

Coiffe — OVER — Profs

An Editorial by **Victoria Tyler**

It's quite clear (see montage below) that USM president Martha Saunders' appearance is important to her. From changing hairstyles to expensive clothing, Saunders is not bashful about keeping herself up-to-date on all things hair and outfits. While www.USMlite.com is doing a bang-up job satirizing these and other facets of Saunders' administration of USM, there remains a more serious, perhaps even insensitive side to this aspect of USM's central executive.



Many, if not most, regular readers of USMNEWS.net fully understand how Saunders' decision to sign a \$2 million lease on a Beechcraft King Air airplane in the middle of the worst economic situation to hit the country in a long, long time is arguably the most egregious example of mismanagement in the 100-year history of the institution. That single, ill-advised decision went a long way in creating the environment wherein Saunders and her executive cabinet have delivered pink slips to almost 50 tenured and tenure-track USM professors since fall of 2009.

It's gotten to the point where all that many USM family members think about when they hear the phrase "president Saunders" are Centennial gateways, presidential luxury suites (at M.M. Roberts), university airplanes, strategic (wrought iron) fencing projects, retention rewards programs, trips to the College World Series, assistant to the president Chad Driskell, "everything is up but the budget," \$325,000 presidential mansion boudoir renovations (using university funds), \$35,000 raises to mediocre football coaches, and many other unflattering things. It's clear to some, and becoming clearer to others, that Saunders operates in a sort of "coiffe over profs" academic world, wherein all that *really* matters to her is being president and having all of the things that she believes that university presidents are *entitled* to have, and that includes everything from mansions to airplanes, and stadium luxury suites to special assistants.

Is it all getting old? You bet. But, getting used to the situation is a necessity, now that the Mississippi IHL has officially chanted "4 More Years!" Yes, Saunders will be around for a while, and that means that all sorts new presidential coiffe is to be expected for as far as our eyes can see, and her mind can imagine.