

# GENERAL TRAVEL POLICIES

The University of Oklahoma travel policy has been developed in accordance with the State Travel Reimbursement Act (*STRA*), 74 O.S., Section 500.1, et seq. The policy covers State officials and employees who are performing a substantial and necessary service for the State of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma.

Non-employee travel is covered under the policy if the travel expenses were:

- Incurred by a student traveling at the University's request.
- Incurred at the University's request by an individual in the course of seeking employment with the University.
- Provided for in a grant and contract for a conference participant when no other fees for the individual's service or participation will be made.
- Incurred by an individual who has volunteered his services and payment for the individual's services will not be made.

Travel expenses incurred by a vendor or consultant should be included in the total amount of the contract award or honorarium. Any such travel expenses **cannot** be reimbursed on the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher.

Claims for reimbursement of travel expenses shall not cover periods of over 31 days. In cases where the travel period is continuous beyond 31 days, subsequent claims for expense reimbursement must be filed as necessary to cover the extended period.

## EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITY

Employees traveling on official business for the University are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable and should be avoided as a standard practice.

The traveler should obtain appropriate receipts for all applicable charges and keep a personal record of all miscellaneous expenditures chargeable to the University, noting each item as the expense is incurred. In this way, all necessary information will be accumulated and available to assist in the preparation and submission of the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher.

## AUTHORIZATION/JUSTIFICATION FOR TRAVEL

Travel must be necessary for the proper execution of official University business or in justifiable pursuit of the University's educational objectives. Meetings and conferences attended must be of a professional nature that will increase the attending individual's usefulness to the University.

University faculty, staff, students and non-university employees traveling on University funds, including grants and contracts and agency special accounts to out-of-state destinations, **must** receive prior written approval from his or her appropriate supervisor or appointed designee with budgetary authority (*Department Head, Vice President, Chair, Principal Investigator, Dean, Provost*). Documentation of the approval shall be maintained in the departmental files of the traveler and/or the funding account sponsor and shall be subject to compliance review by Internal Auditing. Approval for routine in-state business purposes will not require prior approval. Upon completion of the authorized travel (*in-state or out-of-state*), the travel voucher submitted for reimbursement must be approved by the traveler's appropriate supervisor with budgetary authority.

## **LIMITS OF EXPENSE**

Reimbursement for University travel is based on **actual and reasonable** expenses incurred, subject to the limitations established by the University's travel policies (*i.e. STRA*).

If travel expenditures are to be paid from a **grant or contract** department, travel policies of the grant or contract may specify reimbursement of expenses at a rate different than the amount allowed by the University's travel policies. Contact the grants and contracts office concerning questions about these reimbursements.

An expense which is at the **official station** of an employee will not be reimbursed. The "official station" is defined as the designated location where the employee primarily performs his/her responsibilities.

The limits on travel expense reimbursement specified in this policy are not to be construed as an indication of the amounts that should be spent. These are only maximum amounts above which reimbursement cannot be made. University employees' travel expenditures should be as conservative as good taste and circumstances permit.

Specific policies which apply to various types of travel expenses are listed on the next several pages. If there are any questions about reimbursement of expenses, contact Financial Services.

Employees who are required to attend hearings or meetings of any congressional committee/subcommittee or federal agency, board, or commission can be reimbursed for their actual and necessary travel and lodging expenses with the appropriate University approval.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation for persons traveling **singly** should be by common carrier (*air, train, bus*) whenever practical. Advantage must be taken of round trip rates when available. Travel must be by the **most direct route possible**; any individual traveling by an indirect route

must bear the extra expense.

Regardless of the mode of transportation (*including privately owned vehicles*), reimbursement for out-of-state transportation shall not exceed that of **coach airfare plus other allowable transportation costs (i.e. shipping charges, taxi, etc.)**.

### **Commercial Air Travel**

Air travel accommodations should be limited to **coach class airfare only**. Travelers are responsible to book air travel through one of the contracted travel agencies and at the most economical rates using normally traveled routes. In the event that a traveler chooses a higher fare than the lowest applicable fare it will be noted as an exception and reported by the travel agency to the University.

### **Travel Insurance**

University travelers booking air transportation through one of the contracted travel agencies that is billed directly to the University's ghost card qualify for up to \$500,000 in travel accident insurance. If there is a loss of life the maximum \$500,000 coverage is still in effect.

**Travelers should be aware that when flying on a no-charge tour conductor pass or other airline-issued, no-charge ticket, ghost card and ARC affiliation insurance will not be in effect.**

In order for employees to take advantage of special cost savings on domestic airfares, reimbursement of expenses may be allowed to start up to forty-eight (48) hours before and/or forty-eight (48) hours after the object of travel. The State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher must include a detailed cost comparison of additional meals, lodging, and other expenses incurred versus the saving on the airfare if the standard twenty-four (24) hour requirement was adhered to. In addition, the extra day of travel must be a weekend day. The forty-eight (48) hour extended rule shall not apply where travel is by privately owned automobile in lieu of coach airfare, regardless of any direct saving that may be demonstrated.

Travel to foreign destinations may begin as early as forty-eight (48) hours before and/or extend forty-eight (48) hours after the object of travel regardless if there is a cost savings.

In order for employees to further participate in airfare cost savings, reimbursement of expenses may be allowed to start up to seventy-two (72) hours before and/or extend seventy-two (72) hours after the object of travel, provided:

- The travel is in conjunction with a three (3) or four (4) day holiday weekend;
- The first/last day of the object of travel is immediately preceding and/or following the weekend day/holiday;

- The extra day(s) of travel is a weekend day or holiday immediately adjacent to the weekend, i.e., Friday or Monday; and,
- There is a demonstrated cost savings to the University.
- The reimbursement request must include a detailed cost comparison of additional meals, lodging and other expenses versus the savings on airfare if the standard twenty-four (24) hour requirement was adhered to.

Air carrier selection cannot be biased by any traveler's frequent flyer affiliation or benefits. The lowest cost air travel will take precedence over frequent flyer programs. Any employee choosing a more expensive flight may be required to reimburse the University for any excess costs.

Frequent flyer miles earned on travel funded by the University are maintained and redeemed individually by University personnel. Whenever practicable, personnel should redeem frequent flyer miles earned while traveling on University business to fund other University business travel. Frequent flyer miles earned while traveling on University business may not be exchanged for cash. Likewise, the University cannot reimburse personnel for their use.

When the traveler's itinerary includes a personal travel component in conjunction with a business component, the traveler may not have the travel agency bill the University's department for the personal travel component of the airfare.

Travelers should book all air transportation through one of the contracted University travel agencies for air transportation, unless circumstances satisfy one of the following exceptions:

- Air travel was initiated on an emergency basis and time did not allow using a contracted travel agency, e.g. changing itinerary en-route or emergency travel after hours.
- Airfare is part of a package arranged by the organization scheduling the meeting or conference.
- From time to time the traveler may find an internet fare that is lower in price than a fare available from an authorized travel agent. In order to book such a fare and be reimbursed for it, the traveler must produce documented objective evidence that the fare is lower than that which can be secured by the agent. Examples of this type of evidence are an itinerary, email, or memo from the agent, documenting the best fare that could be obtained for the travel involved. The date and time of the evidence and information must be proximate to the date and time of the lower internet fare. Other types of objective evidence may be considered, but in no case shall a mere written statement by the traveler be sufficient. The final decision rests with Financial Services.

The ticket may be booked using the traveler's personal funds and reimbursed per the

University travel reimbursement policy. The traveler must attach all such documented evidence to the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher when submitting it to Financial Services.

Only tickets with verifiable savings will be reimbursed. The traveler understands and accepts that the protections, features, and services that would otherwise accompany an agency-issued ticket may not be available. If it is established by Financial Services, or by subsequent audit, that an equal or lower fare was available through one of the authorized agencies, no or only partial reimbursement may be allowed, and collection action from the traveler may be taken if necessary.

### **Domestic Train/Bus Travel**

**A receipt or ticket stub** for transportation fare must be submitted with the request for reimbursement. Documentation submitted must include amount paid and dates traveled. At the time the out-of-state travel is planned, a coach airplane fare quote should be obtained from one of the University contracted travel agencies. The name of the travel agency, date obtained, and the amount of the quote must be indicated on the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher submitted for reimbursement. Reimbursement will be based upon the lesser of the coach airplane fare versus the actual fare.

### **LOCAL TRANSPORTATION**

This refers to local transportation at the traveler's destination and includes taxi, limousine, bus, subway, etc. Receipts are required of any single expense of \$25.00 or more. If the total of any type of expenditure, e.g., taxi, is \$25.00 or more but each single expense was under \$25.00, indicate the number of trips in brackets beside the total.

### **Reimbursement of Leased or Rented Automobiles**

Reimbursement for automobiles leased or rented within this state from car rental agencies or private parties, to be used in lieu of a privately owned vehicle on official business for the State, **shall not exceed the rate provided for the use of a privately owned automobile.**

The actual cost, including insurance, of leasing or renting a vehicle outside of this State to be used on official business for the State shall be reimbursed subject to approval by the sponsor unless otherwise directed at the dean or director level. **Justification for the vehicle rental must be included on the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher.**

**University vehicles shall not be used or assigned on a long-term basis by a single individual using University funds.** Vehicles may be leased by departments on a monthly basis only if there are unusual or special circumstances, or there is a clear and continuing need for use by more than one person on a frequent basis. Departments with a need for a vehicle on a long-term basis should send a request in writing to the Vice President for Administrative Affairs asking for a waiver. The need for a leased vehicle

should be clearly defined and must clearly be a continuing or ongoing requirement.

University departments may rent vehicles from the Fleet Services for travel to official functions, i.e., conferences, meetings, field trips, or similar activities, for a period not to exceed the length of the time necessary to complete the trip. Fleet Services will require an authorization signed by the Dean or Vice President and Provost for short-term rentals. The authorization may be for multiple rentals if it fits for the specific conditions under which rentals will occur.

### **Privately Owned Automobile/Plane**

For in-state travel, reimbursement for privately owned automobile/plane is limited to the current rate mileage stipulated by the Internal Revenue Service. For a listing of mileage reimbursement rates, [click here](#).

Reimbursement for out-of-state travel is limited to the lesser amount of a coach class airfare versus the map mileage calculated at applicable mileage rate. At the time the out-of-state travel is planned, a coach airplane fare quote should be obtained from one of the University contracted travel agencies. The name of the travel agency, date obtained, and the amount of the quote must be indicated on the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher submitted for reimbursement. Reimbursement will be based upon the lesser of the coach airplane fare versus map mileage cost.

An exception to the comparison to coach airplane fare and map mileage cost is made if a privately owned automobile/plane is used to save time when common carrier transportation cannot satisfactorily cover the number of outlying places or to reduce expenses **when two (2) or more University employees are making the trip**. The reason for the exception to this requirement must be noted on the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher.

### **Map and Vicinity Miles**

Map mileage is the official map mileage from one location to another performed in a privately owned vehicle. Vicinity mileage refers to travel that is in excess of map mileage while conducting University business in a **privately owned vehicle**.

### **Bus Charters**

Anyone chartering a bus for group travel should verify the company is licensed by the state(s) in which they operate and is in good standing. The recommended minimum amount of liability insurance is \$5,000,000. An "Insurance Certificate" stating the above, and naming The Board of Regents of The University of Oklahoma as an "additional insured" in connection with the chartered trip should be requested from the bus company, and forwarded to Purchasing for filing. Any questions related to bus charters should be directed to Purchasing.

## MEALS AND LODGING EXPENSE

Reimbursement for meals and lodging shall not begin more than twenty-four (24) hours before or continue more than twenty-four (24) hours after the objective of the trip, such as the meeting, workshop, conference, etc.

In order for employees to take advantage of special weekend cost savings airfares, reimbursement of expenses may be allowed to start up to 48/72 hours before and/or extend 48/72 hours after the date of the date of the object of travel. Notwithstanding any savings involved, the extra day of travel must be a weekend day, i.e., Saturday or Sunday. The claim must include a detailed cost comparison of additional meals, lodging and other expenses versus the savings on airfare.

Travel under the 48/72-hour extended rule shall not be allowed if the costs of extra lodging and meals along with the discounted airfare exceed the costs of travel under the standard 24-hour rule as shown in the cost comparison. In addition, the 48/72-hour extended rule shall not apply where travel is by privately-owned automobile in lieu of coach class airline fare, regardless of any direct savings that may be demonstrated.

If meals and lodging are furnished as a **package plan**, reimbursement may be based upon a combined receipt but at a daily rate not to exceed the rate that would have been allowed for separate meals and lodging (*the receipt must reflect a breakdown between meals, lodging, registration, etc.*).

The travel distance performed must be such that the employee cannot reasonably leave from and return to his/her home or office location at the start or close of each day's work schedule. The reasonableness guideline used for the distance test is 60 map miles (*one-way*) or more. However, if the travel does not meet the distance guideline, that is, one-way mileage is less than 60 miles, and there are valid reasons for waiving the distance test, the approving official should provide written clarification/explanation of the travel purpose and requirements and reasons for allowance of the expense(s) reimbursement.

Direct purchase of food and/or lodging by the University for employees/volunteers is allowed provided all of the following criteria are met:

- Event is conducted or sponsored by the University;
- A formal notice or announcement from the University to the attending employees is attached as supporting documentation; and,
- Each employee is in travel status for more than eighteen hours.

If the University sponsored event meets the above criteria and exceeds \$2,500, the department must submit a requisition to Purchasing with the supporting documentation listed below prior to entering into travel status. If \$2,500 or less, the department must

submit the following documentation along with supporting invoices to Financial Services for payment after the event:

- Description of the travel objective;
- Reference the statutory authority (*O.S. Subsection 500.2*);
- Prepare a separate accounting of the contracted daily cost of food and lodging as this amount cannot exceed the total daily rate allowed by the state statutes; and,
- A list of attending individuals and their identification numbers.

If State of Oklahoma Travel Vouchers are filed for any attending employees for other expenses, a reference should be made in the per diem and/or lodging section on the form that these items were purchased directly.

### **Reimbursement for Meal Expenses**

There will be reimbursement for meal expenses only in connection with overnight travel status. The basic guideline for overnight travel status without support of an overnight public lodging receipt is 18 hours.

Reimbursement of per diem expenses is based on the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and the rates issued by the Government Services Administration. To obtain these rates for travel beginning July 1, 2001, access the GSA web site at [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem). Both per diem and lodging reimbursement rates are listed as either within the continental United States (*CONUS*) or Foreign.

If the travel is to a location that is within the county of the key city, the traveler will qualify for the per diem rate of that city. If the lodging receipt does not indicate the *CONUS/FOREIGN* city, the traveler must provide a statement on the travel reimbursement claim similar to the following:

*"I certify the public lodging place named on the lodging receipt is located in the corporate limits or county of the CONUS city of travel."*

If the location of travel is not listed on the web site, the federal standard rate for per diem (*meals and incidentals*) will apply.

"Continental breakfasts" and refreshments, such as coffee, tea, soft drinks, etc., provided during meeting breaks are not considered meals. Also, exceptions may apply if there were special circumstances which prevented the claimant from participating in the function at which the meal was provided. Examples of special circumstances would include special dress requirements, diet restrictions, transportation availability, etc. Payment or reimbursement would not be permissible in instances where the claimant merely chose not to attend the function. A statement signed by the claimant attesting to the special circumstances of non-participation in the meal function must accompany the

invoice or the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher.

When a traveler is in overnight status and stays with friends or relatives, the traveler is entitled to an additional \$10.00 per day (*\$2.50 per quarter*) that is intended to cover all charges for meals and lodging. To determine the appropriate rate under this policy, add \$10.00 to the per diem rate for the location of travel and divide by four to get the amount per quarter, if applicable.

### **Reimbursement for Lodging**

Requests for reimbursement for lodging must be accompanied by an **itemized paid receipt** from the hotel, motel, etc.

Reimbursement of lodging expenses is based on the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and the rates issued by the Government Services Administration. To obtain these rates, access the GSA web site at [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem).

Lodging reimbursement rates are listed as either within the continental United States (CONUS) or FOREIGN. If the location of travel is not listed on the web site, the federal standard rate for lodging will apply. If the actual room rate is greater than the maximum allowable rate, the taxes should be prorated accordingly.

If a hotel/motel is designated by the conference, the actual rates will be paid, not to exceed single occupancy rate, if a document is attached from the conference indicating that this was a designated hotel/motel. A list of recommended or convenient hotels is not sufficient as designation by the conference sponsor.

If an activity is sponsored by a University department, that department may designate lodging for the activity by completing in advance the Agency-Sponsored Designated Lodging Notice.

Persons attending meetings, workshops or conferences which are conducted at a designated hotel, motel or other public lodging place who choose to acquire less expensive public lodging shall be reimbursed the actual lodging expense not to exceed the single room rate and the single occupancy rate charged by the designated public lodging place. **When choosing this option, the STRA provides for the reimbursement of local transportation between the two sites to the extent that the cost does not exceed the difference between the cost of the designated lodging and the cost of the optional lodging.**

### **MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL EXPENSE**

Reimbursement may be claimed for the following miscellaneous expenses.

- **Communications.** Business related telephone, telegraph, or fax charges.

- **Registration fees.** If reimbursement is being requested for registration fees, please attach a paid receipt or both sides of a canceled check.
- **Gas, oil, and repairs for University vehicles.**
- **Parking fees and toll road charges.** Airport parking at the OKC Will Rogers World Airport will be reimbursable at a maximum rate per day equal to the published long-term covered parking rate at the airport.
- **Optional business activities.** These expenses should be "essential and necessary" activities that are related and connected with the general purpose of the conference, meeting, seminar, etc. A statement signed by the claimant attesting that these activities were essential and necessary expenses and a brief description of their importance must accompany the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher form. If the optional business activity includes meals, it must be deducted from the cost of the activity, as described with the registration fees.

**Reimbursement may not be claimed for the following expenses:**

- **Personal services** such as hair cuts, shoe shines, etc.
- **Gas, oil, and repairs to privately owned vehicles.** This is covered in the mileage reimbursement rate for private vehicles.

**Reimbursement for Nonrefundable Travel Expenses in Connection with Canceled Travel**

**Reimbursement of prepaid travel expenses may be allowed when the travel is canceled for legitimate reasons. Only the portion of the prepaid expense which is nonrefundable is reimbursable.**