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Letter to Gregg Lassen, CFO, on Potential Outsourcing of the Physical Plant Operations

USM Faculty Senate

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Date: December 19, 2005

**Passed without dissent by
members of the Faculty
Senate on 12-09-05.**

**Endorsed by Members of
Staff Council through
email and phone 12-19-05.**

To: Mr. Gregg Lassen, Chief Financial Officer

Box 5005

From: Members of the Faculty Senate and Staff Council

Topic: Potential outsourcing of the Physical Plant operations

We are concerned about the announcement, "USM may outsource the Physical Plant operations," that appeared in recent articles in the *Hattiesburg American* and *Clarion Ledger*. Apparently, this announcement was a surprise to many who may be affected by this most recent outsourcing initiative. Regrettably, the announcement comes just before the Christmas holidays and just after so many of the people whose jobs may be outsourced devoted so much time and energy to helping the university move forward from the damage of Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Lassen, you are quoted as having said, "If we go this route, the university and employees will benefit." We are not sure how employees will benefit, but your assertion raises several questions.

1. What is the main motivation for outsourcing the operations of the Physical Plant?

2. What will happen to the state retirement programs for employees who have served USM for, say five years? Ten years? Fifteen years? Twenty years? Twenty five years?
3. What about medical benefits employees currently have?
4. What about other benefits such as tuition reductions for family members?
5. Will any benefits (such as tuition waivers) be “grandfathered in” for Physical Plant staff?
6. What happens to the commitment to USM from employees of the Physical Plant?
 - a. Do they still consider themselves as part of the USM family?
 - b. Does USM still consider them as part of the USM family?
7. How much does USM expect to save through outsourcing operations of the Physical Plant, and how does it intend to achieve these savings?
8. Just how would a private sector firm to whom the operations of Physical Plant are out sourced make a profit?
 - a. By reducing employment levels?
 - b. By charging more for services to units within the university?
 - c. By a fixed contract with the university?
 - d. Through a less experienced workforce?
 - e. Through lower compensation (including benefits)?
9. Can current employees of the physical plant expect long term employment with a firm to which services have been outsourced?
10. What happens when the initial contract expires?
11. What impact will outsourcing to an out of state firm have on businesses in the local community that currently provide materials and services to the USM Physical Plant?

Members of the Faculty Senate and Staff Council hope the Administration will openly respond to the points above as well as other relevant questions and concerns.

Is the initiative to outsource the operations of the Physical Plant the business of the members of Faculty Senate and Staff Council? We believe an outsourcing initiative that may have a notable impact on the university as a whole and to valued employees is the business of every member of our university community and most certainly the business of the elected representatives of faculty and staff. We are deeply concerned for the welfare of the staff of the Physical Plant, and we are equally concerned about a university that seems to be on a path of off loading colleagues who have contributed much and who believed they were part of a USM family. In this context, we urge the administration to establish a transparent and participatory process to help determine if and how outsourcing “benefits all.”

xc Dr. Shelby F. Thames, University President

Dr. Jay Grimes, Provost

Members of the Faculty Senate

Members of Staff Council