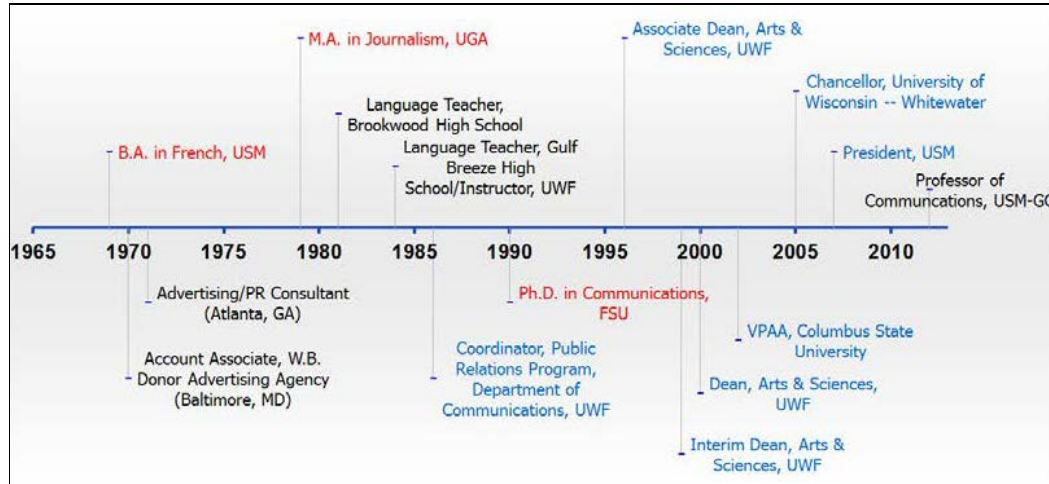


The Saunders Timeline

Reviewing the Prospective UWF Provost's Professional History

The recent ascendancy in the selection process for a new provost at the University of West Florida of former USM president Martha Saunders affords us the opportunity of reviewing Saunders' professional history. This report does just that, using the timeline inserted below. Along the timeline, Saunders' educational milestones are entered in red, while her professional activities related to higher education administration are entered in ocean blue font. All other entries are made in traditional black font.



As members of the USM community are aware, Saunders received a B.A. in French from USM in 1969. One year later, in 1970, she took a job in Baltimore as an account associate with the W.B. Donor Advertising Agency. Saunders would maintain that job for only two years (1970-1971). From there, Saunders moved to Atlanta and worked as an advertising/public relations consultant and feature writer. Although Saunders notes holding this career title from 1971-1981, she fails to reveal the name of the company or companies with which she was affiliated. It appears from the record that whatever work Saunders performed using these titles was done on a freelance basis.

The next stop along the Saunders timeline is 1979, when she earned an M.A. in journalism from the University of Georgia. Picking up in 1981, when Saunders' stint as an advertising/public relations consultant ended, she took a post as a language teacher at Brookwood High School in Snellville, Georgia. Saunders would maintain affiliation with the BHS faculty until 1984, when she took a position as a language teacher with Gulf Breeze High School in Gulf Breeze, Florida, which is just outside of Pensacola. At the same time that she joined GBHS (1984), Saunders also signed on as a part-time instructor at UWF, where she is now seeking the number two position – that of provost. She maintained affiliation with GBHS until 1986, when she joined UWF on a full-time basis, this time serving as the coordinator of the public relations program, which was located within the communications department at the Pensacola-based institution. Saunders would hold this coordinator position until 1996.

At this point it is instructive to look ahead to 1996, when Saunders becomes the associate dean of Arts & Sciences at UWF. That means that in 1989, before she has a PhD, Saunders is only seven years away from becoming the second-highest ranked administrator in UWF's Arts & Sciences college. What's even more is that in 1989, again before earning a PhD, Saunders is only 10 years away from becoming the dean, even if on an interim basis only, of UWF's Arts & Sciences college. This way of looking at the timeline speaks volumes about the proverbial road less travelled, and not in a good way according to sources, that Saunders' higher education career path resembles to date.

Finishing off this story, Saunders earned her PhD in communications from Florida State University in 1990. In 1996 she assumed the post of associate dean at UWF, later moving on to interim dean (1999) and permanent dean (2000), a post she would hold only two years (until 2002). In 2002, Saunders joined Columbus State University as the vice president of academic affairs, a position equivalent to university provost. She held that post until 2005, when she became the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. Two years later, in 2007, Saunders accepted the invitation to become USM's president. The rest is history.