

Special Report

Oh No She Didn't!?

A Look Back at Unnecessary Statements from Fall '08 Convocation

David Tisdale's [25-September-08 presser](#), entitled "Saunders Urges Southern Miss to Use its Strengths to Move University Forward," indicates that USM President Martha Saunders' Fall 2008 Convocation speech included the statement that the "core dialogues" from 2007-08 have given USM "a compass and a guide" for achieving its mission as the premier research university for the Gulf South. Wikipedia indicates that the [Gulf South](#) consists of parts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, all of which border the Gulf of Mexico. To examine Saunders' claim about USM's role as #1 in the Gulf South, USMNEWS.net reporters gathered all of the national research universities listed in *2009 America's Best Colleges* (by *U.S. News & World Report*) that call one of the Gulf South states home. Beside each, Table 1 below reports its *USNWR* 2009 ranking.

Table 1
National Universities in Gulf South States

USNWR Ranking	Institution	State
17	Rice University	TX
47	University of Texas	TX
49	University of Florida	FL
51	Tulane University	LA
51	University of Miami	FL
64	Texas A&M University	TX
66	Southern Methodist University	TX
76	Baylor University	TX
83	University of Alabama	AL
96	Auburn University	AL
102	Florida State University	FL
113	Texas Christian University	TX
130	Louisiana State University	LA
130	Samford University	AL
145	University of AL -- Birmingham	AL
149	University of Texas -- Dallas	TX
155	Mississippi State University	MS
155	University of Mississippi	MS
170	Florida Institute of Technology	FL
170	Texas Tech University	TX
170	University of South Florida	FL
180	University of AL -- Huntsville	AL
180	University of Southern Mississippi	MS
210	University of Houston	TX
227	Florida International University	FL
231	Barry University	FL
231	Nova Southeastern University	FL

234	Texas Woman's University	TX
234	University of North Texas	TX
241	Florida A&M University	FL
241	Florida Atlantic University	FL
246	TX A&M University -- Kingsville	TX
246	University of LA -- Lafayette	LA
250	Jackson State University	MS
257	TX A&M University -- Commerce	TX
257	University of New Orleans	LA

As indicated in Table 1 above, there are 36 national research universities in the Gulf South States. Of these, 22 are ranked above USM, while 13 fall below USM. Thus, USM sits in *the bottom half* of all Gulf South states-based national research universities. With Rice University, the University of Texas, the University of Florida, Tulane University and the University of Miami sitting in the top 5 spots, one would think that Saunders would not have even attempted to make such a jaw-dropping claim. Even if they were the top five, the next (second) five -- Texas A&M University, Southern Methodist University, Baylor University, the University of Alabama and Auburn University -- are enough to make Saunders' claim shocking.

Is there some kind of limit to what USM administrators are able to get away with saying? If not, should there be?