

“Mission Creep”?

During the current hard times, President Saunders finds money to spend on new projects she wants. Are the projects well considered or are they evidence of wasteful, ill-conceived “mission creep” discussed in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article by [Charles Miller](#)? First, consider one of the many new Saunders’ spending initiatives the IHL reported from its October 14-15, 2009 meeting:

“The ***University of Southern Mississippi*** has established the ***Center for American Indian Research and Studies***, which is a limited scope center within the College of Arts and Letters that facilitates educational, research, service, and cultural exchange partnerships between USM faculty and regional tribal governments to better serve the needs of Native Americans. **The center is funded with external grant funds and existing university budgets.** c. The ***University of Southern Mississippi*** has established the ***Center on Aging***, which is a limited scope center within the College of Health that facilitates collaborative research and service activities among the academic departments, the Institute for Disability Studies, and the Osher Lifelong Institute. **The center is funded with external grant funds, existing university budgets, and registration fees.**

Mr. Miller puts it this way: “[i]n the broadest sense, institutions without program accountability experience mission creep, in which resources and management are spread among too many programs. That leads to poorer program quality on average and few programs of the highest quality.”

Well, President Saunders, we would like to hear why these expenditures are essential to USM and while existing positions and programs are being terminated. We would like to hear why these expenditures are essential to USM while support for research is being reduced and/or eliminated. We would like to hear why these expenditures are essential to USM while you are announcing that the number of scholarships being awarded are substantially reduced and that endowed professorships are not being awarded.

We'll soon ask about a few of the other USM expenditures that were reported recently by the IHL, too. By the way, while you're at it, what are you doing with the \$1 million of the \$6 million gift that fell in your lap and was not restricted to scholarship use?

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