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Policy for: All Campuses
Procedure for: Columbia
Authorized by: Leslie Brunelli
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I. Policy

- A. Travel is deemed to be official travel of the University for the purpose of conducting business of the University, to include but not limited to, attending professional meetings, special demonstration meetings and other related meetings. Expenses related to the cost of relocating/moving are not classified as travel (see University Policy [FINA 1.08](#) Relocation Expenses). Students traveling as official representatives of the University and travel by sanctioned student organizations will be subject to the same policies and procedures as other University travelers except where noted in policies and procedures. This policy is applicable to all travel, regardless of the source of funds used for reimbursement.
- B. A traveler on official business will exercise the same care in incurring expenses and accomplishing an assignment that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.
1. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays or luxury accommodations unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of an assignment are not considered exercising prudence.
 2. Travel by commercial airlines will be in coach or tourist class except where emergencies require an exception. Exceptions for first class airfare will be paid and/or reimbursed from funds other than operating funds (A funds).
 3. Transportation to and from business destinations will be by the most economical method. In calculating the most economical method, the travel time, and any resulting extra funds used for meals and lodging costs should be considered in addition to transportation costs.

- C. Reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses of individuals will vary depending upon the circumstances and conditions, including the extent of benefit expected to accrue to the individual and the University, along with the competing demands on available funds. The expenditure of funds from sources other than general fund appropriations is subject to the same limitations and policies applicable to the expenditure of appropriated funds.
1. Each administrator shall determine the appropriateness of such travel and the extent to which the University is to participate in defraying travel and subsistence expenses. Such arrangements should be clearly indicated on the Travel Authorization form.
 2. Financial arrangements may vary, from token University participation in the costs, up to the maximum travel and subsistence allowance applicable to regular official travel.
 3. Maximum reimbursement: State law provides that faculty and staff, while traveling on business of the University, shall be allowed reimbursement for subsistence expenses incurred and paid. They shall, upon presentation of a paid receipt, be allowed reimbursement for actual expenses incurred for lodging up to a maximum of \$300.00 per day per person excluding taxes. Lodging expenses should be reasonable, taking into consideration location, purpose of travel or other extenuating circumstances. The employee shall be reimbursed for the actual expenses incurred in obtaining meals except that such costs shall not exceed the maximum per day meal allowance (See II. J.1.). Meals that have been paid for as part of a conference registration will not normally be reimbursed.
- D. Travel reimbursement for employees will be made via direct deposit to an employee's bank account.
1. Employee travel reimbursements will be deposited into the bank account on file for payroll direct deposit. Employees should have a registered e-mail address on the VIP system to receive notification of deposit. See <https://vip.sc.edu/>.
 2. Non-employees and students will be mailed a check for travel reimbursements.
- E. Travel reimbursements are processed bi-weekly via the accounting checkwrite process; the days are usually Monday and Wednesday. Holidays, closing schedule, and technical difficulties may alter this schedule. Prior to processing the reimbursement, the Travel Authorization (TA) must be approved by department, Contract & Grant, or International Support, as applicable. Travel Reimbursement Vouchers (TRV), including TRVs for registration fees, take approximately ten(10) business days to process from date of receipt. Travel Reimbursement Vouchers (TRV) should be submitted within two weeks after travel return date.

F. Travelers may combine personal and University business travel, provided the date(s) and destination(s) of personal related travel are included on the Travel Authorization in the “purpose of the trip” field. (See II. N.)

II. Procedures

A. Expense Classification of Travel

52021 Non-USC Employee-Consultants, Lecturers, Other Expense category used only for travel associated with a person providing consultation, guest lecturers or other services for the University

52022 Student Travel
Expense category used for student travel and student field trips

52023 Employment Interview Travel Expense category used only for travel associated with visitation of a potential employee. It should not be used for travel expenses incurred by University personnel in pursuit of prospective employees.

52024 USC Employee Travel Domestic
Expense category used for travel associated with (1) professional meetings, conventions or seminars, (2) negotiations on grants, contracts and other legal matters and (3) other travel not specifically covered elsewhere.

52025 USC Employee Travel Foreign
Expense category used for travel that is not within the United States, Canada or Puerto Rico.

52028 USC Athletic Department Employee Conferences and Conventions
Expense category used for travel by Athletic Department employees when traveling to donor meetings, coaches meetings, etc.

54541 Participant Travel
This expense category is to be used for participant travel on grant funds if the grant has participant cost budgeted. This should not be used for USC students or USC employees.

54542 Participant Travel – Student
This expense category is to be used for USC student participant travel on grant funds if the grant has participant cost budgeted.

59421 USC Athletic Department Employee Recruiting
This expense category is to be used for travel by Athletic Department employees when traveling for recruiting purposes.

B. Travel Authorization

1. Individuals traveling on University business should do so only after submitting an approved Travel Authorization form to the Controller's Office. Individuals traveling on University business for which they will not be reimbursed do not have to file an authorization with the Controller's Office.
2. Authorizations for travel by:
 - a. faculty and professional staff are to be approved by the department head, chair, dean, or designee as appropriate.
 - b. academic department heads, chairs and directors are to be approved by the appropriate dean or designee.
 - c. academic deans are to be approved by the office of the provost or designee.
 - d. vice presidents and the provost are to be approved by the president or designee.
 - e. administrative department heads and directors are to be approved by the appropriate vice president or designee.
 - f. for Student Travel approval, see II. C 1-3 below.
3. If the travel reimbursement is to be paid from funds of more than one department, all departments must approve the authorization.
4. Approved Travel Authorization forms are to be forwarded to the Controller's Office immediately, at which time the expense will be committed against the account.
5. Individuals who do repetitive travel for a fixed period of time, i.e., one semester or more, should file a "blanket" Travel Authorization for the estimated cost for the entire period. The Travel Reimbursement voucher(s), under an approved "blanket" Travel Authorization, should be forwarded to the Controller's Office through the appropriate administrative channel.
6. A Travel Reimbursement Voucher can exceed the approved Travel Authorization amount up to \$100 without departmental approval.

C. Travel and Subsistence Allowance for Students

Students traveling as official representatives of the University or sanctioned student organizations are subject to the same policies and procedures as University faculty and

staff except where noted in policy and procedures. Reimbursement may range from token financial support up to the maximum travel and subsistence allowance applicable to regular official travel.

1. For the Columbia campus, the Vice President for Student Affairs or designated representative must approve all student organization travel and make the determination as to method of travel and degree of financial support.
2. For the regional and four-year campuses, the respective dean of students, campus dean or chancellor, or designee, as applicable, must approve travel authorization for students.
3. Other official University student travel will be treated the same as faculty and staff travel and must be approved by the department head, dean, or designee whose budget will be charged for the travel.

D. Group Travel

1. **Employee Travel- Domestic and Foreign**
To comply with State reporting requirements, a separate Travel Authorization must be prepared for each individual in the group.
2. **Student Travel**
More than one individual may travel under one Travel Authorization. However, one person must be designated responsible for the funds. This person must account for all expenditures of the group and will be reimbursed by the submission of a Travel Reimbursement voucher. If such an arrangement is not desirable, a separate Travel Authorization must be submitted for each traveler.

E. Method of Transportation

The method of transportation used by individuals will be the most practical and economical, with due consideration given to the time involved, extra meals, lodging costs and the mission to be accomplished.

F. Procurement of Common Carrier Tickets

If a common carrier is to be used, the individual should contact a University approved Travel Agency. Due to logistics, campuses outside of Columbia may use a local travel service and forward the invoice with a completed Travel Reimbursement Voucher to Columbia for payment.

To view University approved Travel Agencies, see [University Approved Travel Agencies](#).

1. The individual must furnish the Travel Authorization number, shown on the authorization form, to the travel agent. A Travel Authorization should be completed and approved prior to the order being placed. The travel agency will then forward the tickets to the individual's campus office. The ticket will be charged to the University's Travel Department Diners Club account. If the approved Travel Authorization form has not been received in the Controller's Office at the time payment is required, the tickets will be charged to the individual's general departmental fund.
2. If a ticket is purchased by an employee via any method other than an approved travel agency (i.e. Internet), the original passenger receipt should be attached to the Travel Reimbursement voucher. For an E-ticket, the traveler should include with the reimbursement voucher a printed copy of the confirmation and itinerary; or request a passenger receipt at the airline gate. Service fees charged on tickets for Faculty/Staff and Students by non-approved Travel Agencies are not reimbursable.

G. Special Rates

1. Air Travel (Apex, Super-Saver, Excursion, Frequent Flyer, etc.) Often the airlines offer reduced rates on tickets, especially tickets for foreign travel, which could result in substantial savings to a University department. To take advantage of the reduced rates, travel plans must be made well in advance of the trip. It is strongly suggested that as it becomes apparent a trip will take place, contact should be made with one of the approved travel agencies to discuss reduced rate possibilities. Travelers should select air carriers based on costs and time criteria, not on whether frequent flyer premiums are given. Employees should ensure that frequent flyer premiums earned while traveling on University business be used to reduce the cost of subsequent business travel whenever possible.
2. Hotels, Motels, Car Rental

Some hotels, motels and car rental agencies may give a special rate to University and State employees. Inquiries regarding these discounts should be made, and advantage taken of the lower rates, whenever offered. Some examples (but not limited to) are:

Hotels-Motels

Hilton
Hyatt
Marriott
Howard Johnson's

Car Rental Agencies

Alamo Rent-A-Car
Budget Rent-A-Car
Hertz
Avis
Enterprise

SC Hotel/Motel Government Rates Web site:
<http://procurement.sc.gov/PS/agency/PS-agency-procurement-forms.phtm>
(click on Hotel Motel Directory for Government Employees)

H. Procurement of a State Vehicle for Travel

If a State vehicle is to be used, the traveler should reserve the car by contacting the State Fleet Management Office http://www.sc.edu/vmps/statefl/statefl_rq.htm. The request should be submitted as early as possible. Charges for the use of the vehicle will be made directly to the appropriate University account.

I. Use of Private Vehicle

Under varying circumstances, it may be appropriate to use a personal vehicle. University policy encourages air carrier for travel in excess of 500 miles round trip. However, if a personal vehicle is used but a State vehicle is available, reimbursement rates are reduced to the lower rate. Generally, the University will not reimburse (regardless of the source of funds) for the use of a personal car within 10 miles of an employee's official headquarters and/or place of residence. However, when traveling to and from the airport for an out of town trip, mileage traveled in excess of normal commuting mileage is allowable. (See II. J.3 for reimbursement rates). If a privately owned vehicle is used on official University business and an accident occurs, the operator's insurance is responsible for payment up to the maximum liability. Afterwards, the University's insurance will pay up to the University's maximum liability. (See University Policy [LESA 4.06 Vehicle Liability Insurance--General.](#))

J. Reimbursement

A travel reimbursement voucher (TRV) needs to be properly completed and signed by the traveler attesting that the expenses incurred were valid. The Travel Reimbursement Voucher (TRV) should also be approved by the department incurring the expense. For approval signature needed see II. B. 2. a-f. In rare cases where the traveler is not available to sign the TRV, written documentation must be provided designating another individual to complete and sign the TRV. Written documentation must accompany each individual TRV. The documentation should explain why the traveler is unable to sign and must be signed by the Department Head.

1. Meals:

a. In-State/Out of State Meals

When on travel status meals will be reimbursed based on time of departure and time of return up to the maximum allowance shown below. Receipts are not required. These rates are applicable to all sources of funds, Federal, State, etc.

To view maximum meal allowances, see [Maximum meal allowances](#).

NOTE: If an individual on one-day travel (out-of-state) receives reimbursements for meals this amount is considered income and will be reported on a W-2 Form. One-day meal reimbursements are prohibited for in-state travel.

- b. Non-employee meals (i.e. interviewee, consultant, speaker, etc) are reimbursed at the meal rates as listed above. Only the meal for the non-employee is reimbursed through a TRV. Reimbursement for host/hostess meals should be processed via a DEV and follow procurement policies.
- c. Foreign Travel-Meals
If receipts are not provided, only the maximum daily rate for meals as established by the Federal Government for travel in foreign areas can be claimed. When claiming reimbursement for actual expenses of meals that exceed the daily rate, receipts are required. Note: the rates listed include an amount for incidental charges. This amount cannot be included in the meal reimbursement request. (See breakdown at http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=114&menu_id=92 Incidental expenses must be accounted for under "other expenses" on the TRV). See daily rates at http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp .

2. Lodging

- a. Actual hotel/motel cost will be reimbursed not to exceed \$300.00 per day per person excluding taxes.
- b. Original itemized receipts for hotel or motel expenditures must be attached to the Travel Reimbursement voucher when the voucher is submitted for processing.
- c. Reimbursement will not be made for overnight accommodations within 50 miles of the traveler's official headquarters and/or place of residence.
- d. Prepayments - Generally, lodging is not prepaid. If the hotel requires prepayment, the University will reimburse the individual with a paid receipt. The University will prepay lodging to the hotel for student travel with an invoice.

3. Transportation Expenses

- a. Transportation will be paid in full at coach or tourist class rates.

- b. If a private vehicle is authorized the University will pay mileage or economy airfare whichever is less. Reimbursement per mile includes all expenses of vehicle operation including insurance and repairs.

Mileage is reimbursed at the rate set by the State of SC. These rates are applicable for all sources of funds including Federal, State, etc. To view the current mileage rates, see [Mileage rates](#).

4. Other Expenses

Any business expenses due to travel status other than those listed below, should be itemized on the Travel Authorization form. The following expenses may be reimbursed:

- a. Conference and Registration Fees - Receipts must be furnished. If the conference/registration fee includes meals, only in extenuating circumstances will additional reimbursement be made for those meals.
- b. Taxi/limousine service
- c. Parking Fees - Receipts must be furnished. Reimbursement of fines will not be made for moving or non-moving violations.
- d. Telephone Facsimile - Receipts must be furnished. One brief personal telephone call per day is allowable and reimbursable up to \$5.00 per day with proper documentation. Personal calls should be listed separately from business calls on the reimbursement voucher. Frequent travelers should contact the University Technology Services Business Office to receive a calling card.
- e. Drayage - Reimbursement will be made only when an employee flies into a major out-of-state city where there is no option concerning baggage or when traveler has heavy excess equipment needed for business purposes. Receipts must be furnished.
- f. Toll/gasoline charges
- g. Car Rental – Receipts must be furnished.
- h. Baggage Fees – Receipts must be furnished.

Note: the following expenses are non-reimbursable:

- Gratuities
- Supplies
- Service fee for using non-approved Travel Agency
- ATM transaction fees

- Copying charges
- Membership dues

5. Dependents Accompanying Employee

If a dependent accompanies an employee on an authorized business trip, only those expenses that can be directly attributed to the employee will be reimbursed.

6. When claiming reimbursement for expenses that are in foreign currency, the Travel Reimbursement voucher should be completed in US dollars, and the rate of exchange should be documented.

K. USC Corporate Card Program

University employees who travel on University business are eligible to receive a USC corporate card with department approval. This program is intended to provide employees with a means of financing their official University travel and offers many advantages to both the employee and the University.

The corporate card is to be used only for University business travel expenses and the cardholder is responsible for making payments directly to the credit card company. Applications for the corporate card are available through the University Controller's Office, <http://web.admin.sc.edu/ap/announcements.php>.

L. Travel Advance Funds

The University has a small travel advance fund for student travel from which up to 70 percent of the reimbursable subsistence, mileage and other expenses of a trip can be advanced. Applicable conditions are as follows:

1. Employees

Because of the availability of the USC corporate travel card, travel advances will not be made except under extenuating circumstances. A written request must be submitted to, and approved by, the University Bursar. Under no circumstances will an advance be made to the holder of a USC corporate card.

2. Students

- a. An approved Travel Authorization must be on file in the Controller's Office.
- b. Approved projected personal expenses and private automobile use, totaling \$25 or more, must be scheduled for reimbursement to the person traveling.

- c. If more than one student is traveling on the same approved Travel Authorization, one student must be designated as custodian of the advance and required to complete the Travel Reimbursement voucher.
- d. The advance will be made to the traveler/custodian in person at the Bursar's Office on the last business day before departure.
- e. The traveler should submit the Travel Reimbursement voucher within seven business days of return.
- f. Within three business days after receiving notification of availability, the traveler/custodian must personally pick up the reimbursement check from the Office of Financial Services and repay the travel advance.
- g. The amount of available advance funds is very limited. Persons who violate the above procedure will not be eligible for future travel advances.

M. Change in Approved Travel Plans

1. Altered Plans

If travel plans are altered from those previously submitted and approved, either a memorandum or e-mail which outlines the changes, references the original, Travel Authorization number and is approved by the authorizing official, or designee, OR a new Travel Authorization superseding the previously approved authorization must be submitted to the Controller's Office.

2. Canceled Plans

In order to cancel travel plans that were previously submitted and approved, a memorandum or e-mail noting the Travel Authorization number should be forwarded to the Controller's Office.

N. Inclusion of Personal Travel with University Business Travel

- 1. Only business travel dates should be included in the "date" field of the Travel Authorization.
- 2. The date(s) and destination(s) of the personal related travel should be listed in the "purpose of the trip" field on the Travel Authorization.
- 3. Travelers will not receive reimbursement of personal related travel expenses.
- 4. The traveler must provide cost comparison documentation of personal versus business related travel expenses (ie. printed airfare quote of business travel dates only) with the Travel Reimbursement Voucher.

5. If other individuals accompany the traveler requiring the need for double-occupancy, written verification of a hotel's applicable single room rate should be obtained and submitted along with the actual receipt and Travel Reimbursement Voucher.

O. International Visiting Scholar – Advance Airline Ticket Procedure

Departments will now have an additional means of paying for the airline ticket for visiting international scholars sponsored by USC.

TA's may be issued in advance to purchase an airline ticket for visiting international scholars under the following conditions.

1. The host department will issue a valid invitation letter using language approved by the Office of International Support for Faculty and Staff, and a signed copy will have been returned to the issuing department showing the invitee has received and accepted the terms of his/her invitation. *Best practice is to receive the acceptance letter at least 90 days prior to the planned travel date.*
2. The host department will submit an approved and signed TA – Travel Authorization form indicating in top left corner “International Airline Ticket Advance” to the Travel Office along with:
 - a. A memo justifying the need for the advance purchase of a ticket rather than reimbursing the invitee upon arrival in the US;
 - b. The signed invitation letter from the department with an acceptance from the prospective visiting scholar
 - c. The biographic data page of the visiting scholar's passport
 - d. A valid US visa page from the same passport showing B-1 or B-1/B-2; *or* an ESTA approval notice for those coming from a Visa Waiver country;

This TA may only be used for the advance purchase of an airline ticket and will be closed immediately upon payment. The ticket must be refundable or purchased with appropriate trip insurance. The ticket may only be purchased from an approved provider and may only cover travel immediately necessary for the invitee to perform the function for which USC has invited the scholar.

III. Reason for Revision

Policy revised due to departmental reorganization, departmental name changes, and to comply with changes on state approval procedures. Policy updated to revise processing time from 5 to 10

days, to add time that Travel Reimbursement Vouchers should be submitted upon return to campus to add Departmental approval requirement for TRVs, and to add personal travel inclusion.