

Policy No. 910**Responsible Department:** Finance & Operations**Responsible Administrator:** Travel Office Coordinator**Effective Date:** October 1, 1995**Reviewed/Updated Date:** May 2019**Date of Scheduled Review:** May 2023**TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT****General Overview**

The Abilene Christian University Travel and Entertainment Expense Policy provides guidelines and procedures for all faculty, staff, students and others who are traveling or entertaining on behalf of the University. Independent contractors and other non-ACU employees must also comply with this policy. Reimbursement will be made for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred during normal business or while traveling on authorized business. Travel costs are to be allocated and expended within established budgetary limitations and travelers are not to make commitments to travel or to incur travel expenses without first obtaining the appropriate approvals. Every attempt should be made to have all travel requests, booking, and expense reporting processed in the Concur Travel and Expense Management System.

These policies and procedures are intended for University-wide use. However, if a department elects to institute a more restrictive policy for purposes of budgetary control, Financial Operations will support that policy and will work with the department to enforce it.

All travelers are to comply with the following travel expense reimbursement policies and procedural guidelines.

University policy does not define specific dollar guidelines for what constitutes *reasonable* meal expense, because the reasonableness of an expense depends upon many relevant factors including the business purpose of the event and its attendees.

“Reasonable” means the amount that normally would be spent in that specific situation. The amount will vary depending upon circumstances: lavish or extravagant meals will not be paid for by ACU. Expenses for meals may be subject to additional approvals.

In the course of spending University funds, consider these questions to ensure that resources are being used appropriately and that we are being good stewards of the funds entrusted to us:

- Is the expenditure in line with the guidance provided in the ACU Travel Policy and as approved in travel request?
 - If not, is there a good explanation as to why the expenditure is appropriate?
 - Has it been adequately documented

JP Morgan Travel Card

The University has contracted with JP Morgan to provide employees with a University Travel Card. If a supervisor determines that a travel card is needed, applicants will fill out the online Travel Card Application at least two weeks prior to travel. The card will be distributed to the traveler when received by ACU’s Travel Department.

Once received, the travel cardholder is responsible for activating their travel card by calling the toll free number provided on the card. Each travel card is issued to a named individual. Abilene Christian University is clearly displayed on the card, along with the text "ACU Travel." The standard monthly credit limit is \$500 and limit increases are requested on a per trip basis via Concur.

All cardholders are responsible for the secure use of their travel card and for reporting immediately to JP Morgan if it is lost or stolen. Each cardholder should ensure that sufficient budget funds exist before making purchases and only use FOPA numbers the cardholder is authorized for.

The ACU Concur website will be used on a per trip basis to submit travel requests, book travel, and file travel expense reports to reallocate monthly charges.

Before using your ACU Travel card, please know and follow the travel card policy.

Since the ACU Travel card is issued to a named individual, if an employee changes organizations within the University, they will need to contact the Travel Office to update their FOPA information and default manager within the system.

To apply for a JP Morgan Travel Card, visit [ACU's Travel website](#).

Online Travel and Expense System

Concur is the Travel and Expense Management system to be utilized by all ACU employees for requesting approval, booking travel and reporting expenses related to ACU approved business travel. All employee reimbursements and travel card charges must be processed through Concur. Consideration should be given to minimizing travel costs by maximizing flexibility in travel plans to allow for alternate airlines, schedules and times, which can lessen travel costs. The purpose of the system is to eliminate routing paper throughout the University for these Activities, to provide a database for trips and expense reports, and to provide an automated tracking process of unprocessed items.

All air, lodging and car rental reservations should be booked through Concur or the ACU approved travel management company agent.

International and complex travel reservations may be booked with the ACU approved travel management company agent. Complex is defined as having more than one destination or more than one airline involved.

If emergency or en-route changes to travel plans are necessary, the traveler should contact the ACU approved travel management company agent. Making reservations or changes to travel plans through the appropriate channels maximizes the safety and security of ACU's travelers.

When a trip is cancelled after the reservation has been made, it is the employee's responsibility to cancel the flight, hotel and rental car through Concur or by contacting the ACU approved travel Management Company.

Concur can be accessed through Quicklinks via the [myACU](#) homepage.

Expense Reimbursement Limitations and Receipt Requirements

Itemized receipts for lodging, car rental, air transportation, meals, and other travel expenses must accompany the expense report. Expense reports are to be submitted via Concur within 30 days of completion of travel or on a monthly basis (for frequent travelers) with all required documentation. Employee is responsible for ensuring that all charges are being applied to the FOPA that approved the request.

Out of pocket expenses (including airfare and other pre-trip expenses) will not be reimbursed until the conclusion of the trip.

Responsibility of Approvers

Approvers perform a critical control function for the University. Collectively, approvers ensure that expense reports processed for payment are authorized, documented, appropriately funded, and compliant with policy and are associated with activities that have a valid and necessary business purpose. Designated approvers should assist individuals, as necessary, with understanding applicable policies and compliance requirements.

The Concur system routes approval based on the FOPA approver. When the requestor and owner are the same person, the request is routed to the requestor's default approver. If Concur does not have a FOPA approver, it will default to requestor's manager.

It is the FOPA approver's responsibility to ensure funds are available for the requested travel and when approving expense reports approvers must validate that transactions are coded correctly and all necessary documentation is provided.

Air Travel

All reservations for University business travel should be made using Concur and it is the responsibility of ACU travelers to book the lowest and most reasonable airfare through ACU's preferred carriers (when applicable) consistent with their itinerary, the business purpose of their trip and the requirements of the funding source. Tickets should be purchased using the employee's ACU Travel Card.

Every attempt should be made to make reservations early, since the lowest fares are usually available with 21 and 14-day advance purchases and ensures the most convenient and cost effective fares are obtained. Federally funded travel may be subject to additional restrictions which are included in the "Federally Grant Funded Travel" section below. Upgrades in coach class such as Economy Plus seating are considered a personal expense unless approved in advance by FOPA approver.

Group travel arrangements should be made through the ACU approved Travel Management Company.

Traveler participation in frequent flyer programs must not influence flight selection, which would result in additional costs to the University from the lowest airfare. The University will not reimburse travelers for tickets purchased with frequent flyer miles.

When a trip has been cancelled after a non-refundable ticket has been issued, the ticket can be applied to a trip in the future by that traveler on that airline, less a change or cancellation fee.

Travelers must apply any unused ticket value toward a business trip in the future, to mitigate any financial loss to the funding source. In most cases the traveler has a year in which that ticket can be applied.

All American Airline flights booked through Concur or through our ACU preferred Travel Agents, not only allow travelers to earn their own personal reward points, but will also earn points towards our ACU Business Extra Account that will be allocated to departments to redeem for free flights.

Lodging

University travelers should use Concur to book lodging accommodations in order to take advantage of negotiated rates and corporate discounts, exceptions will be made for conference bookings that are booked with registration. If the conference you are attending offers a discounted rate, please work with ACU's approved Travel Management Company to ensure the hotel is booked at the discounted rate. This can be done in Concur using the Conference Rate Form.

When making reservations, single room accommodations and corporate rates should be requested (making sure the lowest rate available is obtained upon check-in). Employees and students should use ACU's Sales Tax Exemption form and Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption form to request exemptions from applicable taxes whenever possible. When hotel accommodations are booked through Concur, our Travel Agency will attach a link to the traveler's itinerary with the Tax Exempt Form needed for check-in.

Incidentals such as magazines, newspapers, laundry, toiletries, in-room snacks and beverages, housekeeping and in-room movies will be considered personal expenses and, therefore, non-reimbursable.

Ground Transportation

Note: All activities in this section are subject to the University Driver Policy.

Travelers should use discretion when choosing ground transportation and ensure they use the most practical and economical option available.

Rental Cars

Travelers should rent cars from ACU's preferred rental car companies and book through Concur to ensure that they obtain the University's negotiated rates and insurance coverage. If you are renting a vehicle from a non-preferred vendor you will be required to purchase insurance at the counter when picking up your vehicle (please consider these extra costs when determining the least expensive option at booking). Travelers are authorized to use rental cars based on the cost efficiency and availability of other means of transportation.

The size of the rental car should be the least expensive model consistent with the number of travelers and the business purpose of the trip. Employees should rent a small or medium class vehicle unless a larger vehicle can be rented at no additional cost or more than two (2) people share the same vehicle.

Due to the exorbitant refueling rates charged by rental agencies, employees should refuel vehicle prior to returning it to the agency. Fuel expenses may be submitted for reimbursement.

Personal Vehicle

A rate that is equal to or below the Internal Revenue Service's standard mileage rate will be used as reimbursement for the use of an individual's personal vehicle while on ACU business. The rate is designed to include all related expenses of operating the vehicle including fuel, but does not include parking fees and toll charges which will be reimbursed separately. However, the total reimbursement for mileage, tolls, and parking is limited to the total cost of economy air fare plus estimated local transportation expenses for the same trip or the cost of a car rental and fuel for the trip's duration.

You can use the [Rental vs Employee Reimbursement Calculator](#) to determine the most cost efficient method for your trip.

All individuals who desire to use their personal vehicles for ACU business must maintain a current driver's license and follow all policies and procedures outlined in the [ACU Driver Policy](#).

Other Ground Transportation

Car Services (i.e. Uber, Lyft), Shuttles, taxicab, and bus fares utilized for transportation purposes while traveling are reimbursable expenses. If bus or rail travel is used, the traveler must select coach class.

Parking & Tolls

Reasonable parking charges and tolls associated with business travel will be reimbursed.

Meals

All meal expenditures are subject to University policies and this guidance regardless of funding source or intended recipient, unless more restrictive guidance applies.

An itemized receipt for meal expenses must be attached to the appropriate expense report. When more than one person is included in the meal expense, the names of each person in attendance and their employment or business affiliation must also be included in the expense report.

Business Meals

All business meals away from ACU's campus (even those still in Abilene) should be paid for using the employee's Travel Card. The employee's monthly credit limit of \$500 should cover these types of expenses and a request will not be required unless additional funds are needed.

Business Meals while Traveling

While traveling on University business, expenses for meals are based on actual, reasonable expenses incurred. Travelers who use their University issued travel card to pay for meals while traveling.

When traveling on ACU business, employees will use the request tool within Concur to request an amount equal to or less than the federal per diem rate to estimate the daily costs of meals during their trip and to provide the FOPA approver the opportunity to see the estimated overall cost of meals. Funds will be added to the employee's travel card using this amount, however, their expense report and FOPA will only be charged the actual costs incurred.

GSA maximums do not apply to actual costs for meals unless specified in the terms and conditions of an award from a sponsoring organization/agency funding the travel. ACU will pay for 3 meals each day, if groceries or snacks are replacing a meal the Travel Card can be used, but additional meals and/or snacks to Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner should be paid out of pocket with no reimbursement by ACU.

Federally funded travel may be subject to additional restrictions which are included in the “Federally Grant Funded Travel” section below.

Student Per Diem

Per Diem allowances for students cannot exceed the allowance set by the GSA for a particular city or foreign country or the budget allocated for the travel by the department or school. Please see “Travel Cash Advances” section below for additional details regarding these types of requests.

Standard Tipping Guideline

The University will reimburse employees for tipping waiters, taxi drivers and baggage handlers.

Standard tipping guideline is 15% of the total at a restaurant, \$1-\$2 for each bag handled by a baggage handler, and a 10% tip for a taxi driver.

Spousal Accompaniment

If an employee wishes to include his or her spouse or family on a business trip, the employee is responsible for any extra expenses, including the difference between meals, transportation, and all other incidentals. Spousal accompaniment on a business trip or entertainment event with a bona fide business purpose must be approved through a [Spousal Accompaniment Approval Form](#) in advance by the tax director or designee and submitted with the appropriate expense report.

Travel Cash Advances

Employees and students may obtain travel advances for expected business expenses through Concur. These advances are loans and are the responsibility of the employee or student. Travel Advance Requests should be submitted at least 7 days prior to the specific date the advance is needed and should not exceed the amount of expected expenses. Cash advances should only be used if they will be unable to use their travel card at some point during their trip. Every attempt should be made to pay for all travel costs utilizing the ACU issued Travel Card.

Travelers are responsible for documenting the use of the advance and providing receipts to be submitted in Concur and included with your trip’s expense report. Any balance remaining from the advance must be returned by personal check or cash to the Cashier’s office, and the cashier’s receipt must be attached to the Expense Report within Concur. Any advance not settled by an expense report may be deducted from the employee’s paycheck.

Travel Cash Advances that are issued for Student Per Diem will require signature from recipient documenting they received the issued amount and should be submitted as documentation with employee’s Concur expense report.

International Travel

In addition to meeting all travel policies outlined in the ACU Travel Policy, any student, faculty or staff member proposing to undertake University-supported or University-related international travel must follow the appropriate approval, insurance, and travel security requirements set forth in the [International Travel Approval Policy](#).

A global perspective is essential to ACU's academic mission, and the University has long supported international travel to conduct research, study cultures and languages, promote collaboration with peer institutions, represent the University, and for other academic, administrative, and sanctioned student activities. The purpose of this policy is to outline the approval process for University-supported or University-related international travel, and related requirements, thereby promoting such travel while mitigating associated risks.

Federally Grant Funded Travel

Travel costs charged to grants and contracts must follow the regulations of the sponsoring entity and the terms and conditions of the individual awards. Restrictions may include the need for prior approval from the sponsor, use of U.S. flag carriers, limits on the total amount that can be charged for travel and compulsory use of government per diem allowances for lodging and/or meals. The traveler should check with the specific agreement or contact the Executive Director of Research well in advance of departure to determine if any additional restrictions are applicable. Travel policies of federal and non-federal sponsors vary.

In addition to meeting all other University policy requirements, the following conditions apply to travel charged to sponsored projects:

Business Purpose

The business purpose section of Concur should clearly identify the relationship of the travel to the purpose of the award. When a trip involves multiple purposes, the basis for allocating the charges to the sponsored project must be stated.

Fly America Act and Open Skies Agreements

Use of the U.S. flag carriers is required for all international travel charged to a federal award unless certain exceptions are met. This requirement shall not be influenced by factors of cost, convenience, or personal travel preference.

Advance Approval Required

Grants from some federal agencies and most federal contracts require that all international travel, even if included in the award, be approved from 45 to 90 days in advance by the sponsor's administrative officer. Some non-federal entities require approval in advance of all travel whether domestic or international. Travelers should consult with Executive Director of Research for details on obtaining approval.

Penalties and Fees

Penalties or cancellation fees for airline, hotel, and car rentals are generally NOT allowable and one should always get pre-approval before charging such costs to an award.

Risk of Non-Compliance

Violation of this policy, including misuse of a University issued Travel Card, may result in the loss of University travel card privileges, taxation or loss of reimbursement, disciplinary action including termination or legal action.

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