Governor Limits Employees Gifts under the State Ethics Law

Northeastern employees should be aware of recent and important changes to the state ethics law, the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act. A new Executive Order imposes significant limitations on the acceptance of gifts. As state employees, Northeastern employees are generally prohibited by law from accepting any gift from a “prohibited source” (individuals or entities who are seeking official action from the University, conducting or seeking to do business with the University, are regulated by the University, are Illinois lobbyists, or who are immediate family members of any individuals falling into the preceding categories). Certain exceptions permitted Northeastern employees to accept gifts, including the $75 food and refreshments exemption and the $100 gift exemption. 5 ILCS 430/10-15. These exemptions have been significantly curtailed.

Per the Governor’s Executive Order 15-09, food and refreshments offered by a prohibited source may be accepted by a state employee only when provided de minimis at a business meeting or reception attended by the employee as part of their official duties. This means the prior $75 food and refreshments exemption from the state ethics law is NO LONGER applicable. Additionally, Executive Order 15-09 removes the exception permitting state employees to accept small gifts during the calendar year having a cumulative total value of less than $100.

Accordingly, Northeastern employees may only accept de minimis food and refreshments from prohibited sources. Examples of de minimis food and refreshments include a boxed lunch or one soda or cocktail at an evening event. In the alternative, Northeastern employees may pay out of pocket for food and refreshments that exceed the de minimis amount or partake and donate the cost of the food and refreshments to a nonprofit charity. In addition, Northeastern employees may no longer accept ANY small gifts totaling less than $100. The revised state ethics law will be strictly construed by the state ethics office.

Please contact the University’s Ethics Officer for any questions: Natalie Brouwer Potts, eeo@neiu.edu, 773-442-5412.