


Did Niroomand Follow E.E.O. Guidelines? A Look at 2004-05 Faculty Recruiting in the EFIB

Investigators at USMPRIDE.COM ran across some interesting information in the stack of paperwork that was obtained via a “freedom of information” request. The information concerns a faculty recruiting trip made by CoB Associate Dean and Professor of Economics Farhang Niroomand to Philadelphia in January of 2005. This report was meant to be part of the “Special Report” series, however USMPRIDE.COM investigators made the case that it should be an independent report given the serious nature of the findings.

The screen below shows what Niroomand planned to do at the American Economic Association Meeting in Philadelphia in 2005 (January):



**EMPLOYEE
TRAVEL VOUCHER**

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

**IMPORTANT-SEE INSTRUCTION
ON BACK**

Employee **Farhang Niroomand**

Address **Box 5021**

Department Name
COB

Others
On Trip

Purpose and Place of Visit **attend American Economic Asso and interview job candidates in Philadelphia PA**

Next, investigators examined the lodging and meals expenses that are shown below:

MEALS AND LODGING									Total
Date	1/6	1/7	1/8	1/9	1/10				
Departure Time	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM		
Arrival Time	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM	AM-PM		
Breakfast	5 60	7 20	5 00 - 5 10	5 10	7 20				30 20 299
Lunch	10 80	8 00	12 00	25 63	16 80				73 23 ✓
Dinner	87 54 ✓	25 20	24 00	163 90 ✓					300 74 44
Lodging	96 90	96 90	96 90						387 60 -
Total Meals and Lodging									791 77

Note that these expenses total nearly \$800, primarily because of the \$87.54 and \$163.90 dinner expenses that occurred on 6 January 2005, and 9 January 2005, respectively. That expense was enough to arouse suspicion in our investigators. Why is it that dinner on that evening was so costly to the CoB?

Additional paperwork submitted by Niroomand provides the answer. That paperwork is copied below:

**BUSINESS RELATED EXPENSE FORM
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

This form must be completed when the Entertainment Expense box is checked on the Employee Reimbursement form. Please make sure all original receipts are submitted when requesting reimbursement.

Date of Activity	Location of Activity	Business Purpose of Activity	AMOUNT
1/6/05	Sahara Grill (Philadelphia, PA)	Dinner with two faculty members from Leeds Business School in U.K. who lectured to our students in the British Studies Program	87.54
1/9/05	Aromatic Restaurant	Dinner with two job candidates from The University of Illinois and Virginia Tech University	163.90

According to the information above, on 9 January 2005 Niroomand had dinner “with two job candidates from The University of Illinois and Virginia Tech University,” and that dinner cost the CoB the better part of \$200. This dinner raises a number of questions: First, was Niroomand part of the EFIB’s recruiting committee/team in January of 2005, or was he acting independently, as the CoB’s Associate Dean, in participating in EFIB’s 2004-05 job search process? Second, and perhaps more importantly, did Niroomand follow E.E.O. guidelines when he had dinner with these two (unnamed) candidates from Illinois and Virginia Tech? Or, did Niroomand’s decision to invite these two candidates to dinner put other EFIB candidates at a disadvantage in the 2004-05 hiring process?

There are other questions that could be raised here. We would think it prudent for USM’s Equal Employment Opportunity officer to look into this matter, and perhaps reprimand Niroomand if it’s the case that his actions in this case were over the line. We would also invite EFIB faculty to contact USMPRIDE.COM and provide some of the details regarding the 2005-06 hiring process (e.g., How did it go?)

The possibility that *Associate Dean* Niroomand, perhaps acting independently, had dinner with two job candidates near the end of the Conference, while the other job candidates were likely treated to a standard in-room interview with the EFIB Search Committee only, seems to us to be potentially troublesome. As the screen below indicates, CoB Dean Harold Doty sanctioned Niroomand’s “recruiting trip” to Philadelphia, a trip that cost the CoB a hefty sum:

Report all expenditures, including expenses paid for with a travel advance. If the department limits the total expenditure, enter the amount on the “Maximum Reimbursement Allowed” block.	Total Other Expenses	168	50
	Total Expenses	1,196	97
	MAXIMUM REIMBURSEMENT ALLOWED →	1,196	97
			37

Employee Signature *F. Niroomand* Date 1/12/05

Approved By *[Signature]* Date 1/12/05

We invited both Niroomand and Doty to provide an explanation for events described in this report.