

## QUESTION: WHAT SHOULD A TRIP TO GREENVILLE, NC COST?

And was the purpose of the trip to attend a football game?

**\$35,579.10**

We continue with reports of the first 17 months of flights of President Saunders airplane. If you are just beginning 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.

USM has identified a total actual cost of **\$591,231.71** for 95.55 flight hours during the first 17 months of operations.

### To Greenville, NC And Back

On November 28, 2009, the Interdepartmental Invoice below represents that Dr. Saunders, Chad Driskell, and Doug Rouse flew on N777AQ to Greenville, NC. The Pilot's log is different than the Interdepartmental invoice in numerous particulars. (See and compare [Interdepartmental Invoices](#) and the [Pilots' Log](#).) For example, the pilots' log shows two trips – one on November 23, 2009 taking 2.4 hours and a second trip on November 28, 2009 taking 3.1 hours. However, the interdepartmental invoice shows a single round trip on November 28, 2009 taking 5.75 hours. According to the interdepartmental invoice, three passengers took the round trip – Dr. Saunders, Chad Driskell, and Doug Rouse. The pilots' log indicates that on the trip down Dr. Saunders, Joe Bailey (Dr. Saunders' spouse), Be Morgan, Davis Morgan, Doug Rouse and Pam Rouse were passengers. On the return trip, the pilots' log shows Dr. Saunders, Mr. Bailey, Doug Rouse and Pam Rouse as passengers. Usmnews.net's reporters have no way of determining which University records are complete or accurate. However, we present both University records for reader consideration.

The actual cost per flight hour = \$591,231.71 total actual cost / 95.55 actual flight hours = \$6,187.67 per flight hour. (Remember, the cost per flight hour of \$800 was the rate President Saunders and Provost Lyman pitched to the [Faculty Senate](#) in their dubious claim that the airplane was an efficient and effective use of taxpayer and student money.) This trip to Greenville, NC was reported in the Interdepartmental Invoice as taking 5.75 flight hours. Therefore the trip cost taxpayers and students **\$35,579.10**. However, if we adopt the flight time shown in the pilots' logs (5.5 hours),

the trip cost taxpayers and students would be **\$34,032.18**. Since usmnews.net has no way to know which number is accurate, we present both amounts. Future reports will address the poor recordkeeping by the University relating to the use of Dr. Saunders' plane.

No purpose was given for the trip. Let me repeat that, no purpose for the trip was stated. The President's Office was charged for the trip and Saunders could not bring herself to be considerate enough to state a purpose for the trip. However, a quick review of [USM sports records](#) shows that the Golden Eagles football team played East Carolina on November 28, 2009.

Scoring Summary (Final)

2009 Southern Miss Football  
Southern Miss vs East Carolina (Nov 28, 2009 at Greenville, N.C.)  
Southern Miss (7-5,5-3) vs. East Carolina (8-4,7-1)  
Date: Nov 28, 2009 Site: Greenville, N.C. Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen  
Attendance: 43006

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	Score
Southern Miss.....	7	0	7	6	- 20
East Carolina.....	3	14	0	8	- 25

Of course, given the lack of candor President Saunders has demonstrated, the purpose of the trip should be reported so as to dispel doubts about the appropriateness and legality of this **\$35,579.10** (or perhaps **\$34,032.18**) expenditure of taxpayer and student money.

We all know that costs of higher education are skyrocketing. Is anyone in authority holding USM and IHL 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 18 flights aboard President Saunders' plane. **An upcoming report about nepotism and N777AQ is sure to get you wondering who's watching out for taxpayer and student interests.**