

31st & Pearl

CoB Airways

Every time we turn around Niroomand's travel expenses seem to rise like the red bar on a United Way Campaign Fund sign. The tab now sits at more than \$24,000 over an 18-month period, give or take a week. Though a recent posting on usmpride.com ("Niroomand's Pots of Money") attributes roughly half of that total to Niroomand's grant, that still leaves over \$12,700 in USM-funded travel during that time frame. Of course, we wouldn't want readers to believe that we think that the compartmentalization shouldn't be scrutinized further. We were under the impression that the usual process in this situation would be for the grant recipient to "buy out" of his or her teaching duties, thus allowing grant funds to support another instructor. In this case, it seems to us as though the grant recipient is hanging on to the teaching duties in order to retain the funds for travel purposes, even if that means missing a significant number of classroom contact minutes.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report issued in 2003, per-capita tax revenue in Mississippi was \$2,214 the year before Niroomand's first trip on record in the other reports available on this website. Using this figure, along with the travel expenditures that remain after accounting for grant funds, support for Niroomand's travel over the 18-month period required the full-time (over one year) efforts of 5.7 Mississippi taxpayers. This is quite an astonishing feat.

Another point warrants consideration. That is, Niroomand's salary has risen from \$72,747, at the beginning of 1997-1998, to \$133,656, at the end of 2005-2006. That's an increase of \$60,909. Of course, we realize that he moved from a regular faculty line to an administrative position, but there is a lot of room in \$60,909 to grow on. A \$700 per month travel expense is over the top in *any* situation. Given the salary figures above, this case seems to stretch even beyond that. What's next?