

Financial

Board of Trustees Policy

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| SUBJECT: Travel Guidelines and Procedures | NUMBER: 6.1.1 |
| | DATE: |
| | SUPERSEDES: |

This document directly relates to the Travel Guidelines and Procedures of SUNY Schenectady.

Travel Guidelines and Procedures

1. Traveler's Responsibility

- All travel requests must be submitted and approved at least 48 hours in advance of travel.
- Familiarize yourself with the College's guidelines and procedures
- Complete and submit both your travel request and reimbursement accurately and timely¹
- Identify your official station² and its effect on your eligibility for travel reimbursement and the amount of travel reimbursement which you may claim
- Obtain necessary approvals for travel³, as required by College policy
- Obtain all necessary travel documents, including tax-exempt certificate, etc.
- Maintain an accurate record of expenses including departure and return times, and mileage if driving College or personal vehicle
- Obtain required receipts and other proof of expenses
- Submit reimbursement only for actual allowed expenses within reimbursements rates
- Forward with all documentation to Purchasing in the Office of Administration in a timely manner

2. Supervisor/Vice President's Responsibility

- Familiarize yourself with College travel guidelines and procedures
- Obtain necessary approvals for your staff's travel as required by College policy
- Identify staff's official stations and its effect on their travel reimbursement
- Approve requests for staff to be in "travel status" only when necessary
- Review traveler's itinerary to make sure travel is done in the most cost effective manner and that it is in the best interest of the College⁴
- Determine if attendance at conventions or seminars is in the best interest of the College
- Verify that travel request is within allowable rates
- Review and certify traveler's reimbursements and that all required documentation is attached and complete

3. Office of Administration's Responsibility

- Ensure that all travel requests and reimbursements comply with travel guidelines and procedures
- Ensure that employees have obtained required advance approvals for travel requests before purchase order is issued and/or payment is advanced
- Authorize payment of travel costs only after approvals and travel evidence⁵ have been received
- Verify all charges
- Designate an employee's official station which is in the best interest of the College
- Provide and manage all travel related documents (tax exempt certificates, etc.)
- Ensure compliance with IRS regulations for correct reimbursement
- Review and approve travel requests and reimbursement completely and in a timely manner
- Ensure that exceptions or waivers are properly approved
- Obtain all necessary travel documentation from traveler and take necessary steps to issue reimbursement in a timely manner

4. Official Station

Your Official Station is your usual work location. The purpose of an official station is to establish when you are in travel status and eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses. Travel between your home and official station is considered commuting and is not reimbursed.

Travel within a one mile radius of your official work station will not be reimbursable.

5. Travel Reimbursements within 50 Miles of Official Station

Occasionally employees find themselves attending official work functions such as meetings or conferences that are within 50 miles of their official work station. In addition, often these functions may run for multiple days and begin early in the morning or have late evening sessions that make it difficult for employees that are not lodging on-site. Therefore, College staff may be allowed reimbursement for travel costs (meal, lodging, transportation) when attending functions within 50 miles of their own workstation under the following guidelines:

- **REQUIRED:**
 - Employee is traveling on official business, and
 - Vice President or designee approves the employee's expenses, and
 - Departmental budget has funds to support the expense.

- JUSTIFICATIONS:
 - For reimbursement of travel, including meals, lodging, and transportation, the employee is a committee member of the group/organization holding the event and is required to be onsite at all times, or
 - For reimbursement of meals, the employee is attending business-related events or meetings that commence prior to 7:00 am and/or conclude after 7:00 pm

6. Travel Status- 50 Miles Beyond Official Station

When you are working at a location more than 50 miles from both home and official station, you are considered to be in *travel status*, and eligible for reimbursement of meals, travel and lodging. Except when otherwise allowed (see Section 5 “Travel Reimbursements within 50 Miles of Official Station”), you must be in travel status to receive reimbursement for meals, travel and lodging.

6.1 Transportation Expenses

When choosing the method of transportation you should consider several factors, such as distance traveled, time to travel this distance, number of travelers, numbers of locations to be visited, and what type of transportation may be available. It is recommended that college personnel use an authorized travel agent available through the New York State OGS Centralized Contract when booking travel and lodging in order to take advantage of the low rates government that are available and reimbursement guarantees if travel needs to be cancelled. To the extent possible, all meals should be paid in advance.

If a more expensive method is used, personnel are required to obtain approval from the individual in the traveler’s chain of command who reports directly to the College President. Many airlines offer lower fares for travel on weekends. Employees should make every effort to utilize super saver rates when possible, if a savings is realized. To obtain the lower airfare, there may be additional lodging and meal expenses. A cost comparison should be done to determine cost effectiveness (showing airfare savings exceeds extra costs incurred). If travel is booked without utilizing the OGS contract and a cancellation is needed, the College will not reimburse the traveler for the cancellation fees or other penalties incurred.

6.2 Common Carrier

A common carrier (train, bus, plane) usually results in the most economical method of transportation. This is true especially for bus or train travel between New York City and Albany. The most economical method should be used unless there are circumstances that would make this unreasonable. This applies to inner city travel as well. Public transit rather than taxis should be used whenever feasible.

7. Meals and Lodging

Only breakfast and dinner are reimbursed; lunch is not. Reasonable and customary gratuities and incidental expenses are included in the reimbursement amounts. No alcohol beverages will be reimbursed. When in travel status, meals will be reimbursed on a per diem basis.⁶

In order to receive the full per diem, it must be necessary for the traveler to be in an overnight status and be eligible for both breakfast and dinner. You may be eligible for breakfast on the day of departure or dinner on the day of return, if you meet the following time limits:

- Breakfast
 - You will be allowed reimbursement for breakfast if you have to depart for the trip before 7:00 a.m.

- Dinner
 - You will be allowed reimbursement for dinner on the day the trip ends if you arrive after 7:00 p.m.

When in travel status, you are allowed reimbursement of actual lodging costs plus a per diem allowance for meals at government rates set forth in the GSA website. The GSA amounts set forth at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287> are based on the physical location of your work assignment. You must itemize all expenses, including meals, (each meal must be itemized separately) for which you will be reimbursed under actual expense. Additionally, receipts are required to claim reimbursement for lodging. The reimbursement amounts are based on rates established by the federal government and vary by county; therefore, both the county and the city must be indicated on your travel request and reimbursement documents. No taxes should be paid within New York State (make sure to bring the proper documentation to ensure tax exemption). For out-of-state travel, local and state taxes will be reimbursed in addition to the per diem amount.

8. Weekend Allowance

You are allowed travel, lodging and meals expenses for the weekends when it is necessary for you to be in travel status attending an approved work related event.

When an approved work related event is within 50 miles of your official station or home, and you are leaving from home to attend the approved work related event, you will be entitled to claim travel reimbursement in accordance with the “lesser of mileage rule”. This rule means that when travel is from an employee’s home to an alternate work location to attend an approved work related event, transportation expenses will be reimbursed using the lesser of 1) mileage

between the home and alternate work location or 2) mileage between the employee's official work station and the alternate work location, times the mileage rates as described below.

9. Mileage Rates

When using your own car for College business, you will be reimbursed a specified rate for mileage. This rate includes all charges for gas, oil, maintenance, repairs, and insurance on your car. No other charges will be reimbursed. Reimbursement shall be at the rates established by the IRS, which can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=250882,00.html>.

10. . Parking and Toll Charges

All reasonable and necessary parking and toll charges will be reimbursed. Tolls that you have paid by the EZ-Pass method will be reimbursed, but you must provide a copy of the EZ-Pass statement, after redacting other travel recorded on the statement prior to submitting it for reimbursement.

11. . Taxi Charges

All travelers should seek the most economic means of transportation. Taxi charges will be approved only if no super shuttle or common carrier is otherwise available. If approved, reasonable and necessary taxi fares will be reimbursed upon presentation of a receipt, along with a customary tip.

12. Conferences

The employee should make every effort to secure lodging to attend conferences, within the allowable government rate. If the lodging rate exceeds the maximum government rates, the traveler should receive prior approval from the individual in the traveler's chain of command who reports directly to the College President. The traveler should consider the following when submitting an over-the-maximum request:

- If there is available lodging within the rate at a nearby location
- Transportation cost saved by staying at the conference site
- Late evening or early morning conference functions
- The attendee is an officer of the sponsoring organization
- The attendee is a lecturer or performing other functions essential to the conference
- If the conference agenda indicates that meals will be provided as part of the conference registration fee, then a reduction to the per diem amounts must be made on the travel voucher submitted.
- Social activities such as sight seeing, golf outings, etc. are considered personal expenses and will not be reimbursed.

- When travelers stay at the conference site, it is usually not necessary to incur transportation expenses to attend conference events. Also, many conferences offer direct transfers from transportation terminals to the conference site.

There may be times when use of a rental vehicle is the more cost effective choice over use of a personal vehicle for travel to and from a conference or other work related event. Use of the Office of General Service Centralized Contract is strongly encouraged, as it offers competitive rates, full insurance coverage at no extra charge, and other advantages not generally available to most consumers. A cost benefit analysis should be conducted when deciding whether to use one's own vehicle or a rental vehicle.

13.0 Foreign Travel

Travel outside the continental United States is reimbursed based on the maximum per diem allowance established by the U.S. Department of State. The foreign travel rates are published monthly and are available from the Federal Superintendent of Documents. Expenses should be converted to American dollars, based on the exchange rate in effect during the period of travel.

14.0 Miscellaneous Expenses

14.1 Expenses for Interviews

Reimbursement of travel expenses for job candidates may be available upon approval of the College President when warranted.

14.2 Telephone Charges

Only telephone charges for official College business may be reimbursed.

14.3 Baggage Transfer Charges

Reasonable baggage transfer and storage charges will be allowed.

14.4 Personal Expenses Not Reimbursable

Personal expenses, such as laundry, valet, movie rentals, theater or banquet tickets, entertainment, and transportation to and from meals are not reimbursable.

15.0 Air Travel/Business Travel Account

When making travel arrangements, it is recommended that employees use an approved travel agent listed on the New York State Office of General Services Travel Agent Services Centralized Contract. This contract provides fee restrictions, insurance and refunds not generally available to most consumers.

¹ Timely shall mean for travel requests, no later than 10 days prior to travel start date; and, for travel reimbursement, no more than 30 calendar days following completion of travel.

² The designation of official station will be determined by the Office of Administration in the best interest of the College and not at the convenience of the employee

³ Per Board Policy, all travel requests over \$300 must be approved by the President. Members of President's Council must obtain the approval of the President for travel of any value, and travel over \$600 must be approved by the Board of Trustees. Travel expenses over \$1,500 requested by the President require approval by the Board of Trustees. Traveler must obtain the approval(s) of their Supervisor and individual in the traveler's chain of command who reports directly to the College President, for travel of any value.

⁴ When considering the best interest of the College, document to what extent the travel advances the College's strategic plan and/or SUNY's "6 Big Ideas".

⁵ Travel evidence consists of receipts for all expenses, including receipts for lodging, travel ticket stubs, etc.

⁶ Per diem means a set amount for each meal, regardless of actual cost; the set amount to be determined by GSA rules.