

A Brief History of Saunders' "Lease" of Airplane N777AQ During a Recession

Part 5

Why Is There So Little Trust In Leaders?

We organize the history by documenting representations made by President Saunders and Provost Lyman in their report to a Faculty Senate meeting on [December 5, 2008](#) (page 2, para. 7). See Parts 1 through 4 which provide a context for Part 5 and the documents obtained from USM in a Mississippi Open Records that are the sources of information concerning the plane and passenger usage, costs, lease agreements, etc.

At the Faculty Senate meeting on December 5, 2008, Drs. Saunders and Lyman claim that "Instead of giving the money to Delta Airlines, we will be giving it to ourselves."

Let's take a closer look at this one. It seems as though Saunders and Lyman are trying to tell us we got one hell of a good deal. We're paying travel money to ourselves, that is, to the USM Foundation. But USM, according to its own records (see, AP & TRAVEL document) pays for the plane's lease, maintenance, pilots, fuel, etc, not the USM Foundation. The truth is, students' and taxpayers' pay for the airplane. Millions of dollars gone for a grossly inefficient use of resources: tens of thousands of dollars per flight within Mississippi, not to mention the cost of using the airplane outside MS, either way, \$6,187.67 per flight hour, not the inaccurate \$800 per flight hour as represented by Drs. Saunders and Lyman.

In a recent newspaper report, President Saunders changed the mission she had originally used to justify "leasing" the plane -- saving travel money by paying it to ourselves instead of Delta. (As you can see from [previous reports](#), there has been little use of the plane by anyone except Dr. Saunders, her husband, IHL members, their spouses, assistants, senior administrators and local politicians.) Dr. Saunders now claims the mission of her plane is to provide improved efficiency for upper administration. The reality is that Saunders could do a lot of work in the back seat of a car while one of her public relations assistants drives her to IHL meetings in Jackson on \$50 in gas. Instead, she chooses to fly her airplane at .9 flight hours times \$6,187.67 cost per flight hour at a trip cost of \$5,568.90. (This amount does not address the cost of someone driving to the airport, collecting Dr. Saunders, driving her to the meeting, perhaps waiting patiently until the meeting is complete, returning Dr. Saunders to her plane, and driving back to work.) Who in their right mind believes a trip to an IHL meeting near Jackson, MS at \$5,568.90 saves Mississippi taxpayers and students money? "Instead of giving the [travel] money to Delta Airlines," taxpayers and students are paying millions of dollars in tribute to an ego that believes because others have an airplane she must also have one.