

# The New **U**?

## The Rocky Marriage of Academics & Athletics at Southern Miss *A Guest Editorial*

In hustling to keep up with the sordid events surrounding the Southern Miss football program, particularly the kinds of episodes described by USMNEWS.net's [What You Talkin' 'bout, Willis?](#), as well as [the most recent scandal](#) involving [three](#) Southern Miss football players who [were shot](#) outside Hattiesburg's notorious Remington's Hunt Club (see montage below), one can't help but be reminded of filmmaker Billy Corben's [marvelous documentary](#) for ESPN's acclaimed 30-for-30 series entitled "The U."



In the documentary, Corben chronicles how University of Miami football players became the "bad boys" of college football throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. As Corben notes, the Hurricanes "bec[a]me Miami's team . . . My team . . . they were our hometown heroes: diverse, brash and dangerous. Just like the city of Miami itself. They spoiled us with national championships: 1983, 1987, 1989, 1991 . . . This is my team. The team that forever changed how football was played – and most certainly put the 'nasty' into dynasty." Though the types of episodes involving its football team that transformed Miami into "the U" have since subsided, it seems to some who are following Southern Miss these days that at least a little bit of the "nasty" was simply exported northward, to the town of Hattiesburg.

So much of the current shooting episode has already been reported by *The Hattiesburg American*, USMNEWS.net, *The Clarion Ledger*, *The Student Printz*, and other news sources, that there is really little to add at this point. Now, [we are told](#) that the Hattiesburg Police [have apprehended](#) three accessories in the recent shooting saga – Patricia Brown, Cleothus Wilkerson, and Van Myers – and that the shooter, though still at large, is alleged to be Travis Brown (see photos below).



In her [official](#) 15-Nov-2010 communiqué to the Southern Miss family regarding the early morning 14-Nov-2010 shooting, USM president Martha Saunders noted that *all three* players involved in the shooting incident outside of the Hunt Club are “interdisciplinary studies,” a fact I found intriguing. A little research on Southern Miss’ website revealed the table below:

**TABLE 1**  
Academic Majors of Southern Miss Football Players

Academic Major	# Football Players	% of Football Players
Coaching (Ed) & Sports Admin/Mgt	21	38.9
General/Interdisciplinary Studies	14	25.9
Business Administration	8	14.8
Construction Engineering Technology	2	3.7
Exercise Science	2	3.7
Accounting	1	1.9
Finance	1	1.9
International Business	1	1.9
Marketing	1	1.9
Political Science	1	1.9
Speech Communications	1	1.9
Sports Medicine	1	1.9

Interestingly, Southern Miss lists the programs of study for only 54 of its football players. Of those, 21, or 38.9 percent, have chosen “Coaching (Ed) & Sports Admin/Mgt” as their USM academic major. Another 14, or 25.9 percent, are majoring in “General/Interdisciplinary Studies.” As pointed out by president Saunders, Smith, Green, and Jones are among this group. In all, 35 of the 54 players for whom an academic major is listed by Southern Miss have selected either coaching administration or general (interdisciplinary) studies. If these numbers are representative, then about 65 percent of USM’s football team is currently tracked into one of these two academic programs. If general business administration is added, then about 80 percent of the listed Southern Miss football players are accounted for *across just three* academic tracks.

One would guess that many details were involved in Miami’s transformation into “the U.” I’m guessing that something like what you see in Table 1 above was one of those details. In that way, USM looks to have made a similar transformation. Combined with the reports linked above, a pretty clear picture of USM’s complete transformation can

now be painted. When done, USM appears to now be “the new U,” similar to what “the U” in Miami was back in the 1980s and early 1990s . . . without the titles, of course.