

## USM Grants Procurement Declining Under Saunders

USM President, Martha Saunders, may have stepped to the podium on 24-September-08 and audaciously stated that USM faculty/staff had procured more external grant monies than faculty/staff at both Texas Tech University and the University of Alabama, but sources tell USMNEWS.net that her Fall 2008 Convocation speech did not recount all of the sordid details about USM's own grant procurement efforts.<sup>1</sup>



Martha Saunders at Fall 2008 USM Convocation (courtesy TSP).

These details relate to what has been happening in recent years regarding USM's own grants procurement efforts, they should be cause for concern for officials in the Research and Sponsored Programs division at USM, as well as higher-ups at the Mississippi IHL office in Jackson. The figures representing these details, which are somewhat startling, are presented below in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**USM Grants Procurement, 2001-08**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Grants Procured</b> | <b>Growth%</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 2008        | \$ 91.0 million        | - 7.7%         |
| 2007        | \$ 98.6 million        | - 3.3%         |
| 2006        | \$102.0 million        | +43.1%         |
| 2005        | \$ 71.3 million        | + 3.3%         |
| 2004        | \$ 69.0 million        | + 2.8%         |
| 2003        | \$ 67.1 million        | + 7.2%         |
| 2002        | \$ 62.6 million        | +25.0%         |
| 2001        | \$ 50.1 million        | +24.9%         |
| 2000        | \$ 40.1 million        | -----          |

**Notes:** The 2008 figure comes from Saunders' 24-Sept-08 Convocation speech. The 2006-07 figures come from Jana Bryant's [21-Aug-07](#) USM presser. The 2003 figure comes from [VP Cecil Burge](#). The 2001-02 figures come from Lynn Jeter's [2-Sept-02](#) *Mississippi Business Journal* article. The 2000 and 2004-05 figures come from Jana Bryant's [31-July-06](#) USM presser.

As the data in Table 1 above indicate, things on the research grants front at USM have not been going so well since Saunders assumed the USM presidency in 2007. Her first report as president showed that grants procurement at USM had **fallen** from \$102 million – the USM record set during the final year of the Shelby Thames administration – to \$98.6 million during Saunders' first year. That drop represented a **decline** in grants procurement at USM of about 3.3%. This decline was followed by another, much **worse decline** of

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<sup>1</sup> To those in attendance, Saunders claimed not only that USM's grants successes exceeded those of TTU for 2007-08, she also haughtily claimed that USM's \$91 million 2007-08 effort far surpassed the \$68.9 million grants enterprise at the University of Alabama, USM's much bigger neighbor to the east. Sources say that Saunders' claim that USM grants procurement surpassed that at UofAL is likely a bogus one. This report, however, accepts Saunders' claim as accurate, given that such a comparison is not central to the subject of this report.

about 7.7% during Saunders' second year at the helm. This **second drop**, one that was *conveniently omitted from Saunders' 2008 Fall Convocation speech* on 24-Sept-08, totaled almost \$8 million – a startling figure according to USMNEWS.net sources. All in all, grants procurement by USM has **fallen** from \$102 million to \$91 million under Saunders' leadership, a **drop (\$11 million) of 10.8%** from the peak set at the end of the Thames administration.

Thames, on the other hand, was clearly masterful when it came to research grants procurement. During his 5-year presidency, the annual growth rates in grants procurement were 25%, 7.2%, 2.8%, 3.3% and 43.1%, respectively. When Thames took over as USM president, the latest grants procurement total stood at \$40.1 million. When he left, the latest total stood at the record \$102. Thus, during Thames' reign USM grants procurement increased by 154.4%.