

Expenditures To Pay for an NPS Pathways Intern's College Tuition

Report Date: January 22, 2015

OIG investigated allegations that National Park Service (NPS) employees improperly used Government purchase cards (GPCs) to pay the tuition of an NPS Pathways intern. Reportedly, the NPS chief of interpretation and education (CIE) directed administrative staff to charge three separate GPCs to pay for a semester of school for the intern.

Our investigation confirmed that three different NPS administrative personnel made GPC payments totaling approximately \$10,442 for the intern's tuition costs. The CIE told us that the intern's ability to obtain a doctorate degree was an important aspect of her credentialing as a professional in her job field at NPS; thus, the CIE viewed the tuition payments as justified.

We learned, however, that the intern was not actually enrolled in courses for the first semester of 2014, which violated the requirements of the Pathways internship program. NPS did ensure that the intern was enrolled as of June 2014. We also learned that no training plan or service agreement was required before NPS made the tuition payments, and the service agreement with the school did permit tuition assistance from Government employers.

We provided this report to NPS for information only and did not require a response.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued internally to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This summary was posted to the web on October 28, 2015.

