

More Sports!

USM Is Still Squandering Millions on Airplane N777AQ, Part 6

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 then handed you a bill for \$173,525, what would you call her?

On October 28, 2012, Mississippi taxpayers and USM students paid a small fortune to fly Interim president Aubrey Lucas all by himself aboard N777AQ from Hattiesburg to Dallas Fort Worth To New Orleans and back to Hattiesburg. This jaunt through Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas cost Mississippi taxpayers and USM students **\$28,458**. for the use of N777AQ. The USM Interdepartmental Invoice for this **\$28,458**. flight reported the purpose: a sports flight. "Conference USA Board Meeting." A funeral apparently caused a change in the flight plans and we have no idea whether it was an official USM trip or a personal event. Regardless, the flight to C-USA Meeting and a funeral does not advance the education of USM students.

What a monumental waste of resources and money without the slightest relation to advancing the education of USM students! Who cares? Students can borrow more money to cover administrative waste.