

# *Rodney Bennett's Extravagance*

Part 7 – While we celebrate Christmas,

Let's rejoice in the gifts granted by taxpayers and students to President Bennett and his cronies. Of course, if you're a student or taxpayer don't expect a thank you note – unless you count the notice of increase in tuition if you're a student and the increase in taxes if you're a taxpayer.

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 extravagance. This series provides analysis of these documents.

This installment examines the March 6 and 7, 2013 flights. The flights are charged to the President's and Assistant to the President's offices. Translation: that means students and taxpayers pay.

The flights are (1) "Athens (GA), Hattiesburg, Gulfport and return" with "Passenger: Dr. R. Bennett," and (2) "Jackson, Gulfport, Jackson, Hattiesburg" with "Pasengers: Driskell, Gov. Bryant, H. Bounds, Bullock, Moore, Harrington."

"Purpose: To Attend Governor's announcement designating USM Center for Excellence in Gulf Studies." The flights took 7.6 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 as reported in USM's records and divide them by the number of reported flight hours as reported in USM's records.)

The total cost for this trip was:

$$\text{\$6,712 X 7.6 = \$51,011.}$$

Was a simple PR announcement worth \$51,011? Did it advance the educational mission of USM? Was there an alternate way to make the announcement that would have cost nothing?

**Here's the bottom line:** What's wrong with offering a written PR announcement about the "Center of Excellence" which is given to local news media complete with pictures of the bureaucrats and an accompanying note to taxpayers and students that you—bureaucrats Bennett, Bryant, Driskell, Bounds, Bullock, Moore, and Harrington—have saved students and taxpayers tens of thousands in travel costs?

The money wasted on these flights of PR nonsense could have paid a full year's tuition for approximately **seven students** and their families struggling to pay the increasing costs of education.

Merry Christmas Bennett, Bryant, Driskell, Bounds, Bullock, Moore, and Harrington.