

Yet Again!

USM Is Still Squandering Millions on Airplane N777AQ Part 14

Readers express disbelief that an airplane, N777AQ, could cost so much and have a hard time believing our reports in usmnews.net. If you have doubts, let me offer again that you review the details for yourselves. A good place to start [is here](#). The decision, then-president Saunders' decision, was verifiably incompetent. An incompetent decision that the IHL and other USM administrators approved and continue to support. N777AQ was and continues to be paid for by uninformed taxpayers and USM students. And now, USM's new president, Rodney Bennett, is taking full advantage of this financially unsound use of N777AQ.

The question you should ask yourselves is: What other financially disastrous decisions have the IHL, USM administrators, and USM faculty made? See, the thousands of records in usmnews.net's archives. It provides insight why the cost of higher education at USM has increased year after year for more than a decade. The IHL and university administrators would like to pacify you with their complaint about reduced state support is the sole reason for the increased tuition and fees. Don't let them get away with it. Review the documents we've gotten from the IHL and USM and learn what they're really doing with your money.

Now for today's report:

In Part 10, we reported that 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." By February 4, 2013, Bennett knew he would be the next Southern Miss president.

USM's records reported that the number of flight hours to taxi Bennett from Athens, GA to USM 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!**

And again.

In Part 11, we reported that on February 6, 2013, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid another small fortune to fly Temple Bennett, the IHL designated "preferred candidate" Rodney Bennett's wife to Hattiesburg from Athens, GA. The cost? **\$22,211**. That's approximately \$22,000 more than the cost of a commercial ticket.

Let's keep a running total of these flights using USM's airplane, N777AQ: **\$53,446!** That's for just two flights taxiing the Bennetts from Athens. The really bad news is that the Bennetts' extravagance has just begun.

And again.

In Part 12, we reported that on February 6, 2013, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid another small fortune to fly USM “president” Rodney Bennett from Hattiesburg to Athens, GA, then to Oxford, MS. The cost? **\$19,435**. Keep in mind, I’m not including the costs of automobile transportation to/from the airports, food, lodging, etc. Just the plane ride.

Let’s continue the running total: **\$72,881**.

And yet again!

On February 7, 2013, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid another small fortune to fly USM “president” Rodney Bennett from Oxford, MS, to Hattiesburg, back to Oxford, then to Athens, GA, back to Meridian, then Gulf Port and on to Hattiesburg. Bennett was accompanied by IHL members Smith and Blakeslee. The number of flight hours was 6.4. The cost of this flight service was **\$44,422**.

Let’s continue the running total: **\$117,303**.

Bennett’s not done yet!

On February 11, 2013, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid another small fortune to fly USM “president” Rodney Bennett from Athens, GA to Hattiesburg. The number of flight hours was 3.3. The cost of this flight was **\$22,905**. USM’s Interdepartmental Invoice states the purpose: “To get Dr. Bennett to campus on a timely manner to participate in the Governor’s press conference relative to the needs after the tornado and discuss plans relative to recovery from the tornado damage.”

Have they lost their minds? you should ask. Bennett wasn’t the president of USM at the time or even an employee of USM at the time or even a resident of Mississippi at the time. Rushing Bennett around in a ridiculously expensive airplane accomplished nothing except a public relations stunt to introduce “an IHL designated candidate for president of USM” that cost Mississippi taxpayers and students **\$22,905!**

Let’s continue the running total: **\$140,208**.

Nothing, and I mean nothing, these administrators do dictate an emergency to act so quickly that they need to fly from one location to another at a cost of **\$140,208** over a period of several days. That is, **\$140,208**, so far.

Dear taxpayers, had enough nonsense, yet? If not, you’ll only guarantee that the waste of your money will continue. You stop their waste or they’ll continue squandering 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 us in our Mississippi Open Records requests.