

31st & Pearl

The Incredible Shrinking Dome

Recent disclosure of University of Wisconsin at Whitewater documents show that USM president Martha Saunders engaged in a number of financial shenanigans while chancellor there. With what we know about Saunders' behavior at UWW, what might be going on at USM? Hopefully one day we will all know. What we can say is that the stature of the dome is diminishing with each passing day, and there is nothing a month-long ethics focus in the b-school can do about it. The decision to lease a Beechcraft King Air plane amidst the worst financial crisis in decades showed Saunders to be less than stellar. Couple that with a \$325,000 renovation of the master bedroom of the president's mansion on Jamestown and you've got the makings of a good judgment vacuum.

Arguably USM's most public venture – its sports program – is falling off a cliff under Saunders' leadership. The women's basketball team just completed 2010 with nine wins against 21 losses. Women's soccer continues to flounder. Football appears stuck at seven wins against six losses. Larry Eustachy's men's basketball program is all over the place –except of the post season, that is. In the three years under Saunders, athletics' won-loss performance has declined each year. It looks like it will wind up somewhere around the 47% winning mark after 2009-10. That follows the 49% (approx.) mark last year. How long can this slide continue?

Over in the CoB, new accounting director Skip Hughes is running amuck, telling faculty that he's not committed to honoring the CoB's relatively new (2008) journal ranking system. Hughes' excuse? *He got on the train when it was halfway down the track.* What ever. Hughes appears to be joining a long line of CoB administrators like George Carter, Steven Jackson, and others who helped pull the college into the quicksand of lower tier institutions.

Yes, the dome has lost much credibility in recent months. Getting it back may take a miracle.