

Part 39

Questions directed to President Martha Saunders at her deposition on April 12 and 13, 2010 – Q is question; A is President Saunders' answer.

Q. Dr. Saunders, yesterday we talked about the letter that Dr. DePree had written Dr. Cannon as part of the investigation, and you said you did not recall whether you reviewed it or not?

A. I don't recall reviewing it. That's correct.

Q. I'm going to have this marked as the next exhibit and ask you if you've ever seen this letter?

(Saunders looks at document which proves Ombudsman Cannon's investigation was seriously flawed.)

Q. Have you previously seen this letter, Dr. Saunders?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did [Ombudsman] Dr. Cannon provide you any documents other than his written report to support his finding?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Is there a file which would contain those materials if they exist?

A. Well, if they exist, there should be.

Q. Okay. And have you checked to see if they exist?

A. No.

Q. So you don't know if they exist, and you don't know if you reviewed them?

A. I don't recall reviewing them or not.

Q. Okay.

A. (Saunders looks at document.)

Q. Do you have any recollection of having reviewed that?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Do you believe the contents of that letter would have been helpful to you in making any decisions concerning Dr. Depree?

A. It would have.

Q. Do you intend review it now?

A. This minute?

Q. No, at any point?

A. I may.

Q. When will you decide whether you will review it?

A. I don't know.

Q. Is there any other information that might be helpful to you in reaching a decision that you have not yet reviewed?

A. I don't know.

Q. We've covered the depositions. Would those be helpful to you in making a decision?

A. They could be.

Q. The letter that Dr. DePree wrote Dr. Cannon could be helpful?

A. It could be.

Q. I believe you said talking -- in your earlier deposition **(Two years earlier)** -- talking to prior presidents might be helpful?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you talked to those prior presidents?

A. No.

Q. Do you intend?

A. I may.

Q. And when will you decide?

A. I don't know.

According to the USM Faculty Handbook

8.2.3 Guiding Principles. At The University of Southern Mississippi, the fundamental principles that guide all personnel evaluation policies and procedures are that rigorous, documented standards for excellence are fairly and consistently applied by each advisory body and each decision-making authority at every level of the evaluation process and that evaluations are conducted in an atmosphere of fairness and professional integrity.

Dr. Saunders testified under oath that she did not know the evaluation and disciplinary standards, did not know when she would know them, or whether she would apply them if she ever came to know them.

Since Saunders did not review extensive evidence, including that which Dr. DePree offered to Ombudsman Cannon, sworn depositions of Dr. DePree's accusers who recanted their accusations, what is the basis for Saunders' decision to fire Dr. DePree and to spend millions trying (unsuccessfully) to find any reason with which to implement her decision?

More than the truth, more than the spirit of inquiry and scholarly integrity Saunders honors the principle of "I don't know." Again and again throughout her deposition she repeats, "I don't know." Even worse, she blithely admits that she does not know when she will know. The extent to which she repeats "I don't know" when it is her duty to know brings disrepute upon the office of President of the University of Southern Mississippi and corrupts the standards to which every faculty is entitled.