

## **Is Saunders as Good as Foglesong? We'll Know in 15 Months**

Many USM constituents are beginning to wonder just how good USM President, Martha Saunders, is. Many are also wondering about the quality of the other unknown, secret finalists that were considered by Thomas Meredith, Mississippi's IHL Commissioner, before Saunders was selected. While the latter question may never be adequately answered, we may soon have some information to assist us in answering the first question: How good is Saunders?

That information may come in mid-May of 2009, or the 2-year mark of Saunders' tenure as USM's President. Saunders' counterpart at Mississippi State University, President Robert "Doc" Foglesong, recently reached the 2-year mark of his MSU presidency, at which point he promptly resigned his post. However, Foglesong's resignation was not submitted as a result of a failed administration, as was the case with the April 2007 resignation of former CoB Dean, Harold Doty. Instead, as Foglesong told the Associated Press on 13-March-08, his administration had accomplished in two years what it set out to accomplish in four years. The goals accomplished by Foglesong, who was also hired in a "secret search" by Meredith and the IHL, include improvements in student numbers and retention, new faculty hirings, new research funding and a renewed energy and enthusiasm on the Starkville campus. According to the AP report, posted on *The Hattiesburg American's* website and shown below, Foglesong claimed victory -- after two years rather than four -- in a letter to MSU faculty and staff. Foglesong also told the *Charleston Daily Mail* that, after completing his service to MSU on 30-June-08, he plans to spend more time in West Virginia.

### **Foglesong says MSU mission accomplished**

STARKVILLE, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi State University President Robert “Doc” Foglesong says he had no more worlds to conquer at MSU, having reached goals he established for the college in two years rather than four.

Foglesong, in a letter to MSU faculty and staff dated Thursday, said it was time for someone else to step in and move the university ahead. Foglesong announced last Friday that he was resigning effective June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

Foglesong, 62, earns \$429,000 a year.

In his letter, Foglesong talks about improvements in student numbers and retention, new faculty hirings, research funding plus a renewed energy and enthusiasm on campus.

“I thought it would take four years to get where we wanted to be in most areas. We did it in two years. Mission complete,” Foglesong wrote in the letter.

Foglesong did not hint at what he would be doing next. Foglesong, a retired Air Force

General, is a Williamson, W.Va., native and West Virginia University graduate.

Foglesong told the Charleston Daily Mail this week that he was planning to spend more time in West Virginia.

It's fun to think about just how brash Foglesong's letter to MSU faculty and staff was, at least as reported by the Associated Press. Reporters at USMNEWS.NET imagined just what that letter must have looked like, and produced what they believe is a reasonable facsimile (shown below):

*Mississippi State University*  
From the Desk of President Robert "Doc" Foglesong

March 13, 2008

Dear MSU Faculty and Staff,

Effective June 30, 2008, I am resigning my position as President of Mississippi State University. Over the past two years, we have made great strides in the areas of student numbers and retention, new faculty hirings, research funding, plus a renewed energy and enthusiasm on campus. Having reached the goals I established for the college, I have no more worlds to conquer at MSU. It is now time for someone else to step in and move the university forward.

Once again, I thought it would take four years to get where we wanted to be in most areas. We did it in two years.

Mission complete!

Sincerely,  
"Doc"

Robert Foglesong  
President

Will Saunders be able to claim "Mission complete!" for USM, a Tier IV school, on or about mid-May of 2009? Only time will tell. If so, one might argue that she is as skilled as Foglesong, who was able to make the same claim after two years at the helm of Mississippi State University -- a Tier III institution. Interestingly, one could argue that current Interim CoB Dean, Alvin Williams, can make that claim on June 30, 2008, given the CoB's recent news that its AACSB accreditation had been restored without qualification. If so, then Williams' victory comes after just 15 months at the helm of the CoB. One thing is for sure, former CoB Dean, Harold Doty, can't make any claim like "Mission complete!" And, Doty had almost four years at the helm of the USM business school to get the job done.