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UNIVERSITY  
OF  
NORTH ALABAMA  
TRAVEL POLICY

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The travel policies of the University of North Alabama have been developed in accordance with Alabama law and Internal Revenue Service regulations and guidelines. These policies cover University employees, students and others who travel on approved, official University business.

At a minimum, employees must obtain prior approval of the immediate supervisor before traveling or obligating University funds. Some types of travel require additional authorization.

When traveling at the University of North Alabama's expense, University employees should, in all cases, seek to obtain the lowest possible fares and rates by scheduling their travel in a manner that will be the most economical to the University. Personal travel for side trips is not reimbursed. It is the employee's responsibility to obtain proper documentation of the travel costs when seeking reimbursement for incurred expenses.

In all cases, there must be a clear, documented business purpose for travel. Excessive or unjustifiable costs are not acceptable and will not be paid by or reimbursed from university funds

### 1. General

- a. Travel Status - Employees are in travel status when they leave their base. Base is defined as the employees' primary residence or work location whichever is closest to the travel destination. Work location is defined as the office location to which an employee is assigned.
- b. Claim for Travel Expenses – Claim forms for In-State/Out-of-State Travel Expenses are used to record all reimbursable employee travel costs and note university paid travel costs. All claims for travel reimbursement must be made on an In-State or Out-of-State travel form. These forms are located at <http://www.una.edu/controller/index.html>. Requests for reimbursement should be submitted within sixty (60) days after completion of the trip. Original itemized receipts and other documentation of the total costs of the trip must be submitted along with the claim form. When a trip includes both in-state and out-of-state travel, the entire trip should be reported on the out-of-state travel form with actual expenditures claimed.

If the claim form is submitted more than 60 days after the traveler's return, the reimbursement may become taxable income to the employee. Federal tax regulations require that substantiation of reimbursed expenses be made within a reasonable period. Under IRS safe-harbor guidelines, that period is 60 days. Tax

withholding will be made from a subsequent salary payment.

The form must be signed on the line marked “Traveler’s Signature” by the employee who traveled and is seeking reimbursement. The employee’s signature acknowledges acceptance and terms of reimbursement.

Any expenses covered by the university or a third party should be noted on the travel form to provide clarity of the entire trip expense.

- c. Documentation of Costs/Approval of Travel Reimbursement - After returning from official travel, employees are required to present original itemized receipts for all actual travel expenses for which a claim is made. See In-State and Out of State Guidelines. Conference registration fees paid by a participating University employee are reimbursable following the conference. To claim reimbursement, any conference brochures or other literature documenting the expense, a registration receipt, including dollar amount and method of payment, or other proof of payment must be submitted along with the claim for travel form.
  - d. Approval of Travel Reimbursement by Supervisor, Dean, Director or Department Head -The University requires that claims from University Travel Expense Forms be signed by the supervisor (not a designee or stamp) of the employee who is requesting reimbursement for official travel. By signing the reimbursement form, the supervisor is certifying the expenses have been used in accordance with the University of North Alabama’s Travel Policies. Even when the traveler is the principal investigator or project director of a grant, the claim for travel reimbursement must be signed by his/her supervisor.

Deans and department heads may establish more, but not less, restrictive policies than what is required by the university, as reimbursement approval from budgets for which they are responsible.
  - e. Exceptions –Generally, any exception to University travel policies should have prior written authorization from the appropriate Dean or Executive Council Member and the University Controller. Rules promulgated by the State of Alabama have precedence.
2. Travel Reimbursement for Executive Officers - The President and each Vice President’s request for travel reimbursement must be reviewed and approved by the Vice President for Business & Financial Affairs. Reimbursement requests from the Vice President for Business & Financial Affairs must be reviewed and approved by the President.
  3. Contract and Grant Travel Reimbursement - Travel reimbursement from contract and grant funds require submission of the Grants and Contracts Travel form found on the Grant Accounting website: <https://www.una.edu/grants-contracts/grants--contracts-accounting->

[forms.html](#) .These forms must be signed by the principal investigator or project director officially responsible for the contract or grant account; this person may not defer this responsibility to anyone else. In addition, the appropriate travel form must be signed by the investigator's or project director's supervisor.

All Reimbursement will be subject to the University's policies, unless the contract or grant prohibits reimbursement of certain expenses.

4. Travel During Faculty Professional Development Leave - With prior approval from the Provost, travel expenses incurred during a faculty professional development leave period may be reimbursed if they are connected with official travel in the performance of University duties.
5. Travel Expenses Advancement - The University does not advance funds for travel expenses for employee travel; with the exception of those pre-authorized expenses paid with a university purchase order or university p-card.
6. Multiple Reimbursements Channels - No employee may be reimbursed by both the University and another organization for the same travel expenses.
7. Generally Prohibited Expenses – The University does not generally reimburse employees for the following:
  - a. Purchases of alcoholic beverages
  - b. Travel expenses incurred by spouses or other family members.
  - c. Cost of passports (unless pre-approved by the appropriate Dean or divisional VP), safe charges, mini bars, in-room movie, valet services, recreational activities (even when such activities are part of a business meeting or conference) and excursions.
  - d. Charges for traffic or parking violations, or other expenses incurred such as lost keys, keys locked in vehicles, GPS systems, maps and atlas.
  - e. Medical expenses incurred during travel may not be reimbursed as travel costs.
  - f. Travel Insurance (unless pre-approved by Controllers' Office)
  - g. Upgraded accommodation expenses, such as airline seat upgrades, luxury suites or other premium discretionary expenses are not approved. Special circumstances may be authorized by the Office of Business and Financial Affairs on a case by case basis and require pre-approval.
8. Special Travel Requirements-If an employee has special travel requirements that are not covered by the above policies, contact the University's Controller's Office prior to travel for approval.
9. Early Arrival/ Late Departure - At times it may be necessary to travel the day before or remain

at the site for an additional night. As a general rule, the University will not reimburse travel earlier than the day before or the day after a meeting/conference.

10. Interrupted Travel - The employee assumes all additional costs associated with deviating from the official travel itinerary if the employee interrupts the official travel for reasons of personal convenience.
11. Cancellation of Trip – The traveler is responsible for obtaining credit for all expenses. Please contact the Controller’s Office at ext. 4232 or via e-mail when an official trip has to be cancelled to prevent potential reimbursement problems.

## II. TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES – MODE OF TRAVEL

1. Air – Only coach/economy fares are allowable when traveling on commercial airline for official University business. Any costs associated with upgraded seating must be pre-approved by the Controller’s office for a specific business purpose or accommodation. Employees should plan well in advance and obtain the most economical fare available (Not more than 4 months out). Airfare may be secured using the university p-card with prior approval from the appropriate supervisor (*Reminder: Travel Insurance is **not approved** from university funds*) Note: If traveler chooses to procure tickets via personal means and request reimbursement, they will not be reimbursed until they have returned from the trip.
2. Taxi – A taxi may be hired for transportation when no other economical public transportation is readily available. If a taxi is hired for any trip except traveling to and from the airport, a written explanation must accompany the reimbursement claim.
3. University-Owned Vehicles - University-owned vehicles are available on a first-come, first serve basis to properly licensed employees of the University. A copy of a valid current driver’s license is required from every driver to be retained in facilities during trip. A request form for use of University vehicle(s) as well as the usage policy is on the Facilities webpage at: <https://www.una.edu/facilities/>.

Traveler must submit a completed request form to Facilities before a vehicle(s) assignment will be made. Except in extreme circumstances, vehicle keys will not be issued earlier than 24 hours prior to the trip.

It is not permissible to use a University-owned vehicle for personal use.

4. Privately Owned Automobile Transportation - Employees who use their own automobiles for official travel will be reimbursed at the current federal mileage rate. The University makes reimbursement for the round-trip mileage traveled from the employee’s base (see “Travel Status” of page 1) and destination or for the actual miles traveled from origin to destination and back, whichever is less. The mileage between an employee’s residence and official travel station is not reimbursable. Current mileage rates are available from the Controller’s Office.

When two or more passengers travel in one private automobile on official University business, only one employee may claim reimbursement for mileage.

When University-owned or private automobiles are used for official travel, any legal parking/or toll charges incurred are reimbursable.

Reimbursement for round trip mileage cannot exceed the cost of a roundtrip flight. The employee will be reimbursed at whichever is lowest, the current mileage rate or the lowest discounted airfare. This is called airfare-in-lieu of mileage.

If a personal vehicle is used to drive to an airport for a flight or to pick up an official University guest, the traveler will be reimbursed at the current effective mileage rate.

Employees traveling within the Florence city limits should submit a claim for travel expenses form to request reimbursement. However, for frequent local travel, claims should not be submitted on a per-trip basis. Rather, employees who make frequent local trips should keep a mileage log and submit claims at appropriate intervals. The mileage log must be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form. The claim for travel expenses form must include the date, destination, and reason for the trip, along with the recorded mileage. Employees may not be reimbursed for travel to their work location.

Under normal circumstances, employees will not be reimbursed for intra-campus travel when a personal auto is used. However, if extenuating circumstances exist, documentation of these circumstances must be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form.

*NOTE: The interval of claims must be less than 60 days. Any expense turned in for reimbursement more than 60 days after the expense was incurred is treated as taxable income subject to withholding per IRS regulations.*

5. Rental Vehicles – Generally, the University does not accept sight-seeing, transportation to and from the airport, or to and from meals as justification for renting a vehicle.

If renting in the Florence area, submit a requisition for a purchase order to the Procurement Office for the vehicle rental. This will insure obtaining a contracted price and appropriate insurance coverage.

Except in special circumstances, requests for reimbursement for a vehicle rental cannot exceed the actual mileage at the current effective mileage rate.

When renting a vehicle, the primary driver should waive collision insurance as this is covered under the University's current insurance plan.

The University carries liability insurance to protect the University. Drivers may want to carry an expanded rider on their own policy to cover themselves.

### III. IN-STATE TRAVEL

1. Reimbursement Restrictions - The guidelines for In-State travel reimbursements are governed by the Code of Alabama 1975, 36-7-20 through 36-7-23, as amended.

Requests for reimbursement for employee travel must be submitted on a travel claim form found on the Controller's website, <https://www.una.edu/controller/>. Travel claim forms are to be submitted within 60 days of travel. Travel reimbursements received after 60 days of the completion date of the trip will be treated as income according to IRS regulations. Tax withholding may be made from a subsequent salary payment.

Travel within the State of Alabama for official University business is reimbursed on a per diem basis for expenses at the current effective rate as approved by State law. Receipts for items covered by per diem do not need to be submitted with the claim for travel expenses form. The overnight per diem allowance covers lodging, meals, and gratuities. Even though receipts are not required, travelers are asked to include some type of trip receipt(s) to allow for audit correlation of trip dates.

2. Overnight - When an employee's official travel requires an overnight stay, the per diem reimbursement for each day or portion of a day will be at the per diem rate dictated by law and is currently eighty-five dollars (\$85) per day for travel that requires one overnight stay and one hundred dollars (\$100) for trips that require a stay of two or more nights.

For example:

1 night: Leave Monday & return to base Tuesday = \$170

2 nights: Leave Monday & return to base Wednesday = \$300

An overnight stay is required to receive full daily per diem allowance. Under no circumstances will an employee be paid an overnight travel allowance at the official station, base or primary residence. If state business requires the traveler to be away from the base or official station on weekends or holidays, the traveler will be entitled to reimbursement for those days.

3. Minimum time from base restriction - No travel allowance or per diem shall be paid for a trip of less than six hours duration. No meal allowance is applicable if the traveler remains in the city where his/her home or base is located.
4. In-state travel greater than six(6) hours but not overnight – When overnight stay is not included, the reimbursement rate for meals is:
  - \$12.75 for trips of 6 – 12 hours
  - \$34.00 for trips over 12 hours in length
5. Waive per diem - An employee who does not wish to be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred while traveling should attach to his or her claim for travel expenses form a signed statement waiving the meal allowance.

Only an employee may decide to waive per diem. A University department may not force an employee to waive per diem.

When an employee's travel expenses are less than the per diem allowance, the employee may choose to be reimbursed for the actual cost of travel. In this case, a signed statement waiving the per diem allowance should be included with the claim for travel expenses form.

#### IV. OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

Traveler must have been gone from base for more than six (6) hours to claim reimbursement of an expense other than mileage.

Reimbursement for Out of State Travel - Requests for reimbursement for Out-of-State employee travel or for In-State travel for the purpose of attending or assisting in hosting a convention, conference, seminar or other meeting of a national organization of which the state or individual is a dues-paying member must be submitted on a Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses Form within 60 days of travel. The form is found on the Controller's webpage, <https://www.una.edu/controller>. Travel reimbursements submitted subsequent to 60 days after the completion date of the trip may be treated as income according to IRS regulations.

1. Lodging – The University p-card may be used to pay for out of state lodging or individuals may choose to pay via personal means and request reimbursement. . Itemized original receipts must accompany the P-Card transaction submission or the reimbursement claim form for Out-of-State Travel Expenses. **Credit card transaction receipts alone are unacceptable.** Receipts must contain the name(s) of the traveler(s), dates of occupancy, daily charges, and the total amount charged for lodging.
2. Meals – Travelers may opt for either the maximum reimbursable amount of \$34 per day without receipts for the duration of the trip OR request full reimbursement up to a maximum of \$60/day with itemized receipts for the entire trip.

Partial days without itemized receipts will be reimbursed as follows: Breakfast: \$6.00; Lunch: \$9.00; Dinner: \$19.00.

Exceptions to the meal reimbursement for the maximum allowed for actual expenses per day require approval from the Vice President of Business and Financial Affairs and the appropriate Dean or Executive Council Member.

3. Gratuities – Generally, gratuities should not exceed 20% for food service. Other tips or gratuities may be reimbursable when they are at acceptable levels and deemed to be reasonable and necessary.
4. Baggage Handling – Only baggage handling expenses incurred when traveling to or from the place of lodging or when traveling to or from the airport or train station will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$150.00.

Baggage fees charged by airlines may be reimbursed for up to two bags each way unless there is an approved business reason for carrying additional bags.

V. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL – Travel is considered international when it occurs anywhere outside the United States or its territories.

1. Travel Claim Forms - Requests for reimbursement for international employee travel should be submitted on the Claim form for Out-of-State travel expenses. All costs listed on the travel claim must be recorded in U.S. Currency and the exchange rate stated on the claim form.

Currency exchange fees may be claimed only when you are required to convert to/from U.S. currency. You may not claim reimbursement for losses due to currency conversion.

*Note: American Express Corporate Card charges are converted by American Express to U.S. dollars and cents and the exchange rate noted. Other major credit card companies convert foreign currency charges to dollars and cents but don't always show the exchange rate.*

Request for reimbursement for travel expenses should be filed on the Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses form within 60 days of travel. Receipts and other documentation of the total costs of the trip must be submitted along with the travel claim form. Documentation must include information detailing meals included in a registration fee. This might be the conference registration information or the daily meeting schedules. Any expenses paid by a third party should be noted on the Claim for Out-of-State Travel Expenses form.

2. Travel Approval – Before using federal contract or grant funds to travel internationally, employees must gain prior approval from the sponsoring agency unless originally approved in the contract or grant.
3. Reimbursement for International Travel - Actual lodging expenses will be reimbursed up to the maximum federal rate allowable in each city. Detailed Receipts are required. The University p-card may be used to cover lodging, but only for payment of the room(s) (room + tax only).

Meals and incidental expenses will be reimbursed at the current federal daily rate (CONUS) and receipts are not required. The U.S. State Department Office of Allowances publishes foreign per diem rates for lodging and M&IE. Current rates may be viewed at the following website address:

Domestic: <https://www.perdiem101.com/conus/2018>

International: <https://www.perdiem101.com/oconus/2018>

No tips or other incidental expenses will be reimbursed as they are covered within the M&IE rates.

4. Other - Reimbursement for insurance for international travel or medical coverage must have approval from the traveler's divisional Dean or Vice-President.

All other guidelines governing Out-of-State travel reimbursement also govern international travel reimbursement.

## VI. NON-EMPLOYEE TRAVEL

1. Independent Contractors – Those individuals and companies that have contracted with the University to provide professional services as defined by IRS regulations are independent contractors (IC). If the agreement with the IC provides for a fee plus travel expenses, reimbursement is made according to the contract signed by the parties but may not exceed the limits stated in the Out-of-State travel policies.
  
2. Volunteers – Individuals who perform services for The University of North Alabama without receiving compensation for those services are considered volunteers. Requests for travel expense reimbursement for volunteers should be made on the requisition claim form and signed by the department head for which the service was performed.
  - The service performed by the volunteer should be described in detail and the volunteer's eligibility for reimbursement established on the disbursement requisition form. It should be clearly stated on the claim form that no fee for services is being paid.
  - An itemized record and all original receipts for the actual transportation, lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses incurred by the volunteer should be submitted with the disbursement requisition form.
  
3. Eligibility Requirements - Volunteers are eligible for actual travel expense reimbursement **when they meet all of the following conditions:**
  - A properly approved University Volunteer Agreement Packet is filled out and is on file within the Office of Human Resources.  
<https://www.una.edu/humanresources/form-and-links.html>
  - They are traveling at the specific request of the University on official University business.
  - They do not receive compensation from any source for performing this service for the University.
  - They are not employees of the University or of any other state entity that would subject them to state per diem regulations

## VII. STUDENT TEAM AND RECOGNIZED STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRAVEL

Dependent upon the circumstances, there are three ways to pay for student group or team travel:

1. One option is to use the University P-Card to cover all approved group expenses and follow the p-card policy for submission of all expenses. It is typically assumed in this case no other claim for reimbursement will be made. If a claim is made explanations of how

the entire trip was covered should be given to explain the out-of-pocket expense and its relation to the group trip.

2. Another option is to reimburse each student separately. Upon completion of trip each student and the advisor should submit, in one package, the appropriate travel reimbursement form with all required documentation.
3. The last option is through an advancement of money to the coach or advisor and that person is responsible for reconciling expenses after the trip (see instructions below for reconciliation of the cash advance upon return).

To obtain advanced funds for student team travel:

**At least 10 days prior to travel** the coach or advisor must submit a voucher (payable to the group advisor) to the Controller's Office for a team travel advance. List the travelers (students and advisors), the purpose of the trip, the itinerary and the budget. The advance should be enough to cover all anticipated expenditures. A check will be prepared.

**Within 10 days after completion of the trip** submit a detailed reconciliation (expense report) with authorized signature(s) to the Controller's Office. This should include itemized receipts for all expenditures. Follow the University's guidelines for expenditure limits.

Advisor, coach, or sponsor of team/group may choose to give students a cash meal allowance rather than submit receipts for individual meals. In such cases, students must sign a verification slip that they have received the funds. If the advisor pays for meals for the group, attach appropriate receipts.

Upon submission of reconciliation - The Accounts Payable Office will review trip reconciliation and receipts. Any remaining funds are to be submitted with the reconciliation paperwork. If the amount spent exceeds amount advanced, a claim for travel reimbursement for the difference should be sent with the reconciliation.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. Why do we only receive \$85 or \$100 per day to cover room & board for in-state travel?**

Answer: This is set within the Alabama Constitution and is a law. It is applicable to ALL state employees.

**2. If I have a situation that is not addressed within the travel policy, what do I do?**

Answer: Contact the Controller's Office to discuss the parameters of the situation and how to manage it BEFORE the travel is organized.

**3. Is train travel an option?**

Answer: Yes, coach seats are an option, however all parameters of in-state & out-of-state restrictions apply. For example, additional travel days to accommodate train travel would not be approved and the total expense could not be greater than mileage reimbursement or airfare.

**4. Are we allowed to pay for non-employee travel & if so, are they subject to the University policy?**

Answer: It is preferable that non-employees pay for all travel & request reimbursement for expenses. Reimbursements will be subject to all restrictions within the University policy.

**5. May I purchase snacks while traveling and receive reimbursement for them?**

Answer: In State: any food purchase is included within the daily per diem rate. Out of state: if the traveler chooses reimbursement by per diem, then the cost of the snack is included within the per diem. If the out-of-state traveler chooses to submit full-itemized receipts for actual reimbursement what they choose to eat is irrelevant, but they may only claim three meals within a day and as defined within the full policy.

**6. May I use a University P-Card for travel expenses?**

Answer: The University P-Card may be used for the following expenses:

- Conference Registration Fees
- Airline Tickets
- Out of town vehicle rentals & associated gasoline during trip (As long as gasoline expense does not exceed reimbursement allowance)
- Out of state lodging
- Out of state taxi or tolls
- Student group or team entrance fees when applicable. (other student group & team travel expenses may be pre-approved, refer to p-card policy)

**7. If I travel out of state via automobile but I am not gone more than six hours am I eligible for reimbursement of expenses?**

Answer: The employee is eligible to claim mileage reimbursement only. No meals or other expenses are eligible for reimbursement.

**8. When I am traveling in-state and do not stay overnight am I eligible for reimbursement of expenses?**

Answer: For trips lasting less than six hours the traveler will be reimbursed for mileage only, no meals. For trips between 6 and 12 hours the traveler may be reimbursed \$12.75 plus mileage. For trips exceeding 12 hours the traveler may be reimbursed \$34.00 plus mileage.