

DEAR USMNEWS.NET

Dear usmnews.net,

When I read your report [Closing in on Big Donations, Again?](#), I was reminded of an earlier report about Dr. Saunders' trip to Los Angeles. Was this the same trip? Was there any return on the whopping cost of her trip?

Name Withheld

Dear Name Withheld,

We at usmnews.net are frequently impressed by our eagle-eyed readers. I believe the report you recall was entitled [Fundraising in California](#). On July 11, 2011, Dr. Saunders effusively [blogged](#) about the joys of meeting successful alumni. According to her blog, Dr. Saunders took in a show, met three alumni (Cindy Smartt, Dr. Chip Breitenkamp, Dr. Rebecca Breitenkamp, and Teena Clark), and a celebrity and generally had a good time. What she does not mention is any return on the money spent on the trip.

At the time Fundraising in California was published, according to the Foundation webpage, none of the successful alumni had made any contributions. However, we are pleased to report that as we respond to your letter to the editor, Ms. Clark had made a contribution to the Foundation at the lowest recognized level – between \$10,000 and \$24,999. While we are all appreciative of Ms. Clark's contribution, let's take a look at what the contribution cost taxpayers and students:

\$42,797.02 Picking Dr. Saunders up in North Carolina and flying her to New Orleans to catch a commercial flight

We don't know the cost of commercial flights to Los Angeles for Mike Bonnette and Dr. Saunders (We don't even know if these were the only two making the trip. Given Dr. Saunders' history, it is quite likely that her husband accompanied her on the trip), bills for hotel, bills for food, ground transportation, entertainment, etc.

We do know that if we assume the only cost associated with the trip is the \$42,000 for shuttling Dr. Saunders to New Orleans, and that Ms. Clark donated the maximum in the level, \$24,999, there was a negative 42% return on investment. If we add in the other costs, the negative return only gets bigger.

Dr. Saunders says she wants to run the school like a business. It seems fair to say that if this is how she runs a business, it would quickly be bankrupt.

While we understand Dr. Saunders' desire to have a good time, and to have her private air-taxi at her beck and call, it is not her money to waste.