

How Long Can Opposites Function?

President Martha Saunders

Relentlessly positive

Ties to USM

Ties to Hattiesburg

Desires a long tenure at USM

Desires the spotlight

Has a long “prohibited list” for cuts

Pro-business stance

Airplane

Provost Bob Lyman

Frequently negative

No ties to USM

No ties to Hattiesburg

Desires a few years pre-retirement

Works behind the scenes

Is willing to cut any budget item

Anti-business stance

No airplane

Many viewing these comparisons would assume this would be a good pairing of strengths and talents; this was so, but seems to be crumbling under the stresses of repeated budget cuts and the fall-out from the various constituencies from those cuts. More often it appears rather than a well-functioning duo the Saunders – Lyman pair are more of the show dog and the groomer: while she prances around various rings for applause, he tries to recover for the next preparations to get her ready. The appearance to an increasing number of staff and faculty is not jealousy but weariness. The perfect example is all the centennial hoopla: Martha is primed and primped to star and strut while Lyman has to sit through all the “how great we are” speeches instead of working on the budget cuts and all the other items that go with being chief academic officer at Southern Miss. How long can such opposites endure?