

President Saunders Continues to Squander Student and Taxpayer Money on Her Airplane

PART 9

www.usmnews.net recently received another set of documents related to President Saunders' airplane, N777AQ, through Mississippi Open Records Act (MORA) requests. MORA documents, USM's own records, provide verification of misrepresentations made by President Saunders and Provost Lyman about N777AQ. What would happen to your career if you made the same financial misrepresentations with taxpayers' and students' money?

We now have two years of **actual** costs of N777AQ. Although the airplane is owned by the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation, all costs are paid by University of Southern Mississippi. That is, taxpayers and USM students pay all costs of President Saunders' airplane.

See [PART 1](#) to access documents acquired through MORA requests. With these records, you can verify **actual** costs of N777AQ. As reported in **PART 1**, **actual** cost per flight hour is **\$5,971.11**.

The ninth report in this series follows:

September 8, 2010

Pilots Allen and Price flew N777AQ from Hattiesburg, MS to Columbus, MS and back. According to USM's "Interdepartmental Invoice" the passengers were USM President Martha Saunders, USM Vice President for Student Affairs Joe Paul, and Dean of the Honors College David Davies.

Actual flight hours were 1.3. Applying Saunders' inaccurate **estimate** of \$800 per flight hour, USM charged \$1,040 to the President's Office, i.e., USM students and Mississippi taxpayers. As reported in President Saunders own actual and detailed cost records, President Saunders is either incompetent or disingenuous to represent that cost per flight hour is \$800 and this flight costing \$4,080.

The **actual cost** to Mississippi taxpayers and USM students to fly N777AQ was 1.3 **actual** flight hours times **\$5,971.11 actual cost** per flight hour which totals to **\$7,762.44**. (Please note that when the **\$907,053.85 balloon payment**, which is due at the end of the five year lease, is amortized over the five years of the purchase/lease, the cost per flight hour is **\$8,910.28**. Including the balloon payment, this trip cost **\$11,583.36**.)

The purpose of the flight as reported in USM's "Interdepartmental Invoice" was "Recruiting Trip to MS School for Math & Science."

Seriously, Drs. Saunders, Paul, and Davies, couldn't you have taken a University car and driven to Columbus, MS a lot cheaper than \$7,762.44? \$7,762.44 is clearly outrageous. Doesn't it occur to you that you are squandering student money?

An unanswered question that should be answered: USM officials represented that their estimated cost of \$800 per flight hour might be slightly more expensive than commercial rates. They have not corrected this material misinformation. The difference between the minimum actual cost per flight hour of **\$5,971.11** and the estimated cost per flight hour of \$800 is material by any measure. A question to consider is, when does incompetence become fraud?

The question is well worth asking again: When does incompetence become fraud?

Dear USM Colleagues,

If you were this incompetent in teaching, research, or service duties, how long do you think President Saunders would quietly stand by not passing judgment in an evaluation of you?

President Saunders has you focused on evaluating each other as if you careers depend on it, and it does. Try a different path. Evaluate her performance. To continue a one-sided evaluation will never cure a significant problem: USM leadership, including IHL Board Members. Of course, you'll need to gather facts and exercise a bit of courage to put the facts to good use.

Marc DePree, Editor
www.usmnews.net