

# The Tale of the Tape

## A Wider Comparison of USM, Alabama and Texas Tech

In the middle of her 2008 fall convocation speech, USM president Martha Saunders made a point of noting that USM's grants procurement total (\$91.0 million) for 2008 was greater than that at both Texas Tech University (\$48.7 million) and the University of Alabama (\$68.9 million). In doing so, Saunders was clearly attempting to show USM constituents in attendance that the institution that she governs "outperforms" other notable institutions in what some believe is an important battleground. Despite numerous studies stating that research grant dollars do very little to fuel a university, Saunders chose that area as the sole focus of her comparison of USM with UofAL and TTU. This essay goes further in comparing these three institutions – institutions chosen by Saunders herself for comparison at the fall 2008 convocation. In Table 1 below, these same institutions are compared on a few other academic/extracurricular fronts.

**Table 1**  
**Comparing USM, Alabama and Texas Tech**

<b>Item</b>	<b>USM</b>	<b>UofAL</b>	<b>TTU</b>
Enrollment	11,924	21,081	23,021
Average H.S. GPA	n/a	3.4	3.0
% Full-Time	86%	91%	91%
Out-of-State Tuition	\$11,762	\$18,000	\$15,213
Age	98	177	85
<i>USNWR</i> Score, 2009	20	42	22
Institutional Endowment (\$millions)	n/a	\$445.8	\$409.6
ACT Scores > 18	87%	99%	99%
ACT Scores > 30	5%	14%	6%
% Transfer Students	13%	7%	9%
Library Titles (millions)	1.5	2.6	2.4
Institutional Endowment (\$billions)	n/a	\$1.000	\$0.642
Sagarin Football Ranking (9/29/2008)	70	1	18
2009 Football Record (9/29-2008)	2-2	5-0	4-0
Football Stadium Capacity	36,000	92,138	53,000
NCAA Team Championships	0	4	1

**Notes:** The first set of institutional data above comes from *America's Best Colleges 2009* by *U.S. News & World Report*. The second set of institutional data is from the online version of *Peterson's Guide*. The second institutional endowment figures are from [endowmentinstitute.org](http://endowmentinstitute.org), and are much newer than those from *Peterson's Guide*. The Sagarin Rankings are from *USA Today*, and the NCAA Team Championships totals, which include all sports except football, are from [ncaa.org](http://ncaa.org). The remaining data are from various sources.

As Table 1 indicates, both UofAL and TTU are quite larger (in terms of enrollment) than USM. UofAL is 76.8% larger than USM, while TTU is 93.1% larger than USM. Both UofAL and TTU also have considerably better students in terms of academic credentials, with each having 99% of students scoring 18 or

higher on the ACT. At USM this figure is significantly lower, at only 87%. At the same time, 14% and 6% of UofAL and TTU students, respectively, scored above 30 on the ACT, compared to only 5% of USM students. In terms of other student demographics, 91% of all students at UofAL and TTU are classified as full-time, compared to just 86% of students at USM. At the same time, only 7% and 9%, respectively, of UofAL and TTU students are transfers, compared to 13% for USM.

As far as institutions go, *USNWR* scores UofAL and TTU (at 42 and 22, respectively) anywhere from 10% to 110% better than USM. Though USM's endowment total appears to be a State secret, *Peterson's Guide* lists those at UofAL and TTU in the \$400 million to \$450 million range. Newer endowment data from [endowmentinstitute.org](http://endowmentinstitute.org) put UofAL's endowment at a whopping \$1 billion, while TTU's is listed at a hefty \$642 million. Again, USM's endowment, which many believe to be well under \$50 million, is not known by this well-known organization. What is known about USM is that its library holds 1.5 million titles. That total is, however, anywhere from 60% to 73% fewer than holdings at UofAL and TTU. About the only place 98-year old USM beats TTU is in institutional age. Even then, however, USM is about 80 years younger than UofAL.

All three institutions are proud of their athletic heritages, yet only UofAL and TTU have won NCAA team championships of one sort or another. Currently, UofAL's football team, which plays in a 92,000-seat stadium, is number one in the land, with a 5-0 record. TTU currently sits at 18<sup>th</sup> nationally, with a 4-0 won-lost record. On the other hand, USM, with its smallish 36,000-seat venue, stands at 2-2 and is ranked only 70<sup>th</sup> nationwide. And as reported earlier here at [USMNEWS.net](http://USMNEWS.net), USM is coming off a first-ever loss to Marshall – a loss that also qualifies as USM's only Conference USA opening game loss since the group of schools was formed several years ago.

Over several more areas than Saunders represented during her 24-Sept-08 convocation speech, this essay covers the tale of the tape between USM, UofAL and TTU.