right person, it's about retaining that person, and that's their [(the IHL's)] job. And, that's something that I haven't heard addressed yet, because we have to hold them [(the IHL Board)] accountable [for the turnover] as well. We can pick the right person, but if they [(the IHL Board members)] don't work to retain the right person, then we could keep picking over and over and over. *[Big Audience Applause at this Point]* So, make sure that when we're going through this process we think about that – that that comes up, and that your feedback gets to us so that we can hear everything. So, thanks.”

Clearly, Scianna, who now lives in Texas, has his hand on the pulse of higher education politics in Mississippi. That savvy, combined with his acumen in other areas, has put him at the forefront of the (potential) politics surrounding the replacement of Martha Saunders, USM's 9<sup>th</sup> president, who resigned her post on 30-June-2012.