

We've [USM] Won The Silver Anvil Award!

Part 3

Hold it: You may want to read the small print.

In [Part 1](#) we asked readers to take time to read *Hattiesburg American* report, "USM Captures Nation's Top Public Relations Award." We also posed a few questions we planned to consider in future reports in this series.

In [Part 2](#), we considered the title to the *Hattiesburg American* article, "We've Won..." The title of the article is inaccurate. The "Nation's Top Public Relations Award," the "2011 Best Silver Anvil Award," went to "Text4baby: Going Mobile With Pregnancy Education," not the University of Southern Mississippi or Martha Saunders. <http://media.prsa.org/>

In Part 3, we take a closer look at President Saunders expertise in communications and public relations, aka puffery, and its cost.

Consider the list of "winners" at the Public Relations Society of America's **2011 Silver Anvil Award winners**. Note that the "agency" for the University of Southern Mississippi is *idgroup consulting + creative*.

Let's recall USM/Martha Saunders' relationship with *idgroup consulting + creative*. When Dr. Saunders first arrived on campus, she brought Mona Amodeo's *idgroup* in from Florida as "[the facilitator for our Campus Dialogues](#)." In November 2007, Ms. Amodeo presented her findings. Did USM, Mississippi taxpayers and students need to pay a public relations firm to know that the "core strength" of any university is its faculty and students?

In previous usmnews.net editorial, [31st & Pearl, Campus Dialogues](#), we reported "[o]n *idgroup*'s webpage as it appeared on [November 26, 2009](#):

The president [Saunders] has since engaged *idgroup* in on-going consulting services focusing on both internal processes as well as the University's communications program. The scope of work of the consulting engagement is aimed at bringing the core strengths that were identified during the Core Dialogue process to life – internally and externally.

Madame President, in November 2009, were you *really* still paying *idgroup* with citizens' hard-earned money? In case you have forgotten, in August 2009, some tenured faculty and tenure track faculty were told they would no longer have jobs. Others were told their future was cloudy. And no, Madame President, USM doesn't need to pay a public relations firm to know that the "core strength" of any university is its faculty and students. Students who are facing major increases in tuition, faculty and staff who are

wondering if they will still have a job at the end the current economic crisis will tell you, paying idgroup to come up with “classic oxymoronic management speak, such as the oft referenced ‘collective individualism’” is not a legitimate use of resources.” Cost to Mississippi taxpayers and students? Tens of thousands of dollars. [[“Worth the Price”](#)]

Well, here we are in 2011 and USM is *still* paying for Martha Saunders’ *idgroup*’s public relations. How much did this service cost? More tens of thousands of taxpayer and student money.

And here’s the important question we’ll consider in Part 4: What good is it [idgroup’s costs and the “award”? Has it advanced the education of students? Has Saunders learned anything from other fiascos like the millions being spent on an airplane?