

News



IU spent \$13,500 on chartered flight for trustee's TV sports gig

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Quinn Buckner flew from a trustee meeting near Jeffersonville, Indiana, to New Orleans to provide commentary for a Pacers game that night. IU paid for the flight on a private jet (seen above) with funds from the IU Foundation. *(Honaker Aviation)*

Indiana University paid more than \$13,500 for a one-way chartered flight for Board of Trustees Chair Quinn Buckner to travel from a March 2024 board meeting to New Orleans, where Buckner [served as a television commentator](#) for that night's Indiana Pacers game.

Flight records and internal IU communications examined by WFIU/WTIU News indicate that the general fund paid for the flight but was later reimbursed by the IU Foundation. The Foundation is funded by donations unlike the general fund, which gets tax and tuition money.

Alex Tanford, chair of the [Bloomington chapter](#) of the American Association of University Professors, said that while his group is most concerned about academic freedom, he contrasts the expense of Buckner's flight with austerity measures on the Bloomington campus.

"I think the money could have been more usefully spent to preserve academic programs and appointments that are currently being cut, supposedly for lack of available funds," Tanford said.

The IU Foundation's tax-exempt purpose is to "[maximize private philanthropic support for Indiana University](#)," and its web page says the organization is "[always mindful of the trust that is invested in us](#)."

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According to IU financial communications, the President's Office told the University Budget Office to have the Foundation pay.

IU spokesman Mark Bode said in a statement that Buckner had to fulfill responsibilities to the university, by conducting the board meeting that morning, and to the Pacers Sports & Entertainment, where he is [vice president of communications](#) and a broadcast analyst.

"The mode of travel was chosen when alternative options were unavailable," Bode's statement said.

Buckner's trip was on a Hawker 800XP.

"Coast to coast capability along with a spacious cabin is why this aircraft is in such high demand," says the description of the plane on the [website](#) of the aviation company IU used. "With new paint and interior this wifi equipped aircraft might be the best private aviation experience you have ever had."



The interior of Honaker Aviation's Hawker 800XP. (Honaker Aviation)

Buckner was appointed as a trustee by the governor [in 2016](#) and has been chair since 2021. His term is up [on June 30](#). Buckner did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A WFIU/WTIU News analysis shows that from January 2021 to December 2024, all of IU's at least 200 chartered flights were for intercollegiate athletics, except two.

IU president Pamela Whitten [flew by charter from Bloomington to South Bend and back on March 27, 2024](#). The other was [Buckner's trip from Clark County Regional Airport in Jeffersonville, Indiana, to New Orleans International Airport in March](#).

[The requisition order](#) for Whitten's \$8,511 round-trip to South Bend says it was [for student engagement](#) and a meeting with the chancellor. Buckner's \$13,554 ride is described as "transportation needs for the Feb/Mar Board meeting" [in purchasing documents](#).

The trustees meeting adjourned before 11 a.m. ET on March 1, a Friday. The game started at 9 p.m. ET. The charter jet [provided by Honaker Aviation](#) took off at 12:38 p.m. ET, according to flight records. The flight was one hour, 44 minutes.

It's standard practice at the university to [compensate trustees for travel expenses](#) "incurred in the performance of official business." That's typically between \$100 and \$900 per meeting, according to recent receipts.

When trustees are unable to attend in person due to a scheduling conflict, they commonly join meetings on Zoom.

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Charter flights are governed by [a university policy](#), which requires senior administrators to secure written approval from the President’s Office “because of emergency, time or scheduling conflicts, or fiscal responsibility.”

The policy also requires those flights to be for university business, precluding payment for “any expenses of a personal nature.”



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