



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

Policy ID: ADM-PUR-7 Minor Revision 8 Status: C

Title: Travel Policy

Description: Accountability and the use of budget for university business travel

Category: Purchasing

Applies to: Staff, Faculty, Department

Contact: [Purchasing Department](#)

Purpose: The purpose of the University of Central Oklahoma Travel Policy is to ensure cost-effective travel practices and adherence to the State Travel Reimbursement Act (STRA), 74 O.S., § 500.1, et seq., while providing reasonable options for the traveler.

Policy Statement: **I. Employee Responsibility**

Travel on behalf of the University of Central Oklahoma is not only an effective business tool but also a privilege. Anyone traveling on official business for the University should exercise discretion and proper judgment in the use of institutional funds. Excessive spending, indirect or circuitous routes, and lavish accommodations are unacceptable and are to be avoided.

II. Travel Requirements

The procedures outlined in this policy are relative not only to University faculty and staff, but also students and non-University employees traveling on University funds, including grants, contracts, and agency special accounts. University travel should only occur when necessary for the proper execution of official University business or in pursuit of the University's educational objectives. Meetings and conferences attended must be of a professional nature and should satisfy the professional requirements of the individual and/or be beneficial to the institution.

Employees 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 appropriate University approval.

It is the traveler's responsibility to obtain appropriate receipts for all applicable charges and keep a personal record of miscellaneous expenditures chargeable to the state, noting each item as the expense is incurred. If receipts are lost, it is the responsibility of the traveler to submit a [Record of Lost Receipts](#) form. **NOTE:** Reimbursable travel expenses are defined as expenses essential to the transaction of official business in connection with the purpose of travel (i.e., "nature of official business").

All employees traveling on University business are required to obtain written travel approval from the appropriate supervisor or appointed designee with budgetary authority. If proper authorization is not obtained and travel is commenced, the traveler accepts financial responsibility for all expenses incurred in regard to the unauthorized event.

All out-of-state travel requests must be submitted using the [Out of State Travel Request](#) form and must be *received* by the Travel Office no later than 21 days prior to the departure date. In the event the 21 day deadline cannot be met, the traveler must submit a letter of justification, subject to approval by the Travel Office and/or management when necessary. If the travel request is not received within the allotted time, and the letter of justification is not approved, the request will be denied and returned to the traveler.

III. Limits of Expense

A. Public Transportation

All travel, other than by a state-owned or state-rented vehicle, must be accompanied by an airline quote from a state contracted travel agency.

1. Commercial Air Travel

a. Preferred Air Provider – Air travel accommodations are limited to coach class airfare only. Travelers are responsible for contacting one of the contracted travel agencies to request a quote, keeping in mind that the preferred carrier is *Southwest Airlines* due to their liberal cancellation/exchange policies, low fares, and no-cost baggage check. In all cases, the most economical rates using normally traveled routes should be selected. However, any domestic airfare travel requests submitted for airlines other than the preferred carrier should be accompanied by a *Southwest Airlines* quote and a letter of justification stating why the preferred carrier was not used. The Travel Office reserves the right to deny air travel if a reasonable *Southwest* alternative exists for the traveler.

b. Frequent Flyer Information: Personal frequent flyer miles are irrelevant to University business, and business travel should be booked without preference toward personal frequent flyer mile accumulation.

c. Domestic Flights – 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 Out of State Travel Request Form 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 not 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.

d. Foreign Flights 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.

Employees may travel up to seventy-two (72) hours before and/or extend seventy-two (72) hours after the object of travel, if there is a demonstrated cost savings to the University.

The University's Foreign Travel insurance stipulates that more than five University employees may not travel on any one foreign flight. If more than five employees plan to travel to the same destination, separate flights must be taken.

e. Travel Insurance - University travelers booking air transportation through one of the contracted travel agencies 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. **NOTE: Insurance covers life only and not the loss of personal property.**

f. Domestic Train/Bus Travel - A receipt or ticket stub for transportation fare containing the amount paid and dates traveled must be submitted with the request for reimbursement. 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 Reimbursement Voucher. Reimbursement for train/bus

travel will be based upon the lesser of the coach airplane fare versus the actual train/bus fare.

g. Initial Payment by the Individual -Employees who choose to purchase their tickets must secure reimbursement through a travel voucher after travel is completed. No reimbursement for reduced-fare advance purchase tickets will be made to employees prior to completion of travel since direct payment by the University is available.

2. Local Transportation

Travelers are encouraged to use free shuttle services available to them at their destination. However, sometimes other local transportation – including taxi, limousine, bus, subway, rental car, etc. – may be necessary. Local transportation is limited to business-related purposes only (i.e., not for personal leisure such as transportation to a movie, bowling, etc.). If use of a rental vehicle is appropriate for the purpose of local transportation, prior to travel individuals utilizing rental cars must submit a justification form indicating the intended percentage of business and personal use of the vehicle.

Receipts are required for 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. If the expense includes more than one traveler, note the number of travelers on receipt or State Travel Voucher.

3. Privately-Owned Automobile

Travelers utilizing personal vehicles will be reimbursed for mileage at the current rate upon completion of the travel. See the State of Oklahoma mileage chart for all map miles. Air travelers are allowed up to 50 miles roundtrip for mileage to the airport at the current mileage rate. See [Traveler's Out-of-Pocket Expenses](#) on request form to estimate the amount of mileage.

4. Leased or Rented Automobiles

A purchasing requisition must be completed for payment for rental car costs prior to travel, and the University's current-contracted rental car company should be the vendor of choice. See the State Policy on Travel Reimbursement for vehicles not rented through the University. The University encourages use of rented automobiles for groups travelling to the same destination when this method of transportation is more cost effective than the rates for airline travel. The traveler should reference the STRA to determine the most cost-effective means of travel using STRA's cost-comparison tool.

5. University-Owned/Fleet Vehicles

For purposes of local University business, University departments may rent vehicles from 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. **University vehicles shall not be used or assigned on a long-term basis by a single individual using University funds.**

B. Meals and Lodging

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. EXCEPTIONS NOTED ABOVE IN REGARD TO EVENTS THAT INVOLVE AIR TRAVEL.

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 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 or more one way. However, if the travel does not meet the distance guideline 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.

When a traveler is in overnight status and lodges with friends or relatives in lieu of hotel lodgings, the traveler is entitled to an additional \$10.00 per day 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.

1. Per Diem

Reimbursement for meal expenses in connection with overnight travel status will be allowed. The basic guideline for overnight travel status without support of an overnight public lodging receipt is determined by the STRA's destination-duration test.

Reimbursement of per diem (meal) expenses is based on the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and the rates issued by the Government Services Administration. To obtain rates for travel, access the GSA web site where 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 applies.

Exceptions may apply if special circumstances (i.e., special dress requirements, diet restrictions, transportation availability, etc.) prevent a claimant from participating in a function at which a meal is provided. However, payment or reimbursement is not permissible in instances where the claimant merely chooses not to attend the function. A statement signed by the claimant attesting to the special circumstances of non-participation in a meal function must accompany the invoice or [State of Oklahoma Travel Reimbursement Voucher](#).

2. Hotel/Motel Accommodations

Employee must complete the purchasing requisition for hotel costs (UCO Purchasing department will determine what form of payment is to be used). Required lodging payments made by personal check or personal credit card will be reimbursed based on the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and the rates issued by the Government Services Administration. These rates may be

found by accessing the [GSA website](#).

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.

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

When a conference venue is also the traveler's selected lodging, the University will pay the lodging costs in full, not to exceed the single occupancy rate, with proper conference documentation that supports the lodging designation.

Persons attending meetings, workshops or conferences that are conducted at a designated hotel, motel or other public lodging place may choose to acquire less expensive public lodging but 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, 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.**

C. Event Registration Fee

Prior to travel, the employee must obtain approval and register for the event (i.e. conference, training workshop, seminar, etc.). Registration fees for conferences, meetings, seminars and similar events shall normally be paid by purchase orders. However, in the following specific situations, advance (pre-) payments, made prior to the event by University issued check or ProCard, may be permitted:

1. The organization requires pre-registration along with payment and by standard policy will not accept a purchase order. **NOTE:** Employee must provide to Purchasing Department documentation from the organizing agency that states by standard policy they do not accept purchase orders.
2. A discounted fee is offered if registration is paid in advance. **NOTE:** Employee must provide to Purchasing Department documentation from the organizing agency that states substitution of participant(s) is allowed and should the event be canceled registration will be 100% refunded. When advance payment is utilized, the registrant must complete the [UCO Pre-Payment of Registration form](#) and submit to Purchasing along with all required supporting documentation. Individuals may also pay by personal check or credit card for reimbursement upon completion of travel.

D. Miscellaneous Travel Expense

While traveling on UCO business, the traveler may claim reimbursement for the following miscellaneous expenses.

1. Communication including business-related telephone, mobile phone, fax, and/or computer internet charges.
2. Registration fees.
3. Parking fees and toll road charges. OKC Will Rogers World Airport parking is reimbursable at a maximum rate per day equal to the published long-term

covered parking rate at the airport. The same practice applies to other regional airports offering comparable accommodations.

4. Optional business activities, including items that are “essential and necessary” related to and connected with the general purpose of the conference, meeting, seminar, or University business objective being sought. A statement signed by the traveler explaining the necessity of the claimed items should accompany the State of Oklahoma Travel Voucher form after the completion of the travel. If the optional business activity includes meals, per diem rates will be adjusted accordingly.

E. Non-Reimbursable Expense

When traveling on University business, travelers will not be reimbursed for personal services including laundry, room service, and entertainment. In addition, gas, oil, and repairs to privately owned vehicles used for University business will not be reimbursed as the expenses for such are covered in mileage reimbursement rates mentioned previously.

IV. Expense Reporting

The [State of Oklahoma Travel Reimbursement Voucher](#) is the accepted and approved expense report utilized by the University of Central Oklahoma. The traveler’s signature on the voucher serves two purposes: (1) affirmation that all travel was performed as indicated and that the claim for reimbursement represents a true and correct account of travel and related expenses and (2) acknowledgement that any expenses claimed have not been reimbursed or otherwise provided for by other sources. Furthermore, the voucher holds the employee liable under possible penalty of law for any falsified expense or misstatement of claim.

Within 14 business days of traveler’s return from the approved travel event, the traveler is required to submit all expenses related to the event, including items covered in Section IV above, to the UCO Travel Office, Lillard Administration Building Room 109, Campus Box 161. Travelers should allow 14 business days for reimbursement. Checks are mailed to the employee’s current active payroll address.

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.

Required documentation to be submitted post-travel includes:

A. State of Oklahoma Travel Reimbursement Voucher

1. Registration/Transportation Information
2. Per Diem
3. Other qualifying reimbursable expenses
4. Total amount of allocated funds to be reimbursed

B. Supporting Documentation of all receipts, agenda/registration, and/or other pertinent documentation.

V. Cancellations

Employees should be thoughtful and deliberate when considering travel on University business. 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. If a travel reimbursement is disapproved by the travel department an exemption of this policy may be made in writing, along with copies of all related materials, to the Executive Vice President. Excessive travel cancelations may exclude employees from future travel or pre-payment privileges.

VI. Non-Employee Travel

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

- A. Incurred by a student traveling at the University's request.
- B. Incurred at the University's request by an individual in the course of seeking employment with the University.
- C. Provided for in a grant or contract for a conference participant when no other fees for the individual's service or participation will be made.
- D. 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](#).

VII. Non-Compliance with Travel Policy

Non-compliance with this policy is not only an inconvenience to University staff and other travelers who do comply, but non-compliance also leaves the traveler with no guaranteed reimbursement for expenses. Furthermore, non-compliance affects the University's reputation and budget by forcing the University to pay unreasonable and sometimes exuberant amounts because the employee failed to plan and follow institutional policies and procedures.

Consequences for a traveler's non-compliance with this policy include but are not limited to:

- Denial of reimbursement;
- Expenses may be applied to traveler's Bursar account and treated as a personal financial obligation or reimbursed via payroll deduction;
- Suspension of travel card privileges (if noncompliance is pervasive in a department or program, suspension of travel card privileges may include all travelers in the affected area);
- Suspension or reduction of travel budget for the current and/or subsequent years;
- Disciplinary action in accordance with UCO Employee Handbook and/or Faculty Handbook up to and including termination of employment;
- Repeat violators must attend mandatory training with Travel Office staff; or
- Notification of noncompliance to the Executive Vice President (staff) or Provost (faculty).

Depending on the severity and frequency of non-compliance with this policy, disciplinary action may be imposed using one or more of the above-referenced consequences as mandated by UCO Executive Vice-President (staff) or Provost (faculty).

**Glossary of
Terms:**

**Legal
Citation:**

Campus

Links:

FAQs:

Formerly

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