GDL-U5348.10    TRAVELING FOR OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY BUSINESS

This guideline temporarily replaces University policy while the policy revision process takes place to address a new travel management system and practices.

This guideline applies to all travel for official University business purposes including when the traveler is a student employee or non-employee. Expenditures of grant and contract funds for travel are subject to the same rules except where specifically noted in the grant or contract.

Definitions:

Data Entry Delegate:
An employee that can enter data in the travel system for a traveler.

Approver Delegate:
An employee authorized to approve on behalf of a supervisor or budget authority (Cost Object
POLICY

Approver - COA).

**Economical:**
Direct financial, work-related costs that occur at the least cost to the state and which the state is responsible to pay.

**Non-employee traveler:**
A volunteer, or any individual who receives no financial compensation from the University but has a need to travel on behalf of Western for official University business.

**International (Foreign) Travel:**
Travel outside of the United States of America and its possessions.

**Official University business:**
Activities performed by an official or state employee or authorized non-employee as directed by the supervisor in order to accomplish university programs or as required by the duties of the position or office.

**Per diem expenses:**
Restricted daily travel costs covering both lodging and meal expenses while in travel status.

**Privately Owned Vehicle:**
A vehicle privately owned, leased, or borrowed by a state driver for which the driver receives, or is entitled to receive, monetary reimbursement or per diem when the vehicle is used to conduct official University business.

**State vehicle:**
A motor vehicle owned, rented, leased, or otherwise under the possession and control of the State. A rental vehicle is a state vehicle if it is rented by a duly authorized employee at the cost of the State and is solely for official state business.

**Transportation Expenses:**
Those costs covering the following but not limited to: a) travel by commercial carriers such as bus, train, ship, and airplane; b) travel by a privately owned motor vehicle(s), such as a car, motorcycle, van, or truck; c) travel by rental motor vehicle; or d) some combination of a), b), and/or c) above.

**Traveler:**
A person in travel status who is on official University business.

1. **Director of Business Services Ensures an Effective System for Management of Travel**

   Under the purview of the Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs (VP for BFA), the Director of Business Services will ensure the University uses all appropriate means for:

   a) Approving and tracking expenditures for travel that supports the University’s mission in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible,
b) Training, and

c) Methods used will be based on standard industry practices and be compliant with federal accountable plan requirements.

2. **Employee Travelers Required to Acknowledge Responsibilities in Writing**

Prior to their first business travel event as a University employee, and when further required by Business services, employees needing to travel for official University business will:

a) Review University and state travel and transportation guidelines, policies, standards, and procedures, and

b) Read and sign the [Traveler: New Profile and Acknowledgment Form](#).

3. **Travel Requests and Expenditures Must Meet Requirements**

When reviewing travel requests, expenditures, advances, and reimbursement requests for approval, the appropriate budget authority(ies) and supervisor(s) must enforce and monitor compliance with state and University rules.

**Supervisors** are responsible for ensuring the purpose of a travel request is:

a) Directly related to official University business,

b) Both critical and necessary for University business,

c) Allowable based on University risk management guidelines and prioritizes the health and safety of the traveler (see *Section 18 – Expenses for Health and Safety May be Paid*),

d) Not influenced by personal travel plans.

**Budget authorities** are responsible for ensuring a travel request and estimated and actual expenditures are:

a) The most efficient and economical,

b) Reasonable and justifiable,

c) Allowable by meeting the criteria, limits and/or exceptions under state and other applicable rules, and

d) Purchased via the proper payment methods.
Approvers are responsible for implementing alternatives to travel, such as video and teleconferencing, and encouraging less expensive means of travel such as carpooling, public transportation and use of state vehicles. Travelers are not to be treated differently under like travel circumstances unless the situation meets travel alternative considerations allowable under SAAM 10.10.20.

In accordance with the Authorizing and Defining Financial Responsibility Policy (POL-U5320.03), financial managers remain accountable for the resources entrusted to them even when they delegate fiscal duties and authority.

4. Prior Approval Required

Travelers must obtain prior approval in accordance with procedures for all out-of-state and/or overnight travel.

For official business travel within Washington state that is not overnight, pre-approval is not required but divisions and/or colleges are strongly encouraged to implement their own approval requirements that should include, at a minimum, verbal pre-approval of the travel by a traveler's supervisor. See also Section 9 – Blanket Travel Authorizations Limited.

An approved estimated expense does not guarantee an incurred expense will be approved if the actual expense does not meet compliance rules.

Travelers who do not obtain prior approval as required may be responsible for any unauthorized expenses.

5. International Travel or Travel to Hawaii Requires Additional Approval

Travel to Hawaii or international travel (excluding British Columbia) requires division vice president or college dean approval.

6. Travel Services Reviews Requests and Expenditures for Compliance

Travel Services will review certain travel authorization requests and expenses for compliance and will notify the traveler and other approvers as appropriate of any issues and need for corrections. Travel Services reserves the right to deny authorization and/or reimbursement in cases of non-compliance. Exceptions may be approved by the appropriate vice president or dean, or the President, in consultation with the Director of Business Services.

7. No Employee may Approve their own Travel

No employee may be allowed to approve their own travel requests, expenditures, or reimbursements. Business Services will ensure appropriate approval review processes are established for travel related approvals.
8. **Approver Delegates and Data Entry Delegates Have Limited Authority**

Supervisors, financial managers may assign a delegate to approve on their behalf. However, supervisors and financial managers remain accountable for their responsibilities as required by policy. An approver delegate does not have approval authority, only the authority to process an approval on behalf of others. Therefore, supervisors and financial managers should review approvals performed by the delegate. No employee shall approve their own travel requests or reimbursements.

A data entry delegate may be assigned to initiate and input the travel/expense information for a traveler. However, travelers remain responsible for the content, accuracy, submission and timeliness of all travel and expense documentation.

Budget authorities who will be approving travel related expenditures must be authorized via the Budget Authority Authorization Form.

9. **Blanket Travel Authorizations Limited**

Those who travel repeatedly to perform duties essential to the employee’s job, such as for research, meetings, and field study, may request a blanket travel authorization when the repetitive travel is for the same or similar purposes. Travel for purposes unrelated to an approved blanket travel request require a separate authorization. Blanket travel authorizations are limited to a duration of one calendar year and travel within Washington state.

Financial managers are strongly encouraged to implement departmental procedures that include a regular review of employee travel activity covered under a blanket travel authorization.

10. **Travel Cash Advances Allowed on Limited Basis**

Travel advances may be approved only to defray necessary reimbursable costs while performing official duties. Advances are limited to 80% of the reasonable estimated amount of lodging and meals and may be distributed no more than 30 days before the start of travel.

No travel advance shall be considered for any purpose as a loan to an employee. Unauthorized use of a travel advance is considered a misappropriation of state monies by the employee.

Travel advances are prohibited for:

a) Non-employees,

b) Use of a privately-owned vehicle,

c) Purchase of commercial air fares,

d) Equipment or supplies, or
e) For a travel period that exceeds 90 days.

Exceptions to these rules may apply to travel advances for group travel leaders.

11. Traveler Must Reconcile Travel Advance Within Required Timeframe

In accordance with and within the timeframes specified in the Reconciling Travel Advances Procedures (PRO-U5348.10C) and Collecting Past Due Travel Advance Procedures (PRO-U5348.10D), travelers must:

a) Fully justify and reconcile the expenditure of any portion of the travel advance for legally reimbursable items on behalf of the University, and

b) Repay any portion of a travel advance that is unexpended.

When a traveler defaults in accounting for or repaying an advance:

a) The full unpaid amount will become immediately due and payable with interest of 10% per annum for the date of default until paid in full (see PRO-U5348.10C), and

b) Be reported by the University as taxable income if payment or reconciliation does not meet IRS timeliness criteria (SAAM 10.80.70.c).

12. Combining Business Travel with Personal Travel Allowed Under Certain Conditions

Travelers may combine a vacation or other personal use onto a legitimate business trip when all of the following conditions are met:

a) The primary purpose of the trip is official University business,

b) The traveler uses, where necessary, his or her approved leave for the vacation or personal part of the trip, and

c) The University does not incur any extra expenses beyond what it would normally incur had the trip occurred without any personal use added.

13. Supervisors Must Ensure International Travelers Satisfy Additional Requirements

Travel involving employees – Supervisors of employees engaged in international travel must be familiar with and communicate to those employees the applicable policies, procedures, and best practices on international travel when applicable. See the International Travel webpage.

Travel involving students – Notwithstanding paragraph a) above, supervisors of credit and non-credit study abroad and exchange programs, and any other academic travel abroad program that is required, sponsored, organized, funded, endorsed or contracted by the University, must also comply with Traveling Outside the United States Policy (POL-U2105.01).
Examples include, but are not limited to:

a) Faculty-led study abroad programs,

b) Study abroad programs at foreign institutions, study centers, outside contractors or affiliates,

c) Student exchange programs with a foreign institution, or

d) Students doing independent study abroad, including internships.

14. Expenditures May be Approved if Traveler Impacted by Illness or Injury During Travel

When a traveler takes leave of absence of any kind during travel status because of being incapacitated due to illness or injury that is not due to the traveler’s own misconduct:

a) The authorized reimbursement for meals and lodging may continue during the leave period, and

b) Providing the traveler is able to travel, reimbursement is not to exceed in total the cost authorized for motor vehicle car mileage or common carrier in returning the traveler to his/her official workplace or residence, whichever is closer, and then back to the assignment.

When the leave of absence for illness or injury is due to the traveler’s own misconduct, the authorized reimbursement for meals, lodging, transportation, and all other travel expenditures may not be continued during the leave period.

When a leave of absence of any kind is taken while in travel status, the exact hour of departure and return to the temporary duty station must be documented.

15. Reimbursements Must Follow Related Policy and Procedures

Reimbursements related to authorized business travel must be processed in accordance with Travel Services reimbursement procedures. Exceptions may be granted by the Director of Business Services. See also Section 18 – Expenses for Health and Safety May be Paid regarding reimbursement for international travel medication.

Travelers receiving an honorarium from an external entity that includes travel are strictly prohibited from seeking reimbursement from the University for the same travel. See the University’s Receiving Honoraria policy (POL-U5400.19).
16. Documentation Required

Supervisors and budget authorities must ensure the validity of the business need for travel and reimbursement of expenses. Documentation may include, for example, conference brochures and agendas to verify business related topics and meals provided.

Receipts and other supporting documentation of expenses are to be attached to the report and retained in accordance with the University’s retention schedule. Original receipts should be kept by the traveler until reimbursement is received.

Any supporting documentation not attached to the report must be retained by the department for six years in accordance with the University’s retention schedule.

17. Non-Employee Travel May be Funded with University Funds

Travel may be paid for with University funds for non-employees, including employment interviewees and guests, when it is related to University business under certain circumstances. Departments must follow the Non-Employee Travel guidelines on the Business Services website.

Travel involving Student Athletes must follow applicable NCAA guidelines.

18. Expenses for Health and Safety May be Paid

The health and safety of travelers must remain a top priority in the conduct of travel related activities. Serious consideration of hazardous situations that could threaten the health and safety of travelers must be made prior to approving travel plans and itineraries and approved plans and itineraries must be altered.

Certain travel expenses are considered personal and are non-reimbursable, including but not limited to costs of personal trip insurance and medical and hospital services.

When travel itineraries are altered after travel begins to address health and safety issues, travelers should promptly notify their supervisor of the change in travel plans.