Using E&G Funds to Pay for Faculty Meals During a Job Candidate Visit

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Using E&G Funds to Pay for Faculty Meals During a Job Candidate Visit

Submitted by: Godfrey Gibbison

2/16/2011

Question:

What is the origin of the rule that E&G funds cannot be used to pay for faculty meals during a job candidate visit?

Is this rule a Georgia Southern rule?

Is this rule a BOR rule?

Rationale:

When a department conducts a faculty search we routinely ask faculty members to accompany the candidate to meals as part of the interview process. It seems to me in those circumstances the faculty are acting on behalf of the university. However, E&G funds cannot be used to reimburse the faculty for their meals. Departments are supposed to pay for these meals using foundation money. (Of course a good alternative would be to take the candidate to lunch in Orlando. In that case we can pay for the mileage and meals with E&G funds.) As it turns out, the rule that faculty meals cannot be paid from E&G funds is the result of another rule. That one states that faculty cannot be reimbursed for meals unless they are absent from campus for 8 hours. I hope someone has a really fantastic explanation why these are the rules and who made them.

Response:

3/3/2011

Dr. Gibbison
Sorry for the delay in responding to your question forwarded to me by Dr. Ron Core. In response to your specific questions, see below:

What is the origin of the rule that E&G funds cannot be used to pay for faculty meals during a job candidate visit?

Reply: The rule is based on State policy managed by the State Accounting Office (SAO). This basic policy is required of all State agencies of which the University System of Georgia is included. It basically states the requirements when on travel status that employees may be reimbursed for meals. The down side of this state wide policy is that it does not address the more unique operating environment of higher education. This is an issue that we struggle with frequently.

No this is not a Georgia Southern rule.

It is a State wide policy of which the BOR is required to comply, as is Georgia Southern.

However, given the fact that some of our operations are unique to higher education the BOR has been granted approval by the SAO for a few variances. One exception is an additional policy when employee food can be paid when not on travel status. Unfortunately, this exception was designed for paying employee meals for certain situations, but faculty/employee interviews is not one of the exceptions.

These policies may be found on the BOR web site at http://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/

Unfortunately, there is no one policy covering all. You can find applicable policies in the sections on travel and miscellaneous.

Let me know if you have other questions.

Kim

Kim H. Brown, CPA
Controller
Georgia Southern University
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Minutes, 3/22/2011: Request for Information: Using Education & General (E&G) Funds to Pay for Faculty Meals during a Job Candidate’s Visit: Godfrey Gibbison (COBA) submitted this request. “What is the origin of the rule that E&G funds cannot be used to pay for faculty meals during a job candidate visit? Is this rule a Georgia Southern rule? Is this rule a BOR rule?” And the rationale for the RFI was: “When a department conducts a faculty search we routinely ask faculty members to accompany the candidate to meals as part of the interview process. It seems to me in those circumstances the faculty are acting on behalf of the university. However, E&G funds cannot be used to reimburse the faculty for their meals. Departments are supposed to pay for these meals using foundation money. (Of course a good alternative would be to take the candidate to lunch in Orlando. In that case we can pay for the mileage and meals with E&G funds.) As it turns out, the rule that faculty meals cannot be paid from E&G funds is the result of another rule. That one states that faculty cannot be reimbursed for meals unless they are absent from campus for 8 hours. I hope someone has a really fantastic explanation why these are the rules and who made them.”

The Senate Executive Committee approved the Request for Information and sent it to Vice President Ron Core. Vice President Ron Core sent it to Kim Brown, Controller, Georgia Southern University, who responded: “Dr. Gibbison, Sorry for the delay in responding to your question forwarded to me by Dr. Ron Core. In response to your specific questions, see below: What is the origin of the rule that E&G funds cannot be used to pay for faculty meals during a job candidate visit?

Reply: The rule is based on State policy managed by the State Accounting Office (SAO). This basic policy is required of all State agencies of which the University System of Georgia is included. It basically states the requirements when on travel status that employees may be reimbursed for meals. The down side of this state wide policy is that it does not address the more unique operating environment of higher education. This is an issue that we struggle with frequently. No this is not a Georgia Southern rule. It is a State wide policy of which the [Board of Regents] BOR is required to comply, as is Georgia Southern. However, given the fact that some of our operations are unique to higher education the BOR has been granted approval by the SAO for a few variances. One exception is an additional policy when employee food can be paid when not on travel status. Unfortunately, this exception was designed for paying employee meals for certain situations, but faculty/employee interviews is not one of the exceptions. These policies may be found on the BOR web site at
http://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/.

Unfortunately, there is no one policy covering all. You can find applicable policies in the sections on travel and miscellaneous. Let me know if you have other questions.”

Michelle Haberland (CLASS) asked the deans and President Keel if there was a way to include the reasonable costs of dining with candidates in the overall budgeting process
for searches. Pointing out that she spent $171 of her own money on a recent successful search, she expressed concern about the discrepancies in the way reimbursements are handled, with some faculty on campus getting reimbursed and others not.

Brooks Keel (President) acknowledged the problem with state law and stated that this is the purpose of college and departmental Foundation Accounts. He explained that this is why he is eager to launch “a capital campaign, to try and help provide those funds.” A capital campaign would not only provide funds for scholarships and endowed professorships, but it could also be used for operating expenses and things not funded by state funds. “Unfortunately, the Foundation just does not have the resources at this point in time to be able to set aside funds like that. We’d love to be able to do so. We’d love to be able to provide Deans with a fairly large amount of flexible money that they could use for a number of things that the state of Georgia just won’t allow us to pay for.” He pointed out that it’s important to understand “that some of these arcane rules are not ours – meaning Georgia Southern’s – and in many cases not the Board of Regents. They are [from] the State of Georgia …and that’s the beast we have to live with.” President Keel expressed sympathy for the difficult situation, saying it was the best we can do.