

## **Governing Boards, Like the IHL, Are Less Engaged In University Budgets Even During Recession**

The office of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning visited usmnews.net yesterday. The visits are not unusual and the editor and reporters welcome their visits and, should they see fit, contributions. The timing of this visit seemed peculiarly appropriate in light of an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 25, 2011. It was entitled "[Boards of Trustees Are Less Engaged on Budes, Survey Finds.](#)"

Despite the pressures of the economic downturn, college trustees are slightly less engaged in budget review and approval than they were before the recession, according to a new report from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Moreover, one-third of boards are lacking in their understanding of budgets, the report says.

The study referenced by The Chronicle of Higher Education article is "The 2011 AGB Survey of Higher Education Governance."

Readers of usmnews.net should not be surprised by the AGB study. As a matter of fact, they have access to documentation that demonstrates a failure of oversight of President Saunders' waste of taxpayer and student resources. Of course, some members of the IHL have [personally benefited](#) from the waste.

Those who care to stop waste and fraud, don't have the authority to stop it; those who have the authority to stop waste and fraud [members of the IHL], don't care to stop it. Here's one of many examples of local waste and fraud that Mississippi authorities don't care to stop. University of Southern Mississippi's president, Martha Saunders, bought an airplane while laying off faculty. What she did with it constitutes the fraud and waste.

Consider one trip aboard the airplane: On June 14 and 16, 2009, a USM Interdepartmental Invoice represents that USM's president "[Dr. Saunders & guests](#)" flew on N777AQ (USM's multi-million dollar airplane Saunders bought/leased during the recession) to Omaha, NE to watch the College World Series. The pilot's log of the Omaha flight provides the passenger list.

"Guests" included: Joe Bailey (President Saunders' husband) and Doug Rouse. Doug Rouse is a member of the Institutions of Higher Learning. The IHL is supposed to oversee the accountability of the use of taxpayers' and students' money. Although President Saunders claimed that the cost per flight hour would be \$800, records obtained through freedom of information requests show that the actual cost per flight hour is about **\$6,000 per flight hour!** Two round trips to the Omaha ball game required 11.7 flight hours. 11.7 flight hours at \$6,000 per flight hour represents the actual cost of the use of the plane was more than \$70,000.

The cost of USM's airplane is an ongoing research project of "tests of social reality." See, "[MS Open Records Request Reveals USM's Actual Costs of President Saunders' Plane](#)"

President Saunders' airplane is an instance of "testing social reality." For a background of the research, see, "A General Theory to Test Social Reality." It provides the structure and guidance for actual tests of social reality which, to date, include "Is Accreditation A Reliable Authority On Academic Quality?" and "University and AACSB Diversity (Diversity in the sense of freedom of speech)." The research reports are free online at the Social Science Research Network. See, <http://ssrn.com/author=397169>

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