

## Are Detailed Expense Reports in the Offing for USM?

What do you think about having at your fingertips detailed expenditures by government? If you ever want to see government spending, including state universities spending, brought under control, it's not going to happen without detailed, reliable information.

Consider what's going on in South Carolina:

"Many public colleges release chart-filled accountability reports that purport to show how they spend taxpayer money. But nine South Carolina colleges have gone one step further, publishing [itemized expense reports](#) online for anyone to see. The colleges, which include Clemson University, released the previously private information after pressure from the state comptroller and from state lawmakers, who [approved bills](#) last month that would require them to publish the data. Such disclosures could become more common as politicians push public colleges to detail their spending and publish financial information online that they would have previously only provided in response to a public-records request. The reports include details on sensitive areas like athletic recruitment, subscriptions, and consulting contracts..." (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* [Under Pressure, South Carolina Colleges Put Expense Reports Online](#), March 2, 2011, By Josh Keller.)

Here's an example of why Mississippi will be last among the 50 states to require issuance of detailed state university expense reports:

On June 14 and 16, 2009, USM's records show that Dr. Saunders flew USM high level administrators, IHL Board members, and state and local politicians in N777AQ to Omaha, NE to watch the College World Series. The passengers: Joe Bailey—Saunders' husband, Chad Driskell—Executive Assistant to the President, Jack Driskell, Joe and Connie Morgan—Former Chief Financial Officer for USM and his wife, Bob Pierce—Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the USM Foundation, Johnny Atherton—Vice President of External Affairs of Mississippi Power, Doug Rouse—Institutions of Higher Learning Member, Billy Hewes—Mississippi state senator, Jay McDowell—USM Assistant Athletic Director for Sports Technology, Richard Giannini—USM Athletics Director, John Brown, and Johnny Dupree—Hattiesburg mayor. USM's records report President's Office was charged for the flight—that is, USM students, faculty, and Mississippi taxpayers paid. The flight time of 11.7 hours and \$5,971.11 per flight hour means an actual cost of **\$69,861.99**. **\$69,861.99** was spent so that President Saunders could chauffeur her husband, politicians, IHL members, upper administrators, and spouses to a BASEBALL GAME. Nor, as usmnews.net has reported, is this sort of "fun" trip an isolated event.

University administrators, IHL members, and elected officials in Mississippi who misappropriate or misuse taxpayer resources will not reveal this kind of corruption without being forced. And since these are the very people who make the decisions whether to reveal detailed information, the question is why should they disclose them? .

After all, by keeping the details secret, taxpayer and student money is their personal piggy bank – or in the words of Harold Doty, their “booze account.”

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