

USM Students, Not Faculty, Take the Lead on Cuts

A Guest Editorial by *Susan Green-Lewis*

When it comes to holding the USM administration's "feet to the fire" over the recent termination of almost 30 USM faculty, USM students, not faculty, are taking the lead. Some would say that this is per usual for USM, though I'm sure some faculty would disagree. What we've seen, though, is while the USM faculty senate spent Friday afternoon (10-Sept-2010) wrestling over legislative language that would request that the University Priorities Committee put down on paper its feelings about the budget cutting process – a task sources say is much ado about nothing – USM students were organizing a town hall meeting that would (on 14-Sept-2010) call Saunders (to her face) to the carpet on her decision to lease an airplane at almost \$2 million. Those who follow these events now know that the sociology major who questioned administrators about the plane was met with what bordered on contempt or condescension, as Saunders interrupted USM vice president for student affairs Joe Paul and essentially stated that she has a plane because she is the USM president, and university president's should have them.



During the town hall Q&A, Saunders looked like a deer caught in headlights (see photo at left above), while the whole cadre of administrators looked a bit like a group one might ignominiously refer to as something like “the Saunders Seven,” on trial by 200 students for mishandling the university’s affairs since 2007 (see photo at right above). The town hall follows yeoman’s work by the staff of *The Student Printz*, which has been covering events since the FY 2011 budget cuts (totaling \$10 million). *TSP* recently unveiled two fine political cartoons describing student sentiment (see inserts below), along with a number of columns and news reports. These additional efforts from *TSP* include Jacob Key’s now-famous 30-Aug-2010 [column](#) entitled “Thoughts on the budget,” as well as Chris Greene’s 30-Aug-2010 [news report](#) entitled “Religion program suffers fatal blow,” wherein the USM community was provided this priceless quote from junior physics major, Floyd Maseda:

“Maybe if they knew how to turn off building lights at night and knew better than to blow millions of dollars on a pointless wall at the front of campus – maybe if they stopped turning the stadium lights and jumbotron on and leaving them on all night – maybe if they didn’t own a jet, maybe then I would have an inkling of respect for the administrative bullshit that we call the leadership of USM,” Maseda said. “Grad school here? I think not.”



What happened to the days during the infamous Shelby Thames administration, when USM faculty held “no confidence” votes, and when the USM faculty senate took tough stances? At least last year, when Saunders [took](#) a meat [cleaver](#) to the economics [department](#), the economists, with the support of only their students, [fought](#) back. Had the campus rallied around them, who knows what would’ve been possible. Once again students are stepping up to the plate. However, these days it’s *all students*, and no faculty. If we’ve learned anything from recent USM history, we know where their unaided efforts will get them.