

## **USM's Taxi Service Goes Around and Around Mississippi, Again! So Out of Touch With Education, IHL Members Know No Better or Don't Care**

### **Still Squandering Millions on Airplane N777AQ, Part 5**

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 17 and 18, 2012, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid a small fortune to taxi a small crowd of USM administrators and IHL members aboard N777AQ throughout Mississippi. This jaunt through Mississippi cost Mississippi taxpayers and USM students **\$31,929** just for the use of N777AQ. That doesn't include hotel bills, food bills, etc. the administrators incurred. The passengers aboard the 4.6 hours of flights from Hattiesburg to Gulfport to Tupelo to Oxford to Meridian to Oxford. were A. Lucas, Interim USM president, C. Driskell, Lucas' assistant, C. Pickering, IHL member, D. Rouse, IHL member, E. Blakeslee, IHL member, and C.B. Smith, IHL member.

The USM Interdepartmental Invoice for this **\$31,929** taxi run around Mississippi reported the purpose: "IHL Board Meeting," including the "Return from Board Luncheon , Building Dedication, and meeting with Governor Phil Bryant. The documents we received don't even offer the pretense of the IHL paying for the use of N777AQ. The IHL on rare occasions used to pay \$800 per flight hour for their use. Of course, we know and you know that is short the accurate cost by better than \$6,000 per flight hour. They don't even do that anymore. Why should they? No one holds them accountable and USM students don't know any better.

What a monumental waste of resources and money without the slightest relation to advancing the education of USM students! And what the hey, students can borrow more money to cover administrative waste.