

In anticipation of usmnews.net's current Mississippi Open Records request which will update USM's and President Bennett's use of an airplane, N777AQ, usmnews.net offers a history of Bennett's use of this expensive administrator's toy, first leased by past-President Martha Saunders and paid for on an ongoing basis with student and taxpayer money.

Do You Think...?

USM Is Still Squandering Millions on Airplane N777AQ, Part 10

Do you think Dr. Rodney Bennett, on February 4, 2013, would have been thrilled to take a commercial flight to visit Southern Miss? By February 4, 2013, Bennett knew he would be the next Southern Miss president. So, I bet he would have been happy to pay for the commercial flight out of his own pocket!



Rodney Bennett, President, University of Southern Mississippi

On February 1, 2013, a news story reported:

College Board officials said Friday that they want Rodney Bennett, the University of Georgia's vice president of student affairs, to become the next president of 16,000-student USM.

http://blog.gulflive.com/mississippi-press-news/2013/02/rodney_bennett_preferred_candi.html

Let's just say he would have been pleased to have USM pay for a commercial flight from Athens, GA to Hattiesburg, MS. How much does it cost for the commercial flight? \$200? \$400?

There are no other words for it: Squandering Students' Money

On March 11, 2013, we returned to reports about USM's airplane because usmnews.net recently acquired through a Mississippi Open Records Act request another set of information about N777AQ. As a matter of fact, with regard to the [current series](#), reporting the use and actual cost of airplane N777AQ, USM administrators have continued to [materially misrepresent](#) information about the cost of N777AQ.

Several years ago, we began reporting details of USM's costs as reflected in its internal records to expose the true cost of then-president Martha Saunders' extravagant use of student and taxpayer money to purchase an airplane, N777AQ, while, by the way, she was firing dozens of faculty because of a cutback in state financial support.

The updated actual cash cost per flight hour is \$4,840. If the nearly one million-dollar balloon payment is included, the total actual cost per flight hour is **\$6,941**. Think of the \$800 misrepresentation this way: If someone sold you a car for \$20,000 then handed you a bill for \$173,525, what would you call her?

On February 4, 2013, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid a small fortune to fly the IHL designated "preferred candidate" Rodney Bennett to Hattiesburg for a "campus visit." Chad Driskell accompanied Bennett on the flight.

Here's the zinger. And it will hurt you in the wallet. The number of flight hours was 4.5. That translates a cost to students and taxpayers in the amount of **\$31,235**. That's approximately \$31,000 more than the cost of a commercial ticket. Also, keep in mind, I'm not including the costs of automobile transportation to/from the airports, food, lodging, etc. Just the plane ride: **\$31,235!**

People do stupid stuff like this only when they're spending other peoples' money!

Your money!

To date, although the IHL visits usmnews.net regularly and only on weekdays during work-hours, never has anyone from the IHL or USM provided any corrections to our news reports despite the fact that we encourage input or corrections to our reports from all our readers. Of course, USM and the IHL have the same records and documents that they provide in response to usmnews.net's Mississippi Open Records requests.