

Rodney Bennett's Extravagance

Part 2 – Another Sports Event

Via a Mississippi Open Records Act request, usmnews.net recently obtained a large batch of documents from USM relating to USM president Rodney Bennett's university aircraft. This series provides analysis of these documents.

This installment examines the August 14-15, 2013 trip in the USM airplane made by President Rodney Bennett and Bill McGillis (Director of Athletics). This pair flew over to participate in "CUSA Board Retreat" in Dallas, Texas.

What was the cost of this sports related travel? And, was it worth it? Did it advance the educational mission of USM?

The round trip from Hattiesburg to Dallas took 3.4 flight hours. The cost per flight hour as reported in USM's records is approximately \$6,712. (Where did this amount come from? It's simple. Just add up all the airplane costs and divide them by the number of reported flight hours.)

The total cost for this trip was:

$$\text{\$6,712 X 3.4} = \text{\$22,821}$$

Here's the crucial question in this report? What would it have cost to buy two round trip tickets to Dallas, Texas? It's easy to find out. Just check Southwest. It's about \$1,000. If Bennett and McGillis deigned to fly commercial, it would have saved students and Mississippi taxpayers nearly \$22,000.

Or, look at the potential cost savings from another perspective. If Bennett and McGillis could have brought themselves to get on a commercial flight, it would have paid annual tuition for about 3 students. Bennett took a trip of dubious to no value to academics for USM students. He took this trip when the money wasted could have paid a full year's tuition for three people struggling to pay the increasing costs of education. Do you think these three students even crossed Bennett's mind?

This flight taxpayers and students paid for is just one of many. We'll report more of them over the next few weeks. This expenditure signals the way President Bennett squanders taxpayer and student money. After all, it's not his money. So, it's easy to spend and it appears he is quite willing to waste your hard earned dollars.