**Department of Biological Systems Engineering**

**Virginia Tech**

**Travel Guide**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this guide is to define terms and provide guidance as it pertains to travel.

**Definitions**

***Domestic***: contiguous 48 United States.

***Non-Domestic***: all locations outside the contiguous 48 United States.

***Official Station***: within 25-mile radius of base point of operation where an employee is employed.

***Public Transportation***: commercial scheduled airline, rail, bus, rental car, shuttle or other

“For hire transportation” or taxi (when necessary).

***State Funds***: any funds deposited with the State Treasurer, whether derived from

appropriation, grants, contracts, or general University receipts.

***Travel***: all activities involving expenses for transportation, lodging, meals or registration,

which may be paid from State funds or involve State vehicles for transportation.

***Travel Status***: travel away from the employee’s official station, except when engaged in

daily travel as part of regular routine.

**Rationale**

When traveling, it is good to be aware of the University’s related policies and procedures. Through research & experience, the BSE Finance team has created this Travel Guide to assist you in planning for, completing, and requesting reimbursement.

**Background**

The university must distinguish travel that qualifies as a reimbursement from

travel that qualifies as scholarship/gift aid. The purpose of the travel, and the primary

beneficiary, are the key factors in making this determination.

When an individual travels to conduct university business, Virginia Tech is considered the primary beneficiary. As a result, the travel reimbursement is non-reportable and may be processed from any appropriate funding source, including E&G funds.

Examples of non-reportable travel reimbursements, where the university is the primary beneficiary, include but are not limited to:

• Presenting at conferences

• Attending student/faculty recruiting events as requested by the department or college

• Conducting university-supported research activities or research that will be published in

the department or university’s name

• Participating in scholastic competitions or Collaborative projects with a university

business purpose

• Working information booths on behalf of the university

The individual is the primary beneficiary when traveling to further their own education or training. Reimbursement for these expenses is considered scholarship income and must be paid through Foundation funds as a scholar award (issued through Financial Aid) or Sponsored Program funds (if the grant specifically supports student travel).

Examples of IRS reportable travel support when there is no university-related business activity include but are not limited to:

• Attending a conference to improve the individual understanding of a particular field or

subject, including theoretical concepts, principles, and broader knowledge.

• Conducting research activities that are not university-supported or will not be published

in the department or university’s name

• Participating in enrichment activities for personal benefit

• Attending a networking event to identify internship opportunities

The department funding the request should use the guidelines above to determine whether the travel is primarily for university business or the personal benefit of the individual prior to the commitment of funds or booking of any travel arrangements.

**Tax Implications**

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| **EXAMPLE** | **TAXABLE** |
| Individual presents at a conference | No |
| Individual travels to lead or assist with approved university research activities | No |
| Individuals participate in a collaborative service project with individuals from other universities | No |
| Individuals travel to represent their department and distribute program information at a community event | No |
| Individuals attends a conference to improve their understanding of a particular field or subject, including theoretical concepts, principles, and broader knowledge, but there is not a university-related business activity | Yes |
| Student travels to conduct research for their thesis, but it is not associated with an approved university research activity | Yes |
| Individual/Student registers for foreign language classes to improve efficiency related to their program of study | Yes |
| Student attends networking event to identify internship opportunities | Yes |

**Travel Pre-Authorization (TA/PA)**

Our college requires Travel Authorization before any trip (domestic or international). This allows a couple of things. (1) it allows the Department Head, as well as supervisor’s/managers to review a travel request to “approve” the individual taking time away from work to attend. This is a good safety net for the traveler in the case that anyone ever questions their travel. (2) TA’s allow BSE Finance team to review funding for availability & allowability – in addition to “reserving” an allotment of the funding mechanism used for this purpose.

Your TA does not have to capture every single cost down to the cent – rather it should be used as a “guardrail” to capture the big pieces… (location, dates, lodging estimate, per diem estimates, and any other costs that can be reasonably estimated.)

Even if you are traveling on funding that is external to the University, it is still a good idea to complete a travel pre-authorization for $1 to capture the purpose/dates of your travel for approval.

**Guide Elements**

• ***Transportation***: Uber/Lyft/Taxi/etc. tip cannot exceed 15%. If you tip over 15% it will not be reimbursed.

• ***Transportation/ Per diem***: Transportation costs incurred to attend meals, “site-see” or do anything other than attending to the business purpose will notbe reimbursed.

• ***Meals***: When you travel, if you are offered a free meal (whether you consume or not) you must report, as this will be reduced from your daily per diem allowance.

• ***Per-diem location***: The first day of per diem is the location you are traveling to and spending that night. The last day of per diem is the location where you stayed the previous night. *(So basically, if you went to Richmond for a week, all per diems will be for Richmond.)*

***• Baggage Fee’s (air travel):*** You are allowed one check in bag each way. If it is for a business purpose, then you can request reimbursement for additional baggage, as long as that information is documented in the expense report. This essentially alludes to items that are necessary to the purpose behind your travel- (i.e. an additional bag with supplies used to compete at a national conference).

***• Travel Insurance:*** Not allowed for domestic travel, however it is allowed for international.

***• Vaccinations***: Allowed for foreign travel.

**Timeframes**

The reimbursement request should be submitted for payment by the employee to his/her.

approver within thirty (30) working days after completion of the trip, where overnight travel is involved, or in case if continuous travel, within thirty (30) working days of the last day of travel for which reimbursement is requested. In all instances, the reimbursement request must be submitted to the authorized approver for approval and forwarded to the Controller’s Office

within sixty (60) days after returning from the business trip. What this means is simply that for those who come back from a trip and don't enter their reimbursement information into Chrome River within (60) days, your reimbursement will move from a non-taxable reimbursement to taxable income. For all travel reimbursement requests, the traveler's supervisor must approve the request within five (5) working days of receipt from employee. In the case of a non-state employee, the authorized approver must approve the request within five (5) working days of receipt from the non-state employee’s delegate. Upon receipt of all requests, the department fiscal office must promptly enter the request in the Chrome River system within five (5) working days. If travel reimbursements are not claimed within the prescribed schedule, the Controller's Office may require an explanation for the delay.

The expenses will be paid by direct deposit usually within 7-10 days after being submitted to the

Controller's Office.