

\$41,457.39!

What's this business of not having a purpose for spending so much money? President Saunders, are you above accountability?

Hey, let's fly to Washington, DC!

On March 8, 2010, USM Pilots' Trip Log reported that President Saunders, C. Burge—then VP for Research, C. Driskell—Executive Assistant to the President, and C. Newell—unknown passenger, boarded N777AQ for a 6.7 flight hour trip to Washington DC. They returned on March 10, 2010. No details were provided about the costs incurred for hotel room, food, beverages, etc. The cost of just the flight aboard N777AQ was **\$41,457.39** (6.7 x \$6,187.67). That's right, the flight to Washington, DC all by itself cost **\$41,457.39**. There was **no Interdepartmental Invoice, no purpose given, no explanation** why this group of bureaucrats flew to Washington, DC. Rest assured, though, you—taxpayers, students, and faculty—paid the **\$41,457.39**, plus hotel, food, beverages, etc.

Since no purpose was given or note of accomplishments, we don't know if this was a joy ride, or simply a trip with a failed goal. We are not assuming that there was a successful result, because President Saunders would have made a worldwide public relations announcement about the trip.

President Saunders offers no reason for spending **\$41,457.39** of our money. Doesn't **\$41,457.39** rise to a level of importance that Dr. Saunders' records should provide some explanation for the trip? Do students think **\$41,457.39** is a lot of money? Do taxpayers think **\$41,457.39** is a lot of money? Do faculty -- particularly those who don't know if they will have a job next year -- think **\$41,457.39** is a lot of money?

Why should President Saunders and her bureaucratic minions care? The answer is, they don't. After all, it's not their money.

King Air N777AQ Trip Log

Date(s)	Destination(s)	Passenger Name(s)
3/8/10 - 3/10/10	Washington DC (KHEF) <small>Manassas, VA</small>	M. Saunders, C. Bunge, C. Driskell, C. Newell
Ldgs 2	Cycles 2	Pilots Cunningham, Allen
		Bus. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trng <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/>
Hobbs Mtr	In 1699.3	Out 1692.6 = 6.7 hrs total

Date	Destination(s)	Passenger Names
3/10/10	Golden Triangle/West Point	Chad Driskell, Mike Lambert
Ldgs 1	Cycles 1	Pilots Cunningham, Price
		Bus. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trng <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/>
Hobbs Mtr	In 1700.1	Out 1699.3 = 0.8 hrs total

Date	Destination(s)	Passenger Names
3/15/10	Hattiesburg, MS	Chad Driskell, Mike Lambert
Ldgs 1	Cycles 1	Pilots Cunningham, Price
		Bus. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trng <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/>
Hobbs Mtr	In 1706.8	Out 1700.1 = 6.7 hrs total

(Remember, usmnews.net's computation of cost per flight hour does not include or amortize the \$907,053.85 balloon payment due on the 60th month. If that amount is included, the cost is substantially higher than \$6,187.67 per flight hour.)

Context

If you are a new reader of this series, catch up by reviewing [A Brief History of Saunders' "Lease" of airplane N777AQ During a Recession, Part 1](#). That report provides background information concerning the actual costs for the first 17 months of an airplane N777AQ leased by President Saunders for a 60-month period. For example, USM documents report total actual cost of **\$591,231.71 and 95.55 flight hours** during the first 17 months of airplane N777AQ operations. Therefore, the ACTUAL cost per flight hour is **\$6,187.67**, i.e., \$591,231.71 total actual cost divided by 95.55 actual flight hours.

Interdepartmental Invoices for 30 flights were provided in an initial response from USM to a MORA request concerning the airplane President Saunders leases and pays for with Mississippi taxpayer and student dollars. Although the MORA request was for all records related to the plane,

USM's response was incomplete. When legal counsel followed up concerning the inadequate response, the University produced more documents. usmnews.net reporters are currently reviewing the additional documents and there are reasons to believe the response was again incomplete.

WHO'S MONITORING THESE "PUBLIC SERVANTS"?

The incomplete response to our MORA request, as exemplified above, signals irresponsible accountability and questionable use of taxpayer, student, and faculty resources.

Is anyone holding USM and IHL administrators accountable? IHL members blessed the lease/purchase of the plane. Why not? IHL members are enjoying the use of the plane **at no cost**. So, do not expect the IHL to do its oversight responsibility and hold President Saunders accountable for this extravagant expenditure of USM student and faculty resources. **And, she's giving it away at the same time she's terminating USM academic programs and faculty.** Unless USM faculty and students take charge of their destiny, President Saunders will continue to implement her own vision which, increasingly does not include them.

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