

Extravagance Grounded

Using the [type of analysis](#) offered by a USMNEWS.net reader, the April-09 [Air Farce One](#) trips to Columbus and Madison cost MS taxpayers \$15,750 each, *not including* the salary and fringes of the pilot or the cost of fuel. The May-09 trip to Macon, GA, cost MS taxpayers an additional \$31,500, again *not including* the salary and fringes of the pilot or the cost of fuel. USM provost Robert Lyman can stutter and stammer before the USM Faculty Senate all he wants, but the USM plane that president Martha Saunders decided to lease (at \$31,500/month) *is an extravagance*, plain and simple. This extravagance is kicking USM's butt at the moment, given the dire budgetary situation facing USM's public institutions of higher learning. Never mind the rising (at the moment) cost of fuel. It's clearly time that the Mississippi IHL Board considers amending its rules regarding the high-dollar contracts and lease agreements that can be executed in the name of Mississippi's public universities. To not do so only invites other extravagances that MS taxpayers should not be forced to support with their hard-earned dollars.