

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

### Part 8

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

##### Closing on Big Donations, Again?

usmnews.net reports President Saunders' 2011 cost and use 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 "Closing on Big Donations, Again?" for good reason. The only passenger on the June 23, 2011 flight was President Martha Saunders. According to USM [Interdepartmental Invoice](#), dated "6/30/2011," the "Purpose: Trip from North Carolina to New Orleans to catch 5:00 p.m. flight to California for Donor Visits." (As an aside, rather than drag the airplane from Hattiesburg to Charlotte, then to New Orleans, then back to Hattiesburg, wouldn't it have been cheaper and easier on everyone, except Dr. Saunders, to just catch a commercial flight from Charlotte to New Orleans?)

No further information was provided: no success, no prospect of success, nothing.

The pilots "Trip Log" for June 23, 2011 recorded 5.3 flight hours with destinations of "HBG-CLT [Charlotte Douglas International Airport]-MSY [Louis Armstrong International Airport]-HBG". No return flight or travel from California is reported. Apparently, President Saunders is quite capable of traveling without the use of N777AQ and its excessive cost per flight hour.

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

**\$29,155.83 = (\$5,501.10 cost per flight hour X 5.3 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:**

**\$42,797.02 = (\$8,074.91 cost per flight hour X 5.3 actual flight hours)**

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, here's what you should have expected from a long-distance personal visit to donors from a university president.** Before Saunders takes a trip aboard N777AQ, the donors should be close to making a very large donation. What are we told in the official records of this trip? No success or prospect for success. No donation (or none worthwhile trumpeting). If that didn't signal incompetence, then a comparison of what it should have cost, if she took a commercial flight does. A first class ticket would cost \$1,000, maybe \$1,500. That would have left enough to support four or five year-long student scholarships.