

Accepting Gifts from Vendors

7/22/2014

History

“No charge” items occasionally appear on invoices being submitted for payment. Items have included cookies, radios, coolers and personal care items. While we appreciate our vendors wanting to reward our patronage, this type of behavior violates the Ohio Ethics Law. The core issue is that we as a public institution should not appear to support or endorse any particular vendor over another. We should also not project the image that we may be swayed by gifts of any size.

Policy

The State of Ohio Ethics Law <http://ethics.ohio.gov/education/overview.shtml> is a legal document signed by all University employees upon employment with the University. **The law states that all public (and therefore University) employees should not accept gifts of substantial value.** While substantial value is not clearly defined in the Ethics Law itself, the University recommends accepting no gifts from vendors or sponsors.

The Ohio Ethics Law expressly states that public employees may not use their position to obtain anything of value that would improperly affect them in carrying out their duties. Thus, gifts from prospective vendors or consultants or potential future employees may not be accepted unless they are of minimal intrinsic value. This applies to gifts of all kinds, including but not limited to goods, services, meals and entertainment. The University considers that the law applies to all individuals (administrators, faculty, and staff) in the department.

All gifts, no matter how small, that are given to the University are University property. In absolutely no instance should items be taken home or kept for personal use. Violation of this could lead to dismissal and possibly prosecution by the State of Ohio.

Procedure

Items such as food and other perishables should be declined whenever possible or donated to local food banks. In those instances when items are un-returnable and no donation center is available, items should be shared with other employees and placed in the open as a general offering for the public. The office should make every effort to discourage future contributions. This will help prevent any question of whether or not the gift was accepted for personal use.

Radios and other electronics which are un-returnable should be used by the office for business purposes. If an office receives a gift it cannot use or cannot store, it should be run through the University surplus department. <http://controller.osu.edu/smd/smd-home.shtml>

If companies would like to show their support for Ohio State University Extension, you should recommend they provide reduced pricing or special offers. We gladly welcome their support.



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AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES