

QUESTION: WHAT SHOULD A TRIP TO COLUMBUS/GOLDEN TRIANGLE COST?

AND WHY WERE IHL BOARD MEMBERS AND A SPOUSE USING N777AQ?

For those of you commencing your readership of the series with this report, you may wish to read the introductory materials in the initial report [What Does A Trip From Hattiesburg, MS, To Gulfport, MS Cost?](#) That report provides background information concerning the actual costs for the past 17 months of an airplane N777AQ leased by President Saunders for 60 months.

USM has identified a total actual cost of \$591,231.71 for 30 round trips during the past 17 months of operations. Based on USM's numbers, the actual cost per round trip is \$19,707.72 (total actual costs divided by number of trips). Alternatively, USM reports a total of 114 passengers over the 17 month period. The cost per passenger round trip flight would be \$5,186.24 (total actual cost divided by the number of passengers).

To Columbus/Golden Triangle, MS

On September 2, 2009, Doug and Pam Rouse and Robin Robinson flew to Columbus/Golden Triangle on airplane N777AQ. The Interdepartmental Invoice shows the flight charged to the "President's Office." The flight time was 1.2 hours. No USM personnel are listed as passengers. Doug Rouse and Robin Robinson are IHL Board Members. Pam Rouse is Doug Rouse's spouse, but is neither an IHL Board Member nor an employee or student at USM. There was no stated purpose for the flight. Was this trip a private unreimbursed use of state property? It may be instructive to review the history of previous [IHL Commissioner Meredith](#).

See, Interdepartmental Invoice inserted below:

[illegible]

How did USM arrive at \$960.00 for the flight? We are provided no guidance. Therefore, we use actual costs incurred by USM over an extended period of 17 months. Whatever costs USM is using to calculate the \$960.00 number, they are not using their own actual costs. [If USM is using a budgeted usage rate, it is a wildly inaccurate estimation of the actual costs and should have been corrected to reflect the true usage and cost of the airplane long ago.] We challenge USM to explain in detail why its cost allocation is accurate. Dr. Saunders will need to begin with the actual costs contained in University records.

We all know that costs of higher education are skyrocketing. Is anyone in authority holding administrators accountable? IHL members blessed the purchase of the plane. IHL members are enjoying the use of the plane (see the above list of passengers and past and future reports in this series.) So, do not expect the IHL to do its oversight responsibility and hold President Saunders accountable for this extravagant expenditure of taxpayer and student money. A corollary is to expect costs of higher education to continue to unnecessarily increase.

Stay tuned to usmnews.net for cost analyses of the remaining 20 flights aboard President Saunders' plane.