

Unintentionally, *The Hattiesburg American* Underlines Martha Saunders Was “Fired” not “Tired”

We say unintentionally, because *The Hattiesburg American* is not known for double entendre or in-depth reporting. Let's follow up with a few of the questions *The Hattiesburg American* overlooked in its July 1 article named "[Making a mark on USM](#)".

What does “Making a mark on USM” really mean? *THA*'s story seems to be an attempt to reconstruct Martha Saunders' reputation and rationalizes keeping [Saunders' salary](#) well above \$100,000 -- considerably more than communications professors at USM might expect for traditional academic work – seemingly in preparation for giving her a boost to move on to another (non-USM) job.

Do you think this is idle speculation? According to *THA*,

As for whether Saunders would consider returning to the role of a university president at some point, somewhere?

“I never say never,” said Saunders, 63. “If an opportunity came up that I really had a heart for, I would never say never.”

Rebuilding Saunders' reputation is essential to getting rid of her.

How is USM rationalizing her salary? As *THA* reported, Saunders will

...serve as co-director with Gulf Coast Vice President Frances Lucas of the new Evelyn Gandy Center for Women in Leadership, a program very much in its formative stage...

As readers of usmnews.net are aware, [a contributor](#) predicted something very similar:

They gave my friend close to \$200,000 to serve as a consultant, but he did not do anything. It was hush money. I suspect Saunders may have received around the same amount to teach one class, a made up title, and will serve as a consultant, but they want her to just stay away.

Underscoring the matter, albeit unintentionally, is a curious discussion in *THA* about the recent firing of University of Virginia's president Teresa Sullivan. After UVa's governing board fired Sullivan, UVa's faculty, students, and alumnae challenged the governing board's decision and convinced the board, or -- depending on whom you talk to – forced it to reinstate Ms. Sullivan. Obviously, Martha Saunders did not receive the same effective faculty, student, and alumnae support at USM. *THA* doesn't entertain this obvious question. Why not?

Southern Miss Faculty Senate President Mary Ann Adams and others at USM give lip service about Saunders' presidency.

Adams said she believes that there is a consensus among faculty that the next president ideally will be someone like Saunders...

Sources suggest it is only lip service, because why replace Saunders if you're looking for someone like Saunders? If you want someone like Saunders, and Saunders is willing to become a president again, follow UVa's lead and "encourage" the IHL to keep Saunders. Raising UVa as an example only underlines the notion that Saunders was fired and was not as popular or well respected as the public relations puffery would have us believe.

So, let's revisit the question that's not going away: Why did President Saunders "resign"?