

## President Saunders: Inefficient and Ineffective Use of Students' and Taxpayers' Money

### Part 9

#### 2011 Costs and Uses of King Air N777AQ

##### What Good Is This?

usmnews.net reports President Saunders' 2011 costs and uses of a multi-million dollar airplane, King Air N777AQ. You have a right to know. Your money is paying for it.

Our news in this series continues with records recently received from USM via open records requests. This report is entitled "What Good Is This?" for good reason. What good does an obscure public relations award do to advance the education of USM students?

The passengers on the June 8-10, 2011 flight was President Martha Saunders, Joe Bailey [Saunders' husband], Mona Amodeo [head of a PR firm that has made lots of money selling USM PR advice at the request of President Saunders—why is anyone's guess. USM has an outsized PR department as it is.], Brian Morrison [Associate Director Athletics/Mjr Gifts], Lynn McCarver [Creative Services Director (PR), University Communications], Melanie Gardner [Marketing Manager (PR), University Communications], Brittney Westbrook, [Marketing and Creative Mgrer (PR), University Communications]. According to USM [Interdepartmental Invoice](#), dated "6/13/2011," the "Purpose: Attend Silver Anvil Awards Ceremony and make Donor Calls."

No further information was provided with regard to the "Donor Calls": no success, no prospect of success, nothing.

The pilots "Trip Log" for June 8-10, 2011 recorded 8.3 flight hours with destinations of "HBG-UKF (N. Wilkesboro, NC)-TEB (Teterboro, NJ)." The flight included a trip back to Hattiesburg. (No explanation was provided for Dr. Saunders' decision to detour thorough Wilkesboro, NC.)

Here's what it cost USM students and Mississippi taxpayers for just the flight:

**\$45,659.13 = (\$5,501.10 cost per flight hour X 8.3 actual flight hours) [For details of measuring cost per flight hour based on USM's cost records, [click here.](#)]**

**If the contractual obligation President Saunders signed for her airplane with regard to a balloon payment is included, the cost to USM students and Mississippi taxpayers is:**

**\$67,021.75 = (\$8,074.91 cost per flight hour X 8.3 actual flight hours)**

Let me repeat that: the cost of this one round trip flight was **\$67,021.75**. Odd as it seems, President Saunders charged the USM Foundation for her donor trip we reported in Part 4.

This time she charged the “President Office.” This calls into question whether this trip was in fact a donor trip.

Regardless, this is truly a pitiful waste of student and taxpayer money. What for?

A trivial vanity award that does not advance student education one whit. A fun trip for Dr. Saunders and her posse that only wastes student and taxpayer dollars at time when Southern Miss is [far below the median](#) on faculty pay. And, sadly enough the overpriced flight is only part of the costs. The \$67,000+ does not account for the hotels, meals, taxis or other ground transportation, etc. for a small army in one of the most expensive cities in the world. As a matter of fact, President Saunders would have advanced USM’s positive public relations a hundred fold at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars less than the flight by doing something substantive with her time, like educating the [Pep Band](#) about how to behave when the entire nation is watching them at the NCAA Basketball Tournament.