

QUESTION:
WHAT SHOULD A TRIP FROM HATTIESBURG, MS
TO WEST POINT, MS COST?

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 months of service and the actual costs.

USM has identified 30 round trips during the 17 months. 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 West Point, MS And Back

On September 4, 2009, President Saunders' plane headed for West Point, MS. She was not on board but the guests were Doug and Pam Rouse, Robin Robinson, Ed Blakeslee, Christy and Brent Pickering, and George and Elizabeth Ross. The flight time was 1.3 hours. Doug Rouse, Robin Robinson, Ed Blakeslee, and Christy Pickering are Board Members of the Institutions of Higher Education. George Ross was President of Alcorn State from January 2008 until December 2009. Elizabeth Ross is Dr. Ross' spouse. Pam Rouse is the spouse of Doug Ross. Brent Pickering the spouse of Christy Pickering.

See, Interdepartmental Invoice inserted below:

(Mark in RED)
 Original ☐
 Department Copy ☐
 (Retain for File)

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOICE
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
 (FOR CAMPUS USE ONLY)

CHARGE: President's Office
DEPARTMENT NAME
5001 266-5001
BOX PHONE NUMBER

CREDIT: Airplane Operations
DEPARTMENT NAME
5003 266-4136
BOX PHONE NUMBER

Date: 4/16/2009

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS OR SERVICES, INCLUDING DATES OF SERVICE	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
1	1.3 Hour Trip to West Point for Doug & Pam Rouse/Robin Robinson	1,040.00	1,040.00
	Ed Blakeslee/Christy & Brent Pickering/George & Elizabeth Ross		
TOTAL →			1,040.00

SPA APPROVAL, IF REQUIRED

SIGNATURE DATE

PROVOST APPROVAL, IF REQUIRED

SIGNATURE DATE

ACCOUNTING INFORMATION	ACCOUNT	FUND	DEPTID	PROGRAM	PROJECT/GRANT	AMOUNT
BUDGET STRINGS TO CHARGE FOR SERVICES OR MATERIALS RECEIVED	604021	10H10	100001	06000		1040.00
AUTHORIZED DEPARTMENT SIGNATURE	DATE					
BUDGET STRINGS TO CREDIT FOR SALES OF SERVICES OR MATERIALS	604021	10H10	100011	06000		1040.00
AUTHORIZED DEPARTMENT SIGNATURE	DATE					

JOURNAL NUMBER: _____
JOURNAL DATE: _____

Smart original - Controller's Office Box 5143

We can only speculate concerning the purposes of the trip because the Inter-departmental Invoice for the flight provides no information. Since spouses accompanied three IHL Board Members and the President of Alcorn State, it is likely that the trip was, either whole or in part, for purposes other than of- ficial business. (In fact, the invoice raises other questions. For example, the invoice is dated April 16, 2009, but the trip did not occur until September 4, 2009.)

However, the reasons for the trip are beyond the scope of this report or the information available to this reporter. We do know that the Interdepart-

mental Invoice “charged” the “President’s Office” a grand total of \$1,040.00 for the flight. Given the actual costs provided for President Saunders’ plane, take your pick how to calculate the cost of this flight.

At an average cost per flight, the trip cost **\$19,707.72**, i.e., \$591,231.71 actual total cost/30 actual trips over the 17 month period.

At a cost per passenger trip flight, the trip was **\$41,489.92**, i.e., (\$591,231.71 actual total cost/14 passengers = \$42,230.83 per passenger x 8 passengers)

How did USM arrive at \$1,040.00 for the flight? We are provided no guidance. Therefore, we use actual costs collected by USM over an extended period of 17 months. Whatever costs USM is using to calculate the \$1,040.00 number, they are not using actual costs. We challenge USM to explain in detail why its cost allocation is accurate and our calculation is inaccurate. 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 using the plane. (We find no evidence that the IHL members reimbursed USM for either their use of the plane or their spouses’ use.) So, expect costs of higher education to continue to unnecessarily increase.

Stay tuned to usmnews.net for cost analyses of the remaining 28 flights aboard President Saunders’ plane.