

## UPDATE AUGUST 8, 2012

usmnews.net has received many comments concerning the recent series about \$700,000 plus paid to idgroup during former-President Saunders' tenure as president of the University of Southern Mississippi. Not too surprisingly, none of the comments concerning the expenditures have been particularly favorable. They range from shock to outright disgust. More than one person has commented on the importance of a free press delving into the use and misuse of public resources, rather than simply parroting the University's press releases.

In any event, now we know what happened to the "Campus Dialogues". idgroup and Southern Miss (under the less than watchful eye of former-President Saunders) ended up paying idgroup a lot of money. Between 2007 and 2012, Southern Miss paid idgroup more than \$700,000 in taxpayer and student dollars. Hopefully, Dr. Saunders' replacement will understand that that the "core strength" of any university is its faculty and students, not money wasted on out-of-state public relations companies.

### Update June 22, 2011:

**The University of Southern Mississippi, in collaboration with ID Group Consulting and Creative, recently produced a new commercial for the University. This fan page was created to give you a closer look at the making of the commercial spot and the Southern Miss students who participated, and to keep you updated as we continue to add to our Web site, [usm.edu/IBelong](http://usm.edu/IBelong).**

<http://www.facebook.com/ibelongatsouthernmiss>

While faculty and staff were losing jobs, and tuition was increasing, Florida based PR firm, Mona Amodeo and idgroup, were being paid – and no doubt handsomely -- by students and citizens of Mississippi for producing a commercial. How many jobs and programs could have been saved with what Dr. Saunders paid for her commercial and idgroup's "collaboration"?

Even if you think spending money on advertising during the middle of an economic crisis is a good idea, can't Dr. Saunders hire a Mississippi PR firm? Aren't Southern Miss graduates good enough to do the job? Even if a Mississippi firm didn't employ Southern Miss graduates, the money would have some benefit to University and the State of Mississippi. After all, a Mississippi PR firm would hire Mississippi citizens and pay Mississippi taxes.

# *31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl*

Whatever Happened to the “Campus Dialogues”?

Reading the republished editorial [Saunders-Amodeo Relationship Should be Examined](#), called for usmnews.net to revisit that relationship. After all, who had heard about “Campus Dialogues” or “Core Dialogues” since – well since January 2008? By way of reminder, 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. At the time, usmnews.net was unable to provide any real information about idgroup. As the earlier editorial observed “no official website, no prospectus, no list of executive officers – nothing to speak of.” However, things have changed. As of 2009, idgroup sports a spiffy new [webpage](#) that highlights The University of Southern Mississippi. According to [idgroup](#)

**“Branding Strategy & Solution:** The findings from the twelve Core Dialogue™ sessions, conducted over six weeks, were analyzed and synthesized into a report that identified the key strengths of Southern Miss, as well as stakeholder perspectives about the desired future. The leadership of Southern Miss is currently using the findings in the next phases of the organizational planning and development process.”

Most people would agree that desired future for students (and their parents) is being able to afford to stay in school – which should translate into careful and thoughtful use of scarce resources.

On idgroup’s webpage as it appeared on [November 26, 2009](#), idgroup added another twist:

“The president 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 live – 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 that their future was cloudy.

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. Of course, given your failure to listen when you repeatedly hear that your plane is an unnecessary luxury in bad times, it may be that you are simply tone deaf to what is really important to USM and its constituents.