

**QUESTION REVISITED:
WHAT SHOULD A TRIP FROM HATTIESBURG, MS
TO GAINESVILLE, FL COST?**

Usmnews.net is revisiting our report of the trip to Gainesville, FL. Since the initial publication, usmnews.net received additional information that should have been included as part of our original Mississippi Open Records request. Although the original response to the Mississippi Open Records request was represented to be complete, usmnews.net reporters and investigators were able to identify significant gaps and inconsistencies in the information. A follow-up request for "the rest of the story" produced additional documents, including pilots logs. Based on this additional information, produced by the University several weeks later, we are now supplementing these reports.

For those of you commencing your readership of the series with this report, you may wish to read the introductory materials in the report [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 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 17 months of operations. The actual cost per flight hour = $\$591,231.71 \text{ total actual cost} / 95.55 \text{ actual flight hours} = \$6,187.67$. **(Remember, usmnews.net's computation of cost does not include or amortize the \$907,053.85 balloon payment due on the 60th month. If that amount is included, the cost per flight hour is substantially higher than \$6,187.67.)** In any event, 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.

On June 6-7, 2009, a trip to Gainesville, FL was reported in an Interdepartmental Invoice. The trip was confirmed in the Pilot's Trip Log as 3.3 flight hours. Therefore the trip cost taxpayers and students **\$20,419.31** ($\$6,187.67 \text{ per flight hour} \times 3.3 \text{ hours}$). However, the additional information contained in the Pilot's Trip Log was surprising.

To Gainesville, FL And Back

The [Interdepartmental Invoice](#) shows two passengers: Martha Saunders and Richard Giannini. However, the [Pilot's Trip Log](#) (a document that was withheld until legal counsel followed up with a second demand for complete records) shows five additional passengers. According to the

Pilot's Trip Log, the passengers were Martha Saunders, Joe Bailey, Richard Giannini, Gayle Giannini, Doug Rouse, Pam Rouse and Dianne Stark. Martha Saunders is President of USM. Joe Bailey is her spouse. Richard Giannini is the Athletic Director for USM. Gayle Giannini is Mr. Giannini's spouse. Doug Rouse is a member of the IHL. Pam Rouse is his spouse. Dianne Stark is Senior Associate AD/Internal Affairs.

There is no reason to believe that any of these passengers are prospective donors being courted for funding, nor is there any indication they are entitled to a state funded flight on Dr. Saunders' plane to the ball game. In fact, the careful omission of the names from the Interdepartmental Invoice and the University's original efforts to withhold the information suggests that Dr. Saunders knew that identifying the additional passengers was likely to raise questions – the questions usmnews.net is raising now.

The passengers concealed by withholding the documents in the original Mississippi Open Records request were high administration personnel and spouses and an IHL member and his spouse – the very people who are charged with the obligation to correct misuse and mismanagement of taxpayer and student resources entrusted to administrators like President Saunders.

The Interdepartmental Invoice shows the flight charged to the "President's Office"—that's your money, dear taxpayers and students. **The stated purpose was to attend the Baseball Super Regional game. It seems as though the airplane was not used to reduce travel costs or improve the efficiency of administrative time — as represented by Drs. Saunders and Lyman — but was, first and foremost, to enhance the entertainment of USM administrators and their spouses and an IHL Member and his spouse.**

As a final report in this series—expected in a couple of weeks, we shall summarize the numerous flights to ball games and the cost. In the first seventeen months of the lease, the "entertainment" costs for the use of Dr. Saunders' plane by well-placed state and university administrative officials are likely to reach six figures.