

More On Clemson PSA

By [fitsnews](#) • on July 28, 2010



By *FITSNews* || Earlier this month, we editorialized in favor of eliminating funding for Clemson University's Public Service Activities (PSA) division.

In case you missed that magnificent bit of taxpayer advocacy on our part, [click here](#).

Our rationale for supporting PSA's elimination is simple – it performs a non-essential function. On top of that, there are numerous other state agencies duplicating PSA's non-essential “quality of life” research and support for the state's agriculture industry (which, incidentally, has received more than [\\$1.6 billion](#) in taxpayer-funded subsidies over the past fifteen years).

And yet for some reason taxpayers are shelling out over \$60 million a year to support PSA's “work” – including a \$242,732 annual salary for its director, John Kelly, who we're told has a particularly cozy relationship with the University's Board of Directors – and an expense account that would make a former Soviet minister blush.

But waste and cozy political relationships don't stop at the top at PSA ...

For starters, there's Terry Hunter, the husband of powerful S.C. lawmaker Gilda Cobb-Hunter – a former House minority leader. Hunter currently serves as PSA's program director for FACETS (Fine Arts Cultural Enrichment Teaching Studios) – a job that pays him \$93,627 a year.

If you're anything like us, you're probably wondering what in the hell “fine arts” has to do with helping farmers.

Of course, you're probably *not* wondering why Cobb-Hunter (and by extension the Legislative Black Caucus) has been one of PSA's most ardent defenders in the S.C. General Assembly.

Anyway, Hunter works at PSA's Sandhills Research and Education Center in Northeast Columbia, S.C. – a facility that is run by Dr. Paul (Mac) Horton.

How much does Horton make?

We don't know, because he's not classified as a full-time employee – and as a result he isn't listed on the state's salary database. Horton's assistant director, however, is listed as a full-time employee with an annual salary of \$100,631.

Another example of questionable employment by PSA involves Laurie Lawson, who has no official position at Clemson but has been on the payroll as a “temporary employee” for the last eight years. Hired in January of 2002, his title is Assistant to the Vice President of PSA, for which he receives \$50,000 a year.

Sources tell FITS that this money is for undisclosed lobbying activities.

Lawson is the patriarch of Lawson Farms, an enterprise that owns and operates a 2,400-acre farm near Darlington. Lawson was appointed by the Obama administration as the South Carolina state executive director for the Farm Service Agency at the U.S. Department of Agriculture last November. He also served as state executive director during the Clinton administration.

Clemson also reportedly pays over \$50,000 a year for a full-time lawyer at PSA, even though the University has its own legal staff as part of its [ever-expanding bureaucracy](#). Incidentally, the brother of Clemson's top lawyer – Clay Steadman – is also said to have a \$70,000 a year job with PSA.

Much of this information was provided to the S.C. Legislative Audit Council earlier this year in an effort to have the agency conduct an independent review of PSA's finances. That didn't happen, however, as Clemson mounted a furious lobbying effort to block the inquiry.

We obviously support an audit, but let's be honest – it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what's going on here.

This is a non-essential government agency paying big bucks to a bunch of career bureaucrats to perform a bunch of non-essential functions.

That's why it is one of many S.C. government agencies that should get the axe ... with the savings [rebated to the taxpayers](#), of course.

WEB EXTRA

[Information on PSA Provided To S.C. Legislative Audit Council](#)