

South Central College

Travel Policy & Procedure

This procedure applies to all employees of South Central College including students, authorized to travel and be reimbursed for allowable expenses in conducting authorized college or Office of the Chancellor business. South Central employees, including students are responsible for complying with this procedure and for the accurate completion of all required forms, including the Employee Expense Report. Students shall be compensated in accordance with the Commissioner's Plan.

Prior Approval

All travel requires written prior approval by an employee's administrator supervisor (Dean, Vice-President or President). All travel that includes overnight stay, conference fees, or airline expenses requires the "Authorization for Travel" to be filled out and signed by the employee's administrator supervisor.

Authorized travel is when it can be reasonably determined that:

- the travel is primarily for the benefit of the college and is related to the effective conduct of business; and
- the cost of the travel and absence from work will be offset by benefits accruing to college, including the professional advancement of an employee; and
- the travel relates to activities which do not have as their purpose the advancement of a political party, a political candidate, or a religious denomination.

The only exception to travel without prior authorization is allowed in the following circumstances:

- emergency travel
- travel originating outside the United States

Spouse/Companion Travel.

Travel expenses will not be reimbursed if incurred by a spouse or other individual accompanying an employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students on business unless:

- the spouse/companion is a state employee and there is a bona fide business purpose requiring their attendance
- such expenses are provided for in collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans

A spouse or other individual may accompany a state employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students on a business trip at the expense of the employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students expense.

Maximum Use of Financial Resources.

Travel costs should take into consideration any financial decisions made such as:

- Employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students leaving a day early to take advantage of a lower airfare.

- Employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students staying over a weekend at his/her own expense to obtain lower airfare. Additional expenses may be paid related to the reduced airfare providing they do not exceed the amount saved on the lower airfare.
- Other unusual situations which increase or decrease the trip costs.
- Travel is being paid for by an outside organization and is in compliance with ethics requirements in accordance with *Minn. Stat. Section 43A.38, Code of Ethics for Employees in the Executive Branch*, and *Minn. Stat. Section 10A.071, Certain Gifts by Lobbyists and Principals Prohibited*. If an employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students is reimbursed by a MnSCU institution for this travel and is also reimbursed for the same travel expense by an outside organization, the employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students must endorse the reimbursement check over to the MnSCU institution. An employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students may be reimbursed by an outside organization for travel or meals expenses, not to exceed actual expenses incurred, which are not reimbursed by the state and which have been approved in advance by the appointing authority as part of the work assignment.
- Employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students elect to drive a personal vehicle rather than fly. Reimbursement for personal vehicle use in lieu of airfare is at the lower reimbursement rate and shall not exceed the lowest round trip coach airfare.

Travel Arrangements.

Travel arrangements may be made through any travel agency. Use of the State's preferred vendors or targeted group and economically disadvantaged vendors is encouraged. The college will not reimburse an employee if the travel arrangements are made using the personal funds of the employee and then the employee is unable to attend the event. The college will not reimburse an employee that has used personal funds until the event actually occurs and the employee attends the event.

Subpart A. Fares.

Lowest Fare

Inquiries on fares and reservations should be made early enough to take advantage of advance purchase discounts.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance coverage purchased by employees is not a reimbursable expense.

Upgrades

Upgrades at the expense of MnSCU are not permitted. Upgrades are allowed at the employee's personal expense.

Free service upgrades for all domestic air travel are permissible with the lowest available rates. Employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students shall not use their positions to seek or accept an unwarranted privilege of substantial value which is not regularly available to similarly situated individuals.

Use of Personal Aircraft

Travel in personal aircraft may be authorized by the Board Chair for Board Trustees, by the Chancellor for Office of the Chancellor staff, and by the President at the colleges and universities when it is deemed in the best interest of MnSCU. Mileage reimbursement in such cases shall be at the rate identified in the applicable collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan. Proof of adequate liability insurance is required and the pilot and aircraft must be in compliance with all Federal Aviation Administration requirements.

Lost Baggage

Personal items lost while traveling on authorized business are not a reimbursable expense.

Excess Baggage

Employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students will be reimbursed for excess baggage charges only when the employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students are required to have on hand equipment, books, reports, etc. which cause him/her to exceed the normal weight limitations.

Subpart B. Lodging.

The lowest, government rate available should be secured at a reasonably priced licensed lodging facility. Staying at the private residence of a relative or friend is not a reimbursable expense.

Room charge and tax may be directly billed to South Central, if permitted. Other miscellaneous charges such as meals, dry cleaning, telephone calls, etc. must be paid by the employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students to the lodging facility at the time of check-out. Business related expenses will be reimbursed through the Employee Expense Report process.

Subpart C. State-owned Vehicles.

State owned vehicles are to be used for official state business only.

Authorized drivers are state employees, contract employees if authorization to drive a state vehicle is specifically mentioned in their contract, students who have been given permission by college or university administration, and an individual assisting an employee or student with a disability, if approved by the employee's supervisor, or for students the college or university administration.

Drivers shall have a valid U.S. driver's license and shall observe all ordinances and laws pertaining to the operation of motor vehicles.

Only authorized persons are permitted to ride in state-owned vehicles. Authorized persons include state employees, other persons participating in related state programs, or an individual assisting an employee or student with a disability, if approved by the employee's supervisor, or for students the college or university administration.

Subpart D. Personal Vehicle Usage.

Employees and any other individuals authorized to travel including students may use their personal vehicle for business purposes when in compliance with state policy outlined in the *Department of Finance's SEMA4 Operating Policy and Procedure Manual, Employee Travel Expenses Chapter*.

Mileage reimbursements for the use of personal vehicles will be at the allowable levels and in conformance with expense reimbursement requirements defined in the respective bargaining agreement or compensation plan of the employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students and state policy as outlined in the *Department of Finance's SEMA4 Operating Policy and Procedure Manual*.

Subpart E. Rental Vehicle.

Rental of a vehicle by employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students is authorized only when the type of trip or location of meetings is such that use of local transportation (taxi, airport limousines and airport shuttles, buses) is not practical or is expected to be more expensive.

Rental vehicles shall be reserved and rented at the lowest applicable discounted rate possible or available.

The use of compact or mid-size/intermediate rental vehicle categories is recommended except in cases where:

- the number of passengers is three or more
- excess baggage for official business requires a large vehicle, e.g., booth displays, slide presentations, sales items
- a larger size vehicle is provided at no extra charge above compact or midsize rate

When rental vehicles are used for travel within the United States, employees and any other individuals authorized to travel, including students, are expected to decline rental vehicle insurance because the state has provisions for insuring rental vehicles against damage through the Risk Management Division. Travelers will not be reimbursed for the cost of rental vehicle insurance for domestic travel. For international travel employees and any other individuals authorized to travel including students should accept all insurance coverage when renting vehicles in a foreign country.

Airline Frequent Flyer Program.

Minnesota Statute 15.435, Airline Travel Credit, requires any credits or other benefits issued by an airline to a public employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students who uses public funds to pay for airline travel to accrue to the benefit of the public body providing the funding. Employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students who frequently fly and have airline frequent flyer programs for their personal travel shall obtain a separate airline frequent flyer program number to record and report receipt of credits or other benefits when using state funds.

Travel Advances.

The use of state credit cards for authorized business expenses is strongly encouraged. An employee and any other individual authorized to travel including students may be issued a travel advance subject to minimum amounts determined by his/her bargaining agreement or compensation plan. The amount of the advance should not include any expense that will be directly billed. Advances should be requested using the Employee Expense Report a minimum of 14 days before departure. An employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students may not have more than one outstanding travel advance due to failure to settle the advance for a trip that has been completed. The advance must be submitted with an Employee Expense Report with appropriate receipts and documentation within five (5) days of returning from the trip. Advances not settled within 28 days of return date will be deducted in their entirety from the employee's pay check.

Reimbursement of Travel Expenses.

Subpart A. Reimbursement Form.

Employees, including students within applicable policies and collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans will be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses while traveling on authorized business. Request for reimbursement of travel expenses shall be submitted on an Employee Expense Report form.

Subpart B. Receipts.

Original itemized receipts are required for all expenses except meals, taxi services, baggage handling, and parking meters or as required in collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans. All forms of canceled checks and copies of credit card bills do not substitute for original receipts. An employee may be allowed to file an affidavit in lieu of a receipt if the original receipt is lost or a receipt is not obtained.

Subpart C. Direct Billing/Credit Cards.

Air travel costs may be paid using a direct or central billing account, state charge/corporate credit card, or personal charge/credit card.

Subpart D. Miscellaneous Expenses.

The following miscellaneous expenses may be reimbursed:

- Personal telephone calls - if allowed by collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans, documented personal telephone calls are reimbursable.
- Laundry and dry cleaning - employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students in travel status in excess of one week without returning home shall be allowed actual cost not to exceed applicable collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans for laundry and dry cleaning for each week after first week.

Subpart E. Non-Reimbursable Expenses.

Following are examples of miscellaneous expenses that employees will NOT normally be reimbursed for:

- Under no circumstances will employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages
- annual fees or interest for personal credit cards
- late payment fees or interest on state-issued corporate credit card
- expenses of traveling companions or family members
- expenses related to vacation or personal days while on a trip
- loss or theft of personal cash or property
- entertainment or amusement costs, movies, "no-show" charges, optional travel or baggage insurance, and parking or traffic tickets
- incorrect or incomplete expense reports
- Parking if an employee who normally does not drive to work drives a personal vehicle because he/she will use the vehicle for official business during the day, the employee is NOT entitled to parking reimbursement at the work station.

International Travel.**Subpart A. Definition.**

International travel covers all destinations outside the Continental U.S.

Subpart B. Authorization/Approval.

The chancellor or designee shall approve/disapprove, in writing, international travel for the presidents and office of chancellor employees.

The president or designee at each of the state colleges and universities shall approve/disapprove, in writing, international travel for college or university employees.

Subpart C. Expense Reimbursement.

Because the cost-of-living varies from country to country and the rate of money exchange fluctuates, the following expenses will be reimbursed at the actual cost unless provisions for reimbursement of international travel are referenced in collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans:

1. Commercial transportation.
2. Hotel/motel accommodations.
3. Meals.
4. Work-related long distance calls.
5. Dry cleaning and laundry services after one week in continued travel status.
6. Miscellaneous expenses incurred with travel such as baggage handling and parking fees.

Receipts for expenses should be attached to the Employees Expense Report. If an employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students does not have a receipt or an affidavit of expenditures, the out-of-state reimbursement limits in collective bargaining agreements or compensation plans shall be used.

Travel Advisories.

Employees or any other individuals authorized to travel including students must NOT travel to countries for which a travel advisory has been issued by the State Department of the United States

of America. Contact the State Department to obtain a list of current advisories at <http://travel.state.gov/>.

Subpart E. Travel Vaccine Requirements.

The Center for Disease Control has travel vaccine requirements, food and water precautions and other pertinent information at the following Internet address: www.tmd.state.mn.us/ (State's Travel Management Division)

Subpart F. Emergency Travel Assistance.

In case of an emergency, contact the travel agency issuing the travel documents and itinerary.

Subpart G. Foreign Currency Services and Reimbursement Conversion.

Foreign currency can be obtained from any of the following locations:

- banks
- airport foreign exchange counter
- major hotels in foreign countries
- currency exchange outlets

Expenses incurred and paid directly by the employee or any other individuals authorized to travel including students are converted into U.S. dollars at the actual exchange rate, supported by receipts such as a foreign currency exchange receipt or a charge/credit card billing statement. When more than one exchange of the same type of foreign currency is made during the reporting period, a weighted average exchange rate (total U.S. dollars divided by total amount of foreign currency) must be used. All expenses must be recorded in U.S. dollars, with the currency conversion rate clearly noted on the expense report and on all support receipts. If the amount claimed on the expense report is more or less than the amount of the attached receipts, a written statement explaining the differences must accompany the expense.

Responsibility and Accountability.

The employee or any other individual authorized to travel including students is responsible for complying with state statutes, laws, regulations, policies, MnSCU's travel policy and procedures, the employee's respective bargaining agreement or compensation plan, state laws, federal laws, and IRS guidelines and for accurately completing all required forms for reimbursement of authorized official business travel expenses. The employee's supervisor is responsible for reviewing and approving all travel requests and expenses. Audits of travel reimbursements shall be conducted according to the audit plan approved by the Board.

Approved 9/25/07