

Let's Fly To Florida And Offer *Another* Mea Culpa for *Another* Sports Screw-up

Still Squandering Millions on Airplane N777AQ, Part 4

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. Former-president Martha Saunders and former-provost Robert Lyman publicly and repeatedly reported the cost per flight hour of N777AQ as \$800. They were eager to boast about what a cost-effective deal Mississippi taxpayers and USM students were getting with their lease/purchase of N777AQ.

Several years ago, we began reporting details of USM's costs as reflected in its internal records to expose the lie. Saunders and Lyman probably believed they could get away with it -- that no one would ever take the time and/or trouble using the Mississippi Open Records Act to obtain detailed cost and usage records, total the actual costs and the actual number of flight hours, and determine the real cost per flight hour of N777AQ. Of course, simple incompetence--Saunders' and Lyman's incompetence--could explain their \$800 cost per flight hour claim, if it were not for the fact that usmnews.net reported in detail the actual cost per flight hour for years and people from the IHL have for years monitored usmnews.net regularly.

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

On October 11 and 12, 2012, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid a small fortune to taxi a small crowd of USM administrators aboard N777AQ throughout Florida. As you read this report, keep this question in mind, how was USM's students' education advanced by administrators pleading special dispensation for *their* sports screw-up? Since USM provided an "Interdepartmental Invoice" for this jaunt through Florida, usmnews.net can report the official purpose of the trip: "**NCAA Hearing.**"

This jaunt through Florida cost Mississippi taxpayers and USM students **\$34,010.90** just for the use of N777AQ. That doesn't include hotel bills, food bills, etc. the administrators also incurred. The passengers aboard the 4.9 hours of flights from Hattiesburg to Fort Meyers, Florida then back up Florida to Orlando were A. Lucas, Interim USM President, J. Hammond, Athletic Director, K. Pierce, Athletic Compliance Coordinator, K. Kroll, Head Men's Tennis Coach, J. Gray, Senior Associate Director, Athletic Student Services Compliance, and D. Phillips, Associate Professor, Human and Recreational Performance.

Let's remind the readers about the monumental screw-up USM administrators and coaches were involved in.

An [*Inside Higher Ed*](#) article reported the results of the hearing in which USM's administrators and head tennis coach participated:

NCAA Cites Southern Miss for Cash Payments, Administrative Snafus. Former men's tennis coaches at the University of Southern Mississippi (unsuccessfully) bribed a highly recruited player to stay on the team with \$5,000 and a car, paid another athlete \$150 to write an academic paper for him, and offered him \$200 to come back and win an in-progress match, according to a National Collegiate Athletic Association public infractions report...In explaining the university's failure to monitor citation, the report notes a flouting of travel policies and procedures, lack of proper documentation and general administrative oversight of the tennis program, and failure to provide appropriate resources to compliance staff. Also, obviously, the coaches' behavior occurred under supposed administrative watch. The violations took place from January 2008 through May 2010.

Who knows how much in total in time and money, this administrative failure of supervision of USM sports cost Mississippi taxpayers and students? We do know just the flights to one hearing cost them **\$34,010.90**.

What a monumental waste of resources and money without the slightest relation to advancing the education of USM students!