



Savannah State University – Application of State & BOR Travel Policies Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Travel - (Updated July 1, 2017)

I. General Travel Related

1. Can I extend a trip for personal reasons on a trip that is business in nature?

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 7.7, Combining Personal Travel with State Business Travel:

For in-state and out-of-state trips that combine personal travel with State business travel, reimbursement may not exceed the amount it would have cost the State if the traveler did not combine personal with business travel. Combining State travel with personal travel does not, in and of itself, provide justification for using a private vehicle rather than a state-owned vehicle.

For out-of-state trips between points where scheduled airline service is available and where travelers are combining official State travel with a holiday, weekend trip, vacation or other personal travel, reimbursement will be based on the cost of the roundtrip coach airfare, lodging, and the meal per diems to which the traveler would have been entitled while traveling by air, or by the least expensive option.

When combining business and personal travel that includes air travel, the air travel costs cannot exceed the cost for the business air travel cost and requires documentation and written approval by a supervisor prior to booking the travel.

When combining personal travel and State business travel, baggage and luggage fees should be allocated, accordingly, and be reasonable under the circumstances.

NOTE: The employee is responsible for any additional costs incurred in booking personal travel combined with business travel.

For example, a University employee must go to San Francisco for a conference that is running Sunday through Wednesday. Therefore, the traveler must book air fare and hotel to leave on Saturday and return on Thursday. Assuming no rental vehicle and the air fare is cheaper with a Saturday through Saturday flight, the traveler could take Friday as a vacation day, incur the cost of the hotel for two additional nights, and the cost of food. The University would only pay meal amounts not included for the return day (Thursday) based

on the time the person should have returned if they had come back at the end of the conference. Please note in this example, it actually saved the University money but be mindful that the employee must take vacation time and that travel reimbursements are only during the time of the conference, not during the personal time, with the exception of the transport to the Airport if it would have been the same if the person left on Thursday.

Another example is as follows and does not include air fare, but a pooled/rental vehicle is utilized. If the same conference was in Atlanta and Wednesday was only ½ day the employee would have to return to campus on Wednesday and return the state vehicle (whether rental or pooled) by the end of that day or first thing Thursday morning if too late returning.

In no case may a State vehicle (owned, pooled, or rental) be utilized for personal purposes. Again, the overriding principle is the addition of cost to the State/University or the usage of State property for personal reasons. Additionally, family and friends are not allowed to ride in State vehicles (owned, pooled, or rentals).

2. What items should be attached to the Travel Authorization when sent for processing?

Office of Planning & Budget: Policy No. 1 – Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing the Payment and Accounting for Travel Advances:

“Justification for a travel advance must include an estimate of all expected costs.”

The justification for Travel Advances at Savannah State University is the Travel Authorization. Therefore, the University has applied OPB’s policy in its written policy on Travel Authorizations, which are an estimate of all expected costs of the business travel occurrence and is used to support both budgetary approvals and Travel Advances, when requested.

If applicable, all of the following items should be attached to the travel authorization:

- **Agenda or meeting announcement** showing dates, times, etc.
- **Copy of registration** form with cost of registration if not on the agenda. (Do not send your registration form that you are intending to utilize or send in with check request.)
- **Hotel reservation information** regarding **estimated costs**, conference room rate from registration site plus taxes (only if applicable).
- **Per Diem calculations**
 - In-State: \$28/Day except in Chatham, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Glynn, or Richmond counties.
 - Out-of-State: GSA area rate (less the \$5 incidentals) times number of days, etc. Remember to only take 75% on first and last day and reduce by any provided meals.
- **Car Rental Cost Comparison** form if utilizing a personal vehicle must be **attached** to Travel Authorization at time of approval or a personal vehicle reimbursement will not be allowable.

- **Estimated rental cost of vehicle if using pooled or rental vehicle.** Make sure you use the Enterprise/Hertz rate, not our internal pool rate and be sure to include pick-up and return dates in your estimate.
- Any other **support for other calculations** such as **gas charges, baggage fees, estimated taxi fares** from and to hotel, estimated airport parking charges, internet fees, etc.

DO include lease and gas costs when using pooled vehicles as these will be charged back to your department based on charges posted for the vehicle and charges to the fuel card.

DON'T attach check requests or motor pool vehicle requests, which *should only be forwarded to the appropriate departments with a copy of the approved travel authorization once it has been returned to you with the Travel Authorization assigned number.*

3. How far in advance do you recommend I prepare a Travel Authorization to ensure that I have a vehicle available and a Cash Advance)?

A general rule of thumb would be *to have your approved travel authorization with all appropriate document to the Comptroller's Office at least two weeks prior to the travel date but the longer the better to allow for processing.* (Refer to Transportation regarding processing time needed to secure a pooled vehicle.)

Once you submit your **Travel Authorization (TA)**, which now includes your Cash Advance, to the Office of the Comptroller, it must be logged in and budget reviewed by either Budget or Grants. Back at the front desk a travel authorization number is assigned and copies made for Accounts Payable to produce cash advances on time. The Comptroller's Office also has to ensure that any necessary Travel Pre-Audit steps are taken before approval. Only after all of this does it get sent back to your office. This process can take **5-7 business days, particularly if there are support or budget issues, it is a Grant, or it includes a Cash Advance.**

The important issue is that once you receive the fully approved Travel Authorization with an assigned number, this must be attached to your Vehicle Request when using a vehicle outside of the 50-mile limit. (Refer to Transportation regarding processing time needed to secure a pooled vehicle.) Your TA will then include all of the appropriate signatures so you will not have to get anything else approved for your vehicle request by attaching a properly completed TA. If a pooled vehicle is not available, Transportation will forward the information to Procurement who will then process the request for a rental vehicle and confirm your reservation with you when completed.

Think of the process as follows:

TA with all approvals to Comptroller's Office

3 -5 business days

BACK TO YOU

Vehicle Reservation for Vehicle with attached TA

3-4 business days to confirm vehicle if it has to be rented (Transportation will generally turn around in no more than 48 hours. If pooled vehicle unavailable then Transportation sends to Procurement, who will generally turn around in more than 48 hours, to secure a rental reservation.)

The key is **planning as much as you can, but at least 2 weeks prior to needing a vehicle or a cash advance**. We do understand that there are a few extenuating circumstances and we will do what we can to secure a vehicle as quickly as possible, but within our business policies and processes.

NOTE: [Travel Cash Advances require seven to ten business days for processing from the date the Travel Authorization is received assuming all approvals and documentation is adequately supported.](#) You should plan on getting a reimbursement for your expenses if you wait until the last minute for any other expenditures. However, you must get the Travel Authorization approved before you travel or you are at risk of not being reimbursed.

Requesting a Pooled Vehicle (as taken from the Vehicle Reservations website on 10/28/15):

To request a vehicle, a SSU employee must submit the following:

- Approved Travel Authorization (for non-local travel)

- [Motor Pool Vehicle Request Form](#) (for non-local travel) **OR** [Local Travel Motor Vehicle Request Form](#) (for local travel)
- [Driver Acknowledgement Form](#)

These forms are available from the Auxiliary Services Parking and Transportation Office on the first floor of King-Frazier Complex, or on the Vehicle Reservation website. The Auxiliary Services Parking and Transportation Office is open from 8:00AM to 5:00PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. All reservation requests must be made during these hours. Requests made after these hours will be processed the next business day. Vehicles are issued on a first come, first served basis. *Departments and employees should anticipate their needs in advance and make early reservations. Sharing a vehicle is strongly encouraged for employees traveling to the same destination. Should a vehicle not be available through the Motor Pool, the requester will be directed to contact Purchasing to secure a vehicle for that trip.*

4. Can I use a Purchasing Card to pay for any of my travel?

You can use your PCard to pay for conference **registration** for employees as long as you have a properly approved Travel Authorization to support the purchase. PCards cannot be used for any other employee travel, with the exception of the PCards held by Procurement for air fare, rental vehicles, and other company purchases.

5. Is there any time that I can travel without an approved, authorized travel authorization?

Savannah State University's policy is that written pre-trip authorization is not required if the following conditions are met:

- Travel is within a **50-mile radius** of the University (any commute mileage must be removed from the odometer calculation for reimbursement.)
- The **only costs** incurred and that are reimbursable are for **personal mileage and parking**. There are no other costs associated with the travel. **(The University doesn't reimburse for hotel or per diem charges within a 50 mile radius of the University or residence unless special circumstances are preapproved on a Travel Authorization by the Vice-President of Business and Finance or the President, but other costs, such as registration, must be put on a Travel Authorization and paid through an eReq or PCard.)**
- Travel is not being paid from an agency fund, grant, Title III, or any other funding source that requires prior approval on all travel instances.

6. How far in advance should you book your air fare?

Planning will always be the key. Air flights should be booked at least 30 days in advance, but not after 14 days due to the expense and state requirements. Depending on the size of the event, the number of people attending, and the event location **a few events will require that you book several months in advance.** However, please be mindful that changes are costly and you should be relatively sure that you are attending an event before booking any travel.

*Ideally, the approved Travel Authorization should be to the Comptroller's Office by not later than 30 days before traveling to ensure Airline booking **BEFORE** the 14-day window.*

7. How late is too late to book air fare?

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, page 9, clearly states the following: *Once travel dates have been confirmed, all flights should be booked **AT LEAST 14 DAYS**, but no more than 30 days in advance, when practical. Flights booked within 30 days of travel help manage agency cash flow and reduce the risk of potential change fees and administrative costs related to any subsequent change in travel plans.*

*Flights booked with less than 14 days advanced purchase are more expensive and require a WRITTEN EXPLANATION for the booking delay be provided to the approver. Approvers may **DENY** charges that result from last minute airline booking.*

NOTE: Savannah State University REQUIRES that the WRITTEN EXPLANATION be PART OF YOUR TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION and BE SIGNED BY THE APPROVER so that the approver is fully aware that they are allowing charges that are more expensive due to last minute planning and that this will affect their budget.

Procurement will require that you have this explanation attached to your Travel Authorization before the air fare can be paid for by a PCard. If you don't have this attached then it may delay your booking and prevent you from being able to travel. This documentation is a requirement of the Statewide Accounting Policies and Procedures.

8. Speaking of air fare, does the University pay for my bags?

As per the State policy, travelers are reimbursed for a maximum of (1) piece of check luggage and baggage charges for excess weight will not be reimbursed. Excess weight is generally over 50 pounds. Standard baggage fees should be reported on the second page of your expense report under miscellaneous fees. Make sure that you print the receipt as support for the reimbursement. (In many cases, you can email the receipt to yourself as well when checking in for the flight.)

9. What do I do when I attend a conference or other event and receive a lot of materials that I need to bring back and the weight will be in excess if I put in my luggage? Or have to take a lot of materials/items to a conference or other event that make my luggage overweight?

It is highly recommended that you use *UPS or another postal service* to send these items ahead to your hotel/conference or back to the University as this is the least expensive option. Baggage excess weight charges are very high and are intended to penalize customers and with few exceptions reimbursement of these charges will be denied.

If you are taking equipment to or returning from a business event where you are flying, it is encouraged that you check with the airline on the cost of an additional bag, box, etc., as it may be more cost effective and will be allowable with an appropriate business purpose explanation. These types of questions can generally be asked of our travel agent who provides information on flight costs. *Planning is encouraged for these types of issues.*

10. If I choose to book my own air fare (paying with personal funds) and reserve my seat, can I get reimbursed?

Savannah State University has approved travel agencies (always refer to the Travel website for these) and you are only allowed to book a reservation with them after you have received an approved Travel Authority for this to be paid for by the University.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 1.2, Lowest Logical Airfare:

Travelers on State business should always select the lowest priced airfare that meets their approved, most logical itinerary and State policy. Travelers are expected to use their best judgment to save on airfare cost, considering points of departure and destination, flight times and schedules, etc.

Bec ause ti ck ets are iss ue d in t he t raveler 's name S avannah S tate Universit y will not reimburse the traveler for the use of personal funds paid for air fare in advance at any time. Even if the traveler uses an online fee to get a lower rate they cannot be reimbursed for the actual expense until AFTER the travel has occurred. Even at that point the purchase must still comply with all applicable state policy. Therefore any additional cost, such as a reservation or online fee, would not be allowed. Savannah State University only allows use of the two travel agencies that are listed on the Procurement page. Airline reservations can be secured by providing the agencies with your approved Travel Authorization number and University Procurement will handle the expenditure. It is the traveler's responsibility, however, to ensure all travel is booked within State guidelines.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 1.3, Business and First Class Tickets:

Business and first class tickets are not reimbursable for domestic flights. Business class is allowable for international travel when approved in advance . . . It is not permissible to confirm a higher fare for upgrade eligibility or for personal reasons. Upgrades at the State's expense are not permitted. Upgrades may be purchased after the travel is booked, at the traveler's expense, only

11. How should I request cash advance for travel and is there a minimum amount?

Please be aware that there is now a cash advance request as part of your Travel Authorization form. You should request only the amount needed for your personal travel and it can only include subsistence and University-allowed transportation costs such as parking or gas, etc.

Please take note of the following:

- No cash advance will be issued to any employee who makes over \$50,000 per year.

- No cash advance will be issued for any amount below the \$100 threshold.
- No cash advance will be issued to any employee with an outstanding cash balance(s)

If you require a cash advance be mindful that *you are receiving an advance of State funds for travel and that you are accountable* for reconciling those funds and getting that report approved and any *funds that are due paid within 10, but no later than 45 calendar days after the completion of the trip or event.*

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 7.1, General:

Employees are expected to exercise good stewardship of funds when traveling on official business. Any expenditure disallowed by the State (or the University when auditing based on established policies) is the responsibility of the employee.

- **PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS:** Travel Advances that have not been accounted for within **30 days** are subject to payroll deduction by Savannah State University. Once you receive notice that funds are due to the University, you have 10 business days to receipt the money or a payroll deduction will be initiated for the amount due.

12. If I cannot get a hotel at the conference rate, can I be reimbursed for another hotel in the area?

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 3.1, Lodging Expense:

Lodging Expense: The traveler should select the least expensive option available taking into consideration proximity to the business destination and personal safety. The traveler . . . MUST inquire about the government rate availability or the conference lodging rate and select the lowest available rate. When the hotel or motel is the conference or convention site, reimbursement will be limited to the conference rate, if available. . . .

Reasonable lodging expenses are reimbursed at actual cost. All lodging claims must be documented with receipts and must be a business that offers lodging to the general public, such as a hotel or motel, and not a private residence. . . .

Upgraded room accommodations that incur an additional charge are NOT allowed.

Again, planning is the key and while travelers may not always be able to get the conference hotel, rates should be reasonable and comparable to the conference hotel and/or GSA rate.

Receipts turned in for hotels must be *itemized checkout folios showing room rate, any additional room charges, and taxes.* These should be separate line items by dates of stay. Charge card statements, other types of hotel ‘receipts’ showing ‘cash payment’ with no itemized checkout folio will not be accepted as documentation of lodging charges. Travelers are responsible for ensuring that no items have been charged to them that are unallowable before leaving the premises and that they have an adequate itemized checkout folio to document their lodging expense.

13. Am I responsible for taxes on my lodging?

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 3.3, Special Discount Rates and Tax Exemptions:

State and local government officials and employees traveling within the state on office business are exempt from paying the county or municipal excise tax on lodging (“hotel/motel” or “occupancy” tax), regardless of the payment method being used. Travelers must be able to provide proper identification to document their employment as a state or local government employee.

In the State of Georgia, *Travelers are required to submit a copy of the Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Form* (and Sales Tax exemption form if you are paying by personal method) *upon registration at the hotel/motel. . . . If the hotel refuses to accept the form at check-in, the traveler should attempt to resolve the issue with hotel management before checking out at the end of their stay. If the matter is not resolved by check-out time, the traveler should pay the tax. . . . And provide an explanation when submitting their expense report. Failure of the employee to submit the Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Form* (and Sales Tax exemption form if you are paying by personal method) **will result in non-reimbursement of the tax to the employee.** This also applies if the traveler goes to Florida and fails to present the Tax Exemption Form that is on the University website for that State as well.

Travelers are to make every effort to avoid payment of tax when possible. In the State of Georgia, you can do this by requesting a check to be made payable from Savannah State University directly to the hotel/motel, you can use a State Travel Card for payment, or you can take a sales tax exemption form with you to present along with your excise tax exemption. You must make the effort and take all tax forms with you along with your Savannah State University identification.

NOTE: **Exempt on hotel/motel and sales tax in Georgia and on hotel/motel tax in Florida currently, but keep looking on the website for updates.** These forms can be found on the Business and Finance Department page under Comptroller, Business Compliance, Forms: <http://www.savannahstate.edu/fiscal-affairs/comptroller-forms.shtml>

14. What about the new \$5.00 per night transportation tax that is now charged by hotels and motels in the State of Georgia?

This tax is allowable and should be included in your Travel Authorizations and Expense Reimbursements/Reconciliations.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 3.3, Special Discount Rates and Tax Exemptions:

Per the Transportation Funding Act of 2015, effective July 1, 2015 hotels in the state of Georgia will charge a \$5.00 per room per night hotel tax to travelers. This tax is not exempted for State Employees.

15. Do I have to provide receipts?

YES, for all items that require receipts and they must be itemized when possible.

Savannah State University requires receipts for all items with the exception of the per diems and the \$5/day incidentals because all audits of records are generally performed within the Comptroller's Office and due to the following State Policy 7.4, Receipts:

Travel expense reports may be selected for audit at any time and all required receipts must be retained by the traveler for three years after the travel date if not attached to the expense report.

State and external auditors audit from our expense reports. Therefore, we require that the documentation be maintained on file with these reports for three years to comply with State regulations.

16. If I am prepaying for gasoline can I just use the prepay receipt?

No. State of Georgia Policy requires *itemized receipts* and the University requires itemized receipts on gasoline to show the number of gallons, the price per gallon, and the total sale as prepay receipts may be misleading.

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure 7.4, Receipts:

Itemized receipts should include:

- *Name and address of the vendor.*
- *Date of service.*
- *Description of goods/service.*
- *Amount paid for each individual item.*

17. Can I use my credit card statement instead of a receipt since it has all my charges on it for my trip?

Only if you have lost your receipt and not for receipts that must be itemized, such as gas receipts or hotel folios. State policy clearly states under 7.4, Receipts:

In the absence of actual receipts, credit card slips and statements are acceptable in lieu of actual receipts.

Credit card slips and statements would not be acceptable in place of a hotel folio or a gas receipt, however, as these must be itemized to show per day charges & taxes or per gallon charges. *In cases where only an itemized receipt is acceptable travelers will not be reimbursed if the receipt is lost.*

18. Can I be held liable as an approver if my employee does not follow travel policies and procedures?

Yes. The **Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure** clearly notes the following on page 6:

By approving travel expenses, the approver is attesting that he/she has thoroughly reviewed each transaction and the supporting documentation, and has verified that all transactions are allowable expenses. The approver is the “check” in the expense reporting process to identify potential or actual errors in expense reporting and is equally accountable for all expenditures.

Upon granting approval of expense submissions, approvers are certifying:

- *Appropriateness of the expenditure and reasonableness of the amount.*
- *Compliance with funding agency regulations and State reimbursement policies.*
- *Completeness and accuracy of documentation.*

Please note that SSU is audited every year for Travel-related expenses and you may lose your privilege to travel and, in some cases, your job for violations of the State Travel Policy. We want to ensure that everyone is able to travel for business in an efficient and effective manner, while also staying in compliance with the State of Georgia, Board of Regents, and Savannah State University policies and procedures.

19. Is there a policy on when travel expense report or travel advance reconciliation are due?

OPB Policy No. 1, Revision 6, issued January, 2014:

State policy requires that travelers submit expenses, substantiating the amount, date, use and business purpose of expenses, ideally within 10 days, but no later than 45 calendar days after completion of the trip or event.

Expenses submitted in excess of 60 calendar days will not be reimbursed.

Another point to note, travel expenses submitted more than 45 days after the last day of employment will NOT be reimbursed.

20. I know we are supposed to refund any unused travel advances, but really what are the rules? Can't I just wait and let you payroll deduct when you audit?

NO! Unfortunately many employees do think we offer payroll deduction as a convenience and that is absolutely not true. *Payroll deduction is a punitive method of collection* when you haven't turned in the funds through the cashier as you are supposed to. These are the regulations and you need to be aware of them, because you can lose the privilege to travel and even your job if you do not follow the State Accounting Office (SAO) and Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) regulations.

OPB Policy No. 1, Revision 6, issued January, 2014:

Employees who require payroll earnings adjustments for un-reconciled Travel Advances to collect amounts due to the State are not eligible for advances in the future.

When the actual travel expenditures are less than the amount of the cash advance the employee shall reimburse the agency for the difference. This reimbursement shall be made at the same time that the travel expenses are substantiated and submitted, by check.

You may pay by check, cash, or credit card and payment should be taken to the Bursar to receipt in. If you refer back to question 16, then, travel advances are due and payable by check within 10-45 days. We require that the payment be taken to the Bursar (as with all University cash receipts) and that the receipt be part of the travel advance reconciliation when this report is turned in. When an adjustment is made by the Campus Travel Coordinator and you are made aware that you owe additional funds you should make every effort to make that payment in as timely a manner as possible and provide a copy of the receipt to the CTC as soon as possible.

PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS: Travel Advances that have not been accounted for within **60 days** are subject to payroll deduction by Savannah State University. If accounted for through an expense report, but an outstanding balance is older than **120 days** following the

completion of the trip or event that amount also will be subject to payroll deduction. (These dates are based on IRS regulations that require us to regard it as income if we don't have documentation to support the funds.)

21. What if I get a travel advance before a trip is canceled or postponed?

The short answer is that you have to reconcile and return the funds by check *within two business days from such notice of cancellation or postponement.* The important thing to note here is that if you do n't do this the entire amount will be deducted from your next paycheck and you may be subject to disciplinary action. See **OPB Revision 6, issued January, 2014.**

Meals and Miscellaneous

22. If a continental breakfast or an evening reception is offered as part of the travel event, can I still receive the per diem?

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, 4.2, Reimbursement Amounts when Traveling:

Meal adjustments include those provided by hotels, meetings, conferences, or any other source. If a continental breakfast, lunch, dinner, or reception is offered as part of the travel and the food/timing is sufficient to serve as a meal, the traveler must reduce the per diem by the appropriate allowance amount. If a traveler has medical restrictions and cannot eat a meal provided by any source while traveling, the traveler should make every effort to have the source facilitate his/her needs. . . .

Please note, however, that if the conference cannot provide or doesn't provide accommodation, the traveler can purchase food that meets his/her needs and must provide a receipt (not to exceed the per diem allowed) documenting the necessity (i.e., dietary restrictions, no vegetarian alternative, etc.) for purchasing the meal to be reimbursed.

23. What is the best way to calculate the 75% allowed of the per diem to enter into my travel expense report? And what about meals provided as part of the travel – how do I account for them?

If you are on travel status for more than one day (overnight), you get *75% of the first and last day of travel regardless of the time left and the time returned.* Utilizing the most recent automated travel expense form:

- Select the location traveled to in the dropdown box. If the location is not listed, select "Other" and specify the location on the next line.
- Place a check mark on the first and last day of travel so that *the 75% of meals will be calculated for the day of departure and the day of return.*

- Also place a *check mark in the box for any meal provided so that it is excluded* from the calculation.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure 4.4, Meal Per Diem during OVERNIGHT

Travel:

When meals are provided to an employee in conjunction with travel events on a travel departure or return day, the FULL MEALS PER DIEM reimbursement rate is reduced by the amount of the provided meal(s) BEFORE the 75% proration.

This will calculate correctly on the most recent travel expense form that has been provided by the Comptroller's Office. Always make sure you pull down a NEW TRAVEL EXPENSE FORM to calculate your travel expenses.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure 4.5, Meal Per Diem during NON-OVERNIGHT Travel:

Employees on State business who travel more than 50 miles from their Residence and Primary Work Station on a work assignment, AND are away for more than twelve (12) hours, may receive the total day's per diem rate allowance for that day, even when there is no overnight lodging. The per diem allowance must, however, be adjusted for any meals provided to the traveler,...Each Agency Head or their designee is to determine the reasonableness of when an overnight stay is justified.

The 75% rule is not applied for one-day travel that meets the requirements above, but you still have to deduct any meals provided. Therefore, you will not check the box for this one day on your travel expense report. However, remember to provide the departure and return times (as well as destination) and to exclude by checkmark any meals provided.

24. What if you are traveling to multiple locations? The pull down menu on the automated travel expense form will only let you select one location.

In cases where employees are traveling to multiple locations or are on continuous travel it is advisable to use a different expense form for each location but to turn them in at the same time with the appropriate approved Travel Authorization attached to each. This will assure that these items are auditable.

When turning in these items it is important to remember that you should only check the first day of the first travel expense report box and the last day of the last travel expense report box to reduce by 75%. Additionally, it is important to remember that per diems are basically calculated based on where you laid your head for the most part.

Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure 4.4 Meal per Diem during OVERNIGHT Travel:

For trips involving multiple travel destinations, base the reduction on the per diem rate in effect where the night was spent as follows:

- *Departure Day: Where you spent the night.*
- *Return Day: Where you spent the night before returning to your Residence or Primary Work Station.*

25. Why is the departure time and return time necessary on the travel expense form?

This is only necessary for one-day travel to document the eligibility for the per diem. To receive the per diem rate the traveler must travel more than 50 miles from their Residence and Primary Work Station on a work assignment, AND are away for more than twelve (12) hours, may receive the total day's per diem rate, even when there is no overnight lodging.

26. Can we get reimbursed for tips and how does that work?

According to the State policy incidental expenses (i.e. fees and tips) are reimbursable, and should not be included in the meal per diem rate utilized in the calculations. Whether in-state or out-of-state, you are limited to \$5 per day for tips and other incidental expenses and this must be itemized under miscellaneous expenses. These tips do NOT include tips for meals as that is already figured into the meal per diem rate. An example of a tip that could be included would be the \$3 you paid the bellhop to bring your suitcase up to your room. Note that incidentals are not subject to the 75% of the first and last day ruling.

II. Transportation

27. Why can't family members or friends ride in a pooled or rental vehicle?

DOAS (Department of Administrative Services) regulations and the SSU Vehicle Usage Policy in support of these State regulations prohibit the transport of families, friends, associates or other persons who are not employees of the University System of Georgia, OR serving the interest of Savannah State University in owned, leased, or rented vehicles. This does not prohibit the transport of students for a valid business purposes as that is serving the interest of Savannah State University. Vehicles owned, leased, or rented using University funds must be used for official business only and never the personal interests of the employees. Under no circumstances should a University vehicle be used for personal reasons.

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 2.2, Car Rental:

NOTE: *The State liability policy is only in effect while the employee is using the rental vehicle for official State business. For this reason, personal use of the vehicle, including allowing friends or family members to ride in a State rented vehicle, is prohibited.*

28. Can I take my family on the University's buses or vans to athletic events, etc.?

No. These University-owned vehicles are subject to the same policy as noted in the first question. Only employees, students, and volunteers performing business functions on behalf of SSU and registered with Human Resources as volunteers can ride in these vehicles. Vendor-provided buses with vendor-provided drivers have been leased on some occasions to transport non-employees and these are covered by the vendor's liability insurance.

29. I know the new State policy discourages the use of a personal vehicle, but is there any time where it is clear that I can use my personal vehicle and be reimbursed for mileage?

Yes, if you are using your personal vehicle **within a 50-mile radius** and are traveling on business you can be reimbursed mileage less any miles regularly traveled to and from home. This is particularly applicable to areas that don't have a department vehicle at their disposal and where the use of a pooled/rental vehicle is not always feasible at the last minute or for just temporary use. You are ***not required to submit a Travel Authorization if only being reimbursed for mileage and parking***, but must submit an *expense reimbursement request showing odometer readings, all departure and destination points, attach receipts for parking, and obtain all required approvals to be reimbursed* for the personal usage of your vehicle at the tier 1 rate.

Pooled vehicles used within this 50-mile radius do not require a Travel Authorization. The Vehicle Request Form must be approved by the Supervisor and the business purpose must be noted for liability coverage.

An example would be that you have to leave work and pick up someone from the airport for an interview late afternoon and take them to their hotel on the way home. The next morning you have to pick them up in the morning on your way to the University for their interview, return them to the Airport early afternoon, and return to work. In this case, let's assume your average mileage to work is 10 miles and the hotel is between your home and the University. On the first day of the pickup, you need to record your odometer readings from the University to your home (the hotel stop was in between) and reduce that by the 10 miles you would have taken to go home at the end of the day. On the second day, the hotel is on your way to work so there would be no mileage reimbursement. However, because you are taking the person from the University to the Airport and coming back to the University to work you would be reimbursed this round trip with no deduction of miles.

Please NOTE Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure 2.3, Personal Automobile: *While driving your personal vehicle on State business, the State provides full liability coverage and personal immunity for the employee for damages and injuries the employee*

may cause to others. *The State does NOT provide coverage for damages to your personal vehicle.*

30. What if I want to use my personal vehicle so that I can take my family or for other personal reasons. Can I just get reimbursed for the gas cost?

The DOAS, and as confirmed in the SSU Vehicle policy, doesn't allow the reimbursement of gas for personal vehicles. The State travel policy only allows mileage reimbursement and there are stipulations on when that can occur. Mileage reimbursement includes the cost of gas as well as the usage of a personal vehicle. If you choose to utilize your personal vehicle for comfort or personal reasons, you are choosing to not be reimbursed unless you meet the requirements that have been established for use of a personal vehicle as the least expensive option for the University. Then you must show that in your Travel Authorization, be pre-approved, and must only be reimbursed for business use of the personal vehicle at the tier 2 rate. See next question.

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure 7.7, Combining Personal Travel with State Business Travel:

Combining State travel with personal travel does not, in and of itself, provide justification for using a private vehicle rather than a state-owned vehicle. . . .

NOTE: The employee is responsible for any additional costs incurred in booking personal travel combined with business travel.

31. When can I use a personal vehicle besides the 50-mile radius?

If BOTH of the following criteria are met then you can get reimbursed for mileage if approved in advance, the **State cost comparison at the Tier 2 rate is properly attached and approved as part of the Travel Authority**, and the Travel Authority is fully approved

BEFORE incurring the cost:

- The mileage reimbursement at the Tier 2 level for the use of a personal vehicle is less than the pooled/rental vehicle plus gas and this can be shown using the State's Vehicle Cost Comparison at <http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/vehcostcomp/> , AND
- This cost comparison is attached to the Travel Authorization when submitted, and the Travel Authorization is signed by the Traveler and approved by the Budget Unit Head or the Vice-President of the division.

Please note you must **always check yes on question number 3**. Employees always have access to pooled and rental vehicles provided. Therefore, mileage reimbursement will be made at the Tier 2 level. Current mileage rates can be found on the State of Georgia website at <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy> .



Exceptions may also be made in extenuating or emergency situations that occur, but these must be justified in writing, signed by the employee, and approved by the Vice-President of the division and the Vice-President of Business and Finance as extenuating or emergency situations before they can be reimbursed.

32. If I am going to an out-of-state location, do I have to utilize public transportation to get to my hotel, conference event, etc.?

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 2.1, Ground Transportation:

Travelers are responsible for knowing which type of ground transportation is the least expensive in the area. In some areas, public transportation (e.g., taxis, shuttles, or mass transit) may be the more economical alternative. In other area, it may be more cost effective to rent a car. When renting a car, the traveler should also consider the costs of parking fees and fuel.

According to the revised statewide policy each individual traveler has the obligation to utilize the least expensive alternative. Employees and supervisors should be aware of this objective. Therefore, when traveling by air to a distant location, one must consider all modes of transportation that can be utilized and select the least expensive alternative.

33. If I am using a rental car at a distant location (i.e., traveling by plane to a destination where public transportation is not available to get me to the hotel, conference, etc.), do I need to book it myself or what process should I go through to utilize the State's contract with Hertz?

You must put a requisition into ePro and note the approved Travel Authorization number on the request. Make sure that you indicate the number of people who are traveling in the vehicle, location (i.e., Airport) that you are picking up the vehicle at, the dates and times of

pickup and return, and your driver's license number. Unless you indicate the number of people, economy cars will be rented when the number of passengers is not noted.

Your Driver's License Number and your Travel Authorization number must be on the Requisition for using an out-of-state vehicle just as we require on the vehicle form for pooled vehicles. This is the way that we track your vehicle reservation through the system when we put it on the Procurement PCard. A vehicle will NOT be reserved for you without providing your driver's license number and the Travel Authorization number on the requisition. A valid driver's license and approved Travel Authorization is required to lease a vehicle when utilizing University funds.

Renting outside the statewide vendor contracts requires an approved waiver from the State and you will not be reimbursed if you rent outside the contract without being authorized to do so.

34. Should I pay for additional insurance on vehicles rented through the State contract with Enterprise/Hertz? What about an option to pre-fuel, purchasing a tank of gas when I pick up?

No. Because the vehicle is being rented under a State contract, we are told to **decline insurance** as all USG employees are covered. If you authorize payment for insurance and we cannot get reimbursed, you will be responsible for this cost. Pre-fuel options are also unallowable as they are often more costly than refueling yourself.

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 2.2, Car Rental:

Employees traveling on State business inside the Continental U.S. in any rented motor vehicle are covered by the State's liability policy; therefore, liability coverage should be declined when renting a motor vehicle. Loss Damage and Collision Damage are also covered for vehicles rented under the Statewide Car Rental Vendor Contract. (Therefore, Savannah State University has adopted a policy that the renter will be responsible for these charges if incurred and due to their error.)

NOTE: The State liability policy is only in effect while the employee is using the rented vehicle for official State business. For this reason personal use of the vehicle, including allowing friends or family members to ride in a State rented vehicle is prohibited.

Additional insurance, car seats, and other non-business related items are unallowable. The following charges are not allowed and if Savannah State's Procurement Card is charged for these items you will be subject to payroll deduction for reimbursement.

- ***Insurance coverage,***
- ***Optional fuel offerings, such as a tank of gas pre-charged,***
- ***Luxury upgrades, etc.***

NOTE: When you return your vehicle it is recommended that you get a complete copy of all charges and review BEFORE you leave the site to ensure that any unallowable expenses have NOT been charged.

35. Can I rent an SUV or a minivan, because it is more comfortable and what I am used to driving?

No. You must have at least 3 business travelers to rent an SUV and over 4 to rent a minivan-type vehicle. Savannah State University allows Compact, Intermediate, and Full-Size vehicles as per the revised State policy. Unless specified, however, Procurement will rent compact or economy as the best economical alternative. Therefore, it is incumbent on the traveler to specify and to rent an SUV or minivan the traveler must meet the additional requirements and specify them in the supporting documents.

Statewide Accounting Policy and Procedure, 2.2, Car Rental:

Approved car rental sizes are Compact, Intermediate, or Full. Other vehicle sizes require a business-related justification. Vans may be rented when there are more than 4 travelers.

It is important to note that, depending on where you are renting, a move up from an economy/compact vehicle may be into what the lessor calls a “full-size” vehicle. As long as you are only charged one vehicle upgrade and the “full-size” vehicle is not an SUV, van, or other extended size vehicle (that you are being charged for) this should be acceptable. At all times travelers are expected to make reasonable and cost-justifiable decisions. Upgrades due to your business or personal membership that do not cost the University additional funds are acceptable.

36. What costs should be estimated when utilizing a pooled vehicle on the travel authorization?

Because you do not know if a pooled vehicle will be available you should always use approximate rental rates and gas rates instead of our leasing rates for pooled vehicles. Remember that the travel authorization is an estimate, but should approximate your cost of the trip. Pooled vehicle rates and the gas charges are charged to your department for your travel and should be part of your travel authorization request.

37. Is it true that we have to provide a refundable amount to the car rental vendor before we can have a vehicle?

Yes, that is true. Because we pay for vehicle rentals through PCards and fuel purchases are not allowed on PCards you are required to leave a credit card, debit card, check, or money order with the rental vendor. If using a credit card you will be charged a \$1.00 fee, which will be refunded when you return the vehicle with no charges due. If using a debit card, check, or money order, you must pay \$25.00 and it will be refunded within seven (7) business days of the return of the vehicle with no charges due.

38. Are students allowed to utilize the vehicle pool or rent vehicles in the University's name?

No. Only in certain circumstances are students allowed to utilize University vehicles. According to the Department of Administrative Services, students are not allowed to operate University vehicles with some minor exceptions. To operate a University vehicle students must:

- Be a University Employee receiving a W-2,
- Be driving as part of the scope of their University duties, (i.e., part of their job description).
- Be trained and supervised, and
- Have a Motor Vehicle Record on file to determine eligibility.

We do not run MVRs on our students due to cost. We allow students to operate vehicles on campus or near campus as part of their employment, supervisors of these student drivers need to make sure that they have been trained and that they are compliant with all of the above including having an MVR on file as part of their employment record. Students are not allowed to check out pooled vehicles or rent vehicles under the University's name due to these policies. (Note also that most of the rental agencies will not rent to individuals under the age of 25.)

The State of Georgia Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure and the Office of Planning and Budget Policy on Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing the Payment and Accounting for Travel Advances (along with additional State travel guidance) can be found on the following web site:

<https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>

These frequently asked questions are provided for the reader to understand the Statewide and University System of Georgia policies and procedures as applied at Savannah State University. As noted in the Statewide Accounting Policy & Procedure, Compliance and Accountability, “Agencies are not authorized to set more lenient policies than the *Statewide Travel Policy*; however, agencies may establish policies that further restrict an employee’s travel if the agency determines that stricter policies are necessary, except that a mileage rate that is different than the rates established by SAO/OPB in accordance with OCGA 50-19-7 may not be adopted.”

For more information, please contact the following individuals:

Employee Travel Questions: Regina D Adams, Campus Travel Coordinator
912-358-4060, or AdamsR@SavannahState.edu

Student Travel Questions: Erika Ancrum, Accounts Payable Supervisor
912-358-4052, or AncrumE@SavannahState.edu

Travel Procurement Issues: Pamela Wright, Senior Procurement Specialist
912-358-4046, or WrightP@SavannahState.edu
Cell 912-977-3387 for emergency travel procurement issues