

### **I. SUMMARY:**

It is the policy of SUNY Old Westbury to provide adequate and cost-efficient means of transportation to employees when traveling on official College business.

### **II. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE and SCOPE:**

The Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) establishes rules and regulations for transportation, travel and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred while on official State business. These rules and regulations can be found at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/agencies/travel/manual.pdf> and are also included by reference in collective bargaining agreements. Each campus is responsible for establishing its own policy and procedures for these areas.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- The employee's obligation is to use the most cost-efficient method of travel and transportation available.
- The area Vice President or Department Head is responsible for reviewing and approving the request to travel and the mode of transportation before travel commences to ensure that the most economical means of travel is taken.
- The Division of Business & Finance conducts the final review and approval of travel and transportation expenses submitted for reimbursement. This review is made to ensure that all expenses are actual, reasonable and necessary, and that the most economical method of travel is used in the best interest of the State. Expense reports should be submitted within 30 days of the end of the travel event to account for all expenses, including out-of-pocket expenses and reconcile the associated travel card charges. Employees are still required to submit expense reports to account for all expenses even if they miss the 30-day submission window.

### **IV. GUIDELINES:**

When choosing a method of transportation, several factors should be considered.

- Distance being traveled
- Travel time
- Number of employees
- Number of locations to be visited
- Type of transportation available

If a more expensive method of travel is planned, you are required to obtain approval from your Vice President in advance of the travel. Justification must be submitted with your request and included as part of the Travel Voucher package. OSC continually stresses throughout its regulations that the **personal preference of an employee is not an acceptable reason when determining the most cost efficient means of travel**. To comply with policy and avoid potential reimbursement problems, it is advisable that you discuss travel plans with the Purchasing Office or the Accounts Payable Office before travel commences if the most economical means of travel is not deemed feasible.

When a more expensive method is chosen without sufficient justification, the College will only reimburse up to the least practical expensive rate of travel. For example if you choose to take a limousine when a less expensive taxi or van service also go to the same destination, you will be reimbursed at the regular taxi fare. OSC directs that the final decision about reimbursements in these instances should be made by the campus business office (Division of Business & Finance). Use of a common carrier typically results in the most economical method of transportation.

**A. Common Carrier**

Often times the most efficient and cost effective method of transportation is using a common carrier such as a train, bus, taxi or airplane. This is especially true when traveling between Long Island and Albany. Where possible, travel should be scheduled using NYS travel services contracts or coach accommodations when traveling by commercial air. You should obtain the lowest cost coach accommodations available and specifically request "government" rates when arranging travel through common carriers. Train travel on Amtrak will be reimbursed at the current Amtrak government rate.

When a common carrier is available but a more expensive method is chosen without sufficient justification, the College will reimburse only the common carrier rate. If a trip is cancelled at the direction of the College, you will not be responsible for any costs incurred. If a trip is cancelled for your convenience, you may be responsible for all associated costs. Charges for traveling by common carrier between a transportation terminal (e.g., airport, bus or train station) and home or official station may be incurred and are reimbursable for actual costs.

**B. State Vehicle**

**You are strongly encouraged to use State vehicles when the use of an automobile is required to travel for College business purposes.** Gasoline, tolls and other necessary expenses incurred while a State vehicle is being used for business purposes will be paid by the College or reimbursed as appropriate. Emergency expenses, if justified, will be reimbursed. The Facilities Department maintains a small fleet of passenger vehicles and vans for use when on official business travel. The Facilities Department also handles the maintenance and reservations of College fleet vehicles and you are strongly encouraged to make advance reservations as early as possible since vehicles are dispatched on a first-come, first-served basis.

**C. Personal Vehicle**

**On rare occasions, a Personal vehicle may be used for State business purposes with written pre-approval (justification) from the Vice President or Department Head.** Such instances may occur if a State vehicle or common carrier is not available, if it is not cost effective or is otherwise not appropriate (for example, there is a need to transport voluminous files or documents and use of a State vehicle or common carrier is not practical), or when there are extenuating circumstances which preclude the use of a State vehicle.

Mileage reimbursement rates are determined by OSC, the IRS and collective bargaining agreements. Employees who are required by the College to use their personal vehicle or employees informed by the Facilities department that State vehicles are not available, will be reimbursed according to OSC, IRS or collective bargaining agreements, as appropriate. When seeking reimbursement, the pre-approval justification must be included in the voucher package.

If the use of a Personal vehicle is authorized, you should be aware that your own personal automobile liability policy is the first layer of insurance coverage should an accident occur. There is no State coverage for uninsured/underinsured motorists; personal injury protection or medical payments. These coverages must be provided through your own personal policy. Comprehensive and collision losses to your personal vehicle are not covered by the state but Workers' Compensation coverage is provided as if you were using a State owned vehicle on state business. For additional information refer to *SUNY Old Westbury Procedure No. B-08 "Liability Exposure While Driving on SUNY Business."*

**D. Rental Vehicle**

When the use of a Rental vehicle is necessary and prudent, the College will use the New York State Office of General Services (OGS) Centralized Passenger Vehicle Rental Contract. All insurance coverage and collision damage waivers are covered under this contract. Additional information about this contract may be obtained from the Purchasing Office or the OGS Travel Contracts website. Contact the Purchasing Office for assistance in reserving the rental vehicle. Any gasoline purchases and other direct costs associated with the rental vehicle will be reimbursed. You cannot claim the personal car mileage reimbursement rates when using a rental vehicle. If you use a rental vehicle for personal reasons, you must reimburse the State for the cost of any charges incurred as a result of such personal usage. The College is direct-billed for the rental vehicle so there is no need to use State issued travel cards or personal credit cards.

**E. Additional Transportation Expenses**

Toll charges will be reimbursed whether paid in cash or with an EZ Pass issued to the employee. The College will **not** establish EZ Pass accounts for employees' personal cars. However, EZ Pass accounts may be established for the College's fleet. Such accounts will be established in the name of New York State. Those officers and employees who are permitted to utilize State vehicles for personal use must reimburse the State for the costs of any EZ Pass charges incurred during any personal usage. All reasonable and necessary (not excessive) parking charges will also be reimbursed. Valet parking fees will only be reimbursed if it is an unavoidable expense (for example, when the hotel only offers valet parking). Additionally, reasonable and customary tips for allowable valet parking and taxicab fees will be reimbursed.

**V. REFERENCES:**

1. Office of the New York State Comptroller Travel Manual
2. SUNY Old Westbury Procedure No. B-08 "Liability Exposure While Driving on SUNY Business"

**VI. APPROVALS:**

This policy was prepared by the Division of Business & Finance and was reviewed by the President's Cabinet prior to final approval by the President.