

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE  
TRAVEL EXPENSE AND REIMBURSEMENT POLICY



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## TRAVEL EXPENSE AND REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

### Overview

The purpose of the travel and expense reimbursement guidelines is to provide campus policy and procedures for travel and entertainment costs in compliance with IRS regulations for qualification of business expenses. These guidelines are designed to ensure consistency for all members of the Swarthmore community whose travel is paid for by the College. The contents of this policy applies to all travel and entertainment regardless of funding source and whether purchases are made directly via invoice, Purchasing Card (PCard), or as a reimbursement from the College.

The IRS regulations state that to qualify as a business expense, the expense must be "ordinary", "necessary" and "directly connected with or related to your profession." Expenses may not be lavish or extravagant. An individual traveling on College business should not profit as a result of business travel.

The College will reimburse all reasonable employee travel and entertainment expenses for transportation, meals, lodging, and other necessary business expenses. Travel expense for faculty to attend professional meetings or conducting research cannot exceed the stipulated amount of the granted funds provided by the College. Travel funded by a sponsored grant or contract must also adhere to all required procedures and restrictions of the sponsoring organization.

Every effort should be made to schedule travel arrangements to keep College expenses to a minimum, while assuming a reasonable level of comfort and convenience. If a travel itinerary is altered to accommodate personal preference, the traveler is expected to pay any additional costs incurred.

In general, reimbursements will be made on the basis of actual and reasonable expenses incurred for transportation, meals, lodging, and other necessary business expenses. Per diem allowances are not permitted except in cases where a department has established a per diem for travelers who don't have a PCard with prior approval of the AVP for Finance and Controller. Those per diems are based on location using the federal government per diem rate listed at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

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### Receipts and Supporting Documentation

The following documentation is required for all expense reimbursements:

- a) The original receipt or invoice (or a scanned copy) with line item detail and proof of payment, if applicable
- b) Description of purchase and business purpose
- c) List of meal attendees, if applicable

If the receipt does not provide proof of payment, you need to provide additional information (such as a copy of the credit card statement). In the rare case where a receipt for a minor expense is not available, a description of the expense can be included with proof of payment. The Business Office may refuse reimbursement if an employee repeatedly reports lost or misplaced receipts.

### Expense Authorization

Authorization for travel expenses in the form of a travel advance, credit card (PCard) charge, or expense reimbursement must be approved by the department head or supervisor having budgetary responsibilities. Authorized travel expenses for academic department heads should be based on approval of the Provost's Office.

The College reimburses travel of students or non-employees (such as job applicants, lecturers, consultants, and other individuals) when required by authorized contractual agreement or when approved in advance by the relevant department head or President's Staff member.

Travel expense reimbursement requests are required to be authorized and turned into the Business Office within 30 days for reimbursement. Supporting documentation (e.g., dated original receipts) must accompany the report for all related expenses.

No employee (faculty, staff, or student) may approve their own reimbursement request. Reimbursements requests are to be approved by an employee's supervisor, the department head, or financial manager responsible for the budget being charged.

### Transportation

Whenever possible, employees are to use a College-issued PCard for business travel expenses. If an employee does not have a College-issued PCard, a personal credit card or travel advance may be used.

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### *Local Travel Defined*

Local travel is defined as travel within Delaware County or a radius not more than 25 miles from campus. If you use your personal vehicle for College business that requires local travel, the College will reimburse you at the prevailing mileage rate plus tolls, parking, and related expenses. Commuting mileage is not reimbursed. Commuting from home to work is not reimbursable, even if the employee works on an unscheduled workday, such as on a weekend.

To illustrate: if an employee lives 20 miles from campus and travels to a meeting which is 25 miles from campus, only 5 miles is reimbursable since 20 miles are considered the employee's ordinary commute.

### *Personal Automobile*

If driving your personal vehicle, you will be reimbursed for the mileage driven (excluding commuting mileage) at the current Federal mileage rate. The mileage rate includes reimbursement for gasoline and expenses such as repairs, insurance, or any physical damage to the vehicle. Tolls and parking will also be reimbursed. Parking tickets or fines for moving violations will not be reimbursed.

The College insurance policy does not cover accidents when an individual uses a private vehicle for business. It is the responsibility of the owner of the vehicle to carry adequate insurance for the driver and passengers. In case of an accident in a private vehicle on College business, the Board of Managers could at its discretion indemnify a legal claim against the driver or owner of the vehicle. Therefore, it is advantageous for employees to consider rental vehicles to avoid any claims on their personal insurance record.

### *Commercial Rental Vehicles*

In selecting a rental car, travelers should select an economic option such as a compact or economy car whenever possible. Swarthmore College Purchasing has corporate discounts with several participating companies. Reservations for car rentals should be through one of these College contracts. Please refer to the College Purchasing Office website for information on campus-wide auto rental agreements.

When renting a vehicle within the United States, travelers do not need to purchase a Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) from the rental car agency as coverage is provided by the College's auto

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insurance policy. However, if an auto is being rented in a foreign country for business use, local coverage and physical damage coverage must be purchased. For insurance reasons, car rental agreements should include Swarthmore College and the College's address.

#### *Van Rental*

Due to the increased level of risk associated with transporting numerous people in a vehicle, driving a van for College business requires that drivers undergo the College's van driving training and pre-authorization. This is the case whether a van is College-owned or is a rented vehicle. Successful completion of this van training program includes a driver license check and a brief road test demonstrating general driving skills. The van program authorization is administered by Public Safety. Rental of passenger vans that seat 15 passengers is strictly prohibited.

#### *Taxi, Bus and Shuttle Services*

Local taxi fares and shuttles to and from airports and railroad stations for College employees are reimbursable (including tip) to the extent that such service is not included in the air or rail fare.

Uber, Lyft and other similar transportation services are permitted travel alternatives which may be used in the same manner as a taxi service if the total trip cost is comparable to other ground transportation options. Travelers should note that legal, insurance, and operations of Uber and Lyft vary around the world. Travelers should also be aware of the "surge" pricing model which can significantly increase the amount charged to travelers at times of high demand. Faculty and staff are asked to consider the financial impact of surge pricing when using these car service programs.

If a faculty or staff person uses a personal membership for a car rental such as renting a Zip Car, this is acceptable in lieu of using a personal vehicle and charges for Zip Car rentals would be reimbursed similar to traditional rental vehicles.

#### *Rail Travel*

Coach accommodations must be used for trips shorter than 150 miles. Amtrak Acela service should only be used in special circumstances due to schedule.

#### *Air Travel*

The standard airline accommodation for air travel is coach class. Commercial air travel should be selected based upon lowest available airfare available assuming a reasonable level of comfort

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and convenience for the traveler. Any request to fly outside of 'coach' or 'economy' class must be granted by an appropriate member of the President's Staff under the following conditions: medical necessity, length of trip, or in an emergency. Extra leg room, such as 'economy-plus' seating which is not in the fare category of business class is permitted for flights with a duration of more than four hours. The Board of Manager's stated travel policy for College Officers permits first or business class travel for the President. All travelers may use "points" or decide to pay out for an upgrade to first or business class, however these upgrades are not reimbursable.

Air transportation is restricted to commercial airlines licensed by the U.S. Government. Use of an airplane such as a charter must be approved in advance for reporting requirements of the College's insurance policy. If five (5) or more college employees are scheduled to travel outside of the U.S. on the same flight, notification of these travel plans should be made in advance of the travel to the AVP for Finance and Controller.

#### *Frequent Flyer Points*

Travelers may retain the rewards for frequent flyer plans or other bonuses that may accrue from business travel. In no case, however, may the traveler choose a reservation at a higher cost in order to accumulate additional plan credits. Faculty and staff with College PCards are required to use the PCard for travel rather than a personal credit card. Employees may not be reimbursed for tickets purchased with frequent flyer points.

#### *Extra Airline Fees*

Extra airline fees such as early bird check in and advanced seat selection are considered a personal expense and should not be submitted for reimbursement. 'Economy Plus' seating is permitted for flights with a duration of more than four hours. The College will reimburse for one (1) checked bag per person, unless there is a business purpose for excess baggage. Flight insurance purchased by employees is not a reimbursable expense; however, flight cancellation or change penalties are reimbursable provided that it was caused by unavoidable circumstances.

#### *Foreign Travel*

Faculty and staff traveling internationally on College business and students in off-campus programs are covered for emergency assistance through the College's Foreign Travel policy through AIG WorldRisk Assist. The coverage includes medical assistance, lost baggage or passport assistance, evacuation ad

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repatriation as well as other general assistance. A copy of the World Risk Travel ID card is provided as an Appendix to this Policy.

Foreign student travel as well as faculty or staff accompanying students are insured through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). CISI provides medical referrals, evacuation assistance, and a wide range of travel assistance. Registration with CISI is required before leaving. Please contact the off-campus study office for further information.

### Lodging

Travelers are expected to use standard rooms at reasonably priced mid-market hotel or motel accommodations. The College does not approve accommodations at luxury hotels unless a reservation is made as part of attendance in a conference or workshop. The College has corporate discounts for several major hotel chains to offer further budgetary savings.

Travelers are eligible to utilize lodging if their duties require that they be away from the general area of their tax home substantially longer than a normal workday and they need to get sleep or rest to meet the demands of work while away from home. Faculty and staff are not eligible to stay on College business at the Inn at Swarthmore unless the overnight accommodation has been approved by a President's staff member for an on-call emergency or in the case of hosting an alumni or other Advancement event.

The College will reimburse for the cost of hotel internet access to the extent that it is necessary to conduct College business. Travelers may stay in rental accommodations (e.g., VRBO or Airbnb) if the total cost is less expensive than a hotel stay in a standard, single occupancy room. For safety reasons, the College does not recommend Airbnb stays, however if travelers choose to stay in a rental accommodation, they must provide documentation of the rental accommodation's lower cost.

Examples of non-reimbursable expenses include:

- Valet parking
- Personal entertainment expenses (movies, golf, gambling)
- Laundry (unless the trip is longer than 5 days)
- Toiletries, medicine, magazines
- Baby sitting
- Kennel or pet-sitting expenses
- Family members' expenses
- Traffic violations or parking tickets

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- Lost baggage
- Gas for personal vehicles
- Souvenirs and Gifts\*
- Charitable contributions

#### *Recognition awards or Gifts\**

The College has established programs of recognition and awards to faculty, staff and students. Departmental budgets are not to be used for gifts to members of the Swarthmore Community outside of these regularly offered programs. The Human Resources Department has an established program for retirement, service awards and memorial-type gifts. Gifts in recognition of birthdays, weddings, baby showers or illnesses are not reimbursable.

#### *Reasonable Costs*

To review the reasonableness of necessary travel, the College may compare a traveler's expenses with the federal per diem rates listed at <http://www.gsa.gov> to determine whether an individual's travel is excessive.

## Meals

Meals incurred during business travel on College business are on the basis of actual and reasonable cost. Entertainment expenses are expenses incurred while entertaining guests of the College and at events such as social and recreational activities when a business discussion takes place immediately before, during, or after the event.

The meal documentation required for all meal reimbursements must include the following information:

- Who attended (self, if alone)
- Business purpose of the meal
- Cost
- Where the meal was taken
- The date

Original, or scanned copy of the itemized receipts must be submitted for any meal or entertainment expense regardless of cost. In the rare instance when a receipt from the vendor is



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not available, the documentation must still contain the information above. Standard tips on meals that range from 15% to 20% are reimbursable.

#### *Alcohol*

A limited amount of alcohol in connection with a traveler's meal is reimbursable. Alcohol consumed outside normal meal times is not reimbursable unless it qualifies as an entertainment expense. Reimbursement of alcohol is prohibited on all government grants.

#### *Non Business Meals*

For non-travel business meals to be reimbursable, there must be a clear business reason for the meal and a clear and compelling reason to meet over a meal. It is likely that an outside party (donor, vendor, student, parent, peer from another institution, employment candidate, etc.) is present and are an integral part of the business discussions at the meal.

#### *Employee-only Meals*

College funds should only be used for refreshments or meals at meetings if the meal was provided as part of a local conference, seminar, workshop, presentation, or other similar group meeting involving employees and when it extends through the usual mealtime(s).

#### *Departmental Holiday Meals*

The College hosts a small number of official holiday gatherings meant to recognize the contributions of staff and faculty. Other departmental gatherings that are purely social in nature should be paid with personal funds.

#### *Departmental Banquets or Functions*

Many departments host events to celebrate the end of the year, such as recognition of graduating seniors or completion of a major project. Such gatherings should mark a significant accomplishment that was of benefit to the College and not for birthdays, baby showers, etc. A campus reception to welcome a new employee or in honor of a retiree or staff departure is acceptable. Such gatherings should be hosted and approved by a President's Staff member and should be of modest cost.

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### Special Travel Arrangements

#### *Combining Business with Personal Travel*

If combining a business trip with personal travel, the expense reimbursement should be split so that only the business portion of the trip is submitted for reimbursement or charged to a PCard. If traveling a route that is not the most direct route to/from for personal reasons only the direct route by the most economical means is reimbursable.

#### *Spouse/Partner Travel Policy (also known as Companion Travel)*

In general, the expenses of a spouse, family member, or other person accompanying the business traveler are not reimbursable. In certain circumstances—specifically, while performing their official duties in the areas of advancement, alumni relations, and other business of the College—the President or Vice President for Advancement may be accompanied by others who are expected to make an important contribution to achieving the purposes of the travel or events. All companion expenses must also meet the following conditions:

- the companion attends and contributes to the official function, and
- the purpose of the travel, the activities of the spouse/partner relating to College business, and the expenses incurred are fully documented

Any spouse/partner travel other than the President or the Vice President for Advancement must be approved, in advance, by the President.

#### *College PCard*

Employees who travel regularly as part of their work responsibilities should use the College's PCard to cover expenses associated with their business trip. An employee may obtain a Corporate Pcard with the approval of his or her President's Staff member if they anticipate spending at least \$2,500 per year on the card.

#### *Travel Advances*

The College will provide travel advances for employees traveling on College business in order to cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Travel advances are not issued for students of the College. Travel advances are not offered to employees with PCards unless there is a valid reason why the PCard cannot be used for out-of-pocket expenses. To obtain a travel advance, employees

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complete a Travel Advance form and submit it to the Business Office. Requests should be made at least five (5) working days prior to the date of departure. Payment is made via ACH direct deposit to the employee's bank account.

All unused travel advance funds must be returned to the Business Office within ten (10) days of the completion of a trip. The completed Travel Advance/Travel Expense form and the appropriate accounting should accompany the funds. As per IRS section 1.62-2(g), advances must be accounted for within 120 days after the expense was paid or incurred. If the advance has not been accounted for within 120 days, Payroll will withhold this amount from the traveler's next paycheck.

The College reserves the right to refuse travel advance requests for employees who have an open advance outstanding or do not submit reports on a timely basis.

#### *Travel Agency*

The College has an account at Avenue Two Travel to provide travel services to employees and students traveling on official College business. Using this account does not require the use of a College credit card as the College can be billed directly for any expenses incurred. Avenue Two Travel charges a fee for their service ranging from \$10 to \$50 depending on the service being provided. The benefits of using a travel agent include: assistance in emergency travel, cancelled flights, weather events, or for the coordination and payment of travel of groups, students, or prospective student. Avenue Two's telephone number is (610) 328-6666.

#### *Audit and Review*

The College has an obligation to properly review, approve, and record every transaction within its accounting system. All travel expense reimbursement requests, of any college employee, are subject to audit. The misdirection of College funds / resources, or the reimbursement of business expenses outside of the approved policies of the College, constitutes a serious breach of internal controls and a falsification of records. This type of serious employee misconduct may warrant immediate discharge.

The Vice President for Finance and Treasurer approves reimbursement requests for members of the President's staff. A summary of all reimbursements to President's Staff is provided annually to the Audit Subcommittee.

*Revision date January 2018*