

Where was Martha Saunders (in the Galaxy Tab Scandal)?

Part 2

There's Always Time for PR

On August 22, 2011, Dr. David Davies, Dean of the Honors College, [wrote in his blog](#) “The Hattiesburg American’s Ed Kemp did a Terrific Article on the project [Samsung Galaxy tablet computers], which has been publicized widely across the country in [technology blogs](#) and elsewhere.” And, he is absolutely right. Take a minute and run a Google™ search. There are scores of pages repeating the story. Take a look at just the [first page](#) of the search. Here are just three examples (of hundreds and hundreds):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wI7V6v5et5U>

<http://www.gottabemobile.com/2011/08/01/southern-mississippi-students-getting-samsung-galaxy-tab-10-1/>

<http://www.geekword.net/galaxy-tab-10-1-university/>

According to the [Hattiesburg American](#):

It’s that contract between Blackboard and Southern Miss that may have violated state College Board policy requiring state bids for contracts over a certain dollar threshold, according to Chief Communications Officer Jim Coll.

Coll said the question of tax liability from the Office of Internal Audit regarding tablets given to employees triggered the review.

After five years on the job, surely Dr. Saunders understands the need to obtain IHL approval for substantial expenditure of state funds. In this case, while the Galaxy Tabs were arguably “free”, Dr. Saunders authorized [expenditure of \\$440,000](#) in state funds to Blackboard.

Dr. Saunders may want to tell us that she did not authorize the expenditure – that one of the three suspended administrators signed off on the activities. However, if that is Dr. Saunders’ position, what she is really telling us is that she is only the public relations face of the University, and not the person in charge. If she is telling us she is not in charge, what are we paying her to do? Hand out Samsung Galaxy tablet computers in a [public relation extravaganza](#)? Make [expensive videos](#)? Spend [\\$300,000+ in a boudoir](#) makeover? [Leased a plane](#) for [millions of dollars](#) so that she does not have to be [inconvenienced](#) by driving?

Given the growing number of mistakes and errors in judgment, the time has come for Dr. Saunders to step down or be removed as president. She's not competent to do the job.

If she is to remain at USM, perhaps she could be located in the public relations department. There, she can continue to spend her time making videos that imply how friendly she is, as long as she pays for them from donations designated for that purpose or from her personal assets.