

# TIPS TO ENSURE REIMBURSEMENT

You're planning to travel for university business. Follow these tips to ensure the money you spend on the trip can be reimbursed.



**\*Just because funds were spent does not guarantee they will be reimbursed.\***

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**THESE TIPS DERIVE FROM UNIVERSITYWIDE AND CAMPUS POLICIES.**

**SOME DEPARTMENTS OR CONTROL POINTS MAY HAVE MORE RESTRICTIVE CONTROLS.**

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## KEEP RECEIPTS

Keep receipts

❖ Business and Financial Services (BFS, aka Accounting) needs both documentation of expense (how much money, what it was spent on) and substantiation of payment (proof of payment and who did the spending).

➤ Normally this means itemized receipts

- The world isn't ideal. If you are unable\* to obtain itemized receipts, work with your financial coordinator on alternative forms of documentation that have been acceptable to BFS previously.

\*but please do try; BFS could deny reimbursement for lack of itemized receipts.

➤ Receipts should indicate who did the spending.

- ◆ Accounting may ask for additional documents that indicate the expenditure was made by the traveler. ◆

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## BUT DON'T KEEP THEM TO YOURSELF FILE TIMELY ONCE YOUR TRIP ENDS

It's a busy time returning from a business trip, but don't delay turning in your receipts and filling out department-required reimbursement request forms.

- ❖ UC recently adjusted [policy](#) to set a time limit on requesting travel reimbursement. Per policy, trip expenses should be filed within 45 days of the trip ending.
  - Currently, there is not clear campus guidance on this: Do expenses need to be submitted by the traveler within 45 days or reach BFS by then?
    - Depending on variables, it could take a couple of weeks for your department personnel to fully translate your receipts to the campus online travel reimbursement system (Web TEV) and get everything to BFS. Allot time for this.
    - Allot more time for additional approvals that might be required.
  - **It's Best to Play it Safe:** To meet the university time limit, provide your forms and receipts to department financial staff as soon after your trip as you can, and definitely by any departmental deadlines.

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## PROVIDE INFO NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST

Policy requires that a travel reimbursement include the following. The onus should be on the traveler to provide the following, not on the staff person filing your reimbursement:

- Location(s) visited
- Dates of travel
- Dates of any personal days while on travel
- BUSINESS PURPOSE of the trip. Include specifics (e.g., presenter at VI International Conference on xxx).
  - It's preferable to use full words, not acronyms.
  - Provide a copy of the program or conference agenda, if applicable
- Receipts and sufficient detail to capture all reimbursable expenses

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## UNDERSTAND THAT REGULATIONS APPLY

- ❖ Regardless of original source, once funds run through the university, university regulations apply. Therefore,
  - Even travel funded by donor monies needs to adhere to university policies and regulations, and
  - Research funds are not an individual's funds. The university is administering them, therefore university regulations apply.

- ❖ If multiple regulations are involved, the stricter one prevails.
- ❖ Neither alcohol nor tobacco products can be charged to state funds.
- ❖ [AB 1887](#) precludes use of state funds for travel to specific US states.
- ❖ When in doubt, consult your financial staff.

It's always preferable to consult them in advance. Sometimes they can advise alternate approaches that will enable you to accomplish your objectives within university regulations.

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## DON'T PAY FOR OTHERS

- ❑ Per UC [policy](#) third-party travel expenses are not reimbursable\*.

Third Party payment = a person pays expenses that were not their own.

\*allowable: instructor-led student group trips (field trips)

\*allowable: co-travelers sharing a room (provide documentation; obtain authorization in advance)

- This means that UC, at its highest level, believes that the university's mission can be accomplished without the need for this type of payment. As this implies, there are other paths available. If you don't know what those are, ask your financial coordinator.
- Don't expect reimbursement for third-party expenses.
- While on travel, hosting a meal for business purposes (e.g., a UC host and a non-UC guest) could be allowable. Paying the dinner bill for a group of UC colleagues while on travel is not reimbursable under UC policy.

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## ECONOMY / FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- ❖ UC [policy](#) indicates that the traveler will make choices that demonstrate good stewardship of university resources; spending decisions will be made in the interest of economy and will not be extravagant or lavish.
- ❖ Under no circumstances shall expenses for personal travel be charged to, or be temporarily funded by, the University.
- ❖ UC encourages the use of [CONNEXXUS](#) when making travel arrangements (hotel, airfare, train, rental car)
  - It enables direct bill to the department, eliminating the need for traveler to await reimbursement
  - It takes advantage of negotiated discounts for the university and preferred sourcing agreements
  - It allows traveler to [utilize a favored travel site](#), while still booking through CONNEXXUS

- It allows campus to pay airfare for visitors, eliminating the need for the visitor to outlay funds and await reimbursement
- If booking through BCD Travel (via CONNEXXUS), the traveler has access to a travel agent
- UC travel insurance automatically applies when a UC traveler books transportation through CONNEXXUS (except Southwest Airlines)
- Automatic car rental insurance coverage, through the rental company
- Now allows Airbnb booking as a UC preferred accommodation option, but follow the [UC process!](#)
- Uber for UC
- Price adjustment if airfare pricing reduced AFTER purchase
- Increases likelihood that expenditure will be in compliance with university policy

◆ Individualized or small group training can be arranged for CONNEXXUS use. ◆

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## MEAL ALLOWANCES – TRAVEL WITHIN THE CONTINENTAL U.S.

- For meals while on travel status, the university will reimburse actual expenses only, capped at \$62 per day.
- ❖ If you entertain a non-UC guest while on travel, that may be reimbursable, at the department's discretion and under university [entertainment policies](#) (similar to hosting a guest at UCSB).
- ❖ Special note on alcohol:  
Most departments do not reimburse alcohol consumed while on university travel. When it is reimbursed, special accounting is required.
- ◆ For these reasons, the traveler must indicate (mark) all alcohol expenses on meal receipts. ◆

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## INSURANCE COVERAGE

- The university provides insurance coverage for its employees on business-related travel.
- ❖ Register your trip so that UC travel insurance applies.
  - If you book through CONNEXXUS (above) registration is automatic
  - For business travel within California coverage is automatic
  - ◆ If you plan to travel outside of California and do not book your travel through CONNEXXUS, register your trip [here](#) ◆

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## LODGING EXPENSES – TRAVEL WITHIN THE CONTINENTAL U.S.

- UC reimburses actual, documented lodging expenses, capped at the room rate of \$275/night (exclusive of taxes). Itemized receipt is required.

- ❖ This does not mean that every hotel you stay in should cost \$275 a night. Fiscal Responsibility (see above) indicates that university travelers should seek reasonably priced accommodation for the location of their travel.
  - The university no longer ties its allowable lodging reimbursement amounts to the US State Department domestic location allowances (as of Oct 2017).
  - UC policy allows for rates above \$275/night under specific circumstances (e.g., when prearranged conference hotel rate exceeds \$275 – provide documentation).
  - Exceptional Approval Required: If the traveler is unable to secure lodging at \$275 per night or less, the traveler may request an exception by submitting additional documentation that supports the higher lodging rate. This additional documentation should include a price comparison within proximity of the meeting location and in the same timeframe as the travel; this means screenshotting the price comparison and submitting an exceptional approval request through your department chair and dean.

◆ Exceptional approval is not guaranteed. ◆

- ❖ Unapproved rates that exceed \$275/night will be reimbursed at no more than \$275/night.

Airbnb is now a UC accommodation option through [Airbnb for Work](#).

Account for other charges on the hotel bill.

- Food and drink charges on a hotel bill should be included under your meal total; these are not to be included with lodging costs.
- Charges for parking, internet service, etc. should be accounted for separately on the travel reimbursement request, and not included with lodging costs.

◆ Aid your financial staff by marking these charges on the hotel bill and providing an explanation for them. (It will speed your reimbursement.) ◆

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## AVOID INTERNET PACKAGED TRAVEL DEALS – YOU WON'T GET REIMBURSED

- Itemized receipts are required for lodging and transportation.
  - ◆ UC will NOT reimburse for 'packaged' travel deals (e.g., obtained through Orbitz or similar site) precisely because these packages cannot provide a breakdown of costs, e.g., for airfare, hotel, rental car. ◆
  - ◆ Do not use these internet travel package deals. You will not be reimbursed. ◆

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## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation expenses are reimbursed based on the most economical mode of transportation and the most commonly traveled route consistent with the authorized purpose of the trip.

Thus,

Airfare:

- should be economy class (coach class), "regardless of the purpose or fund source."
- if funded on federal grants, should be on a US flag carrier

Rental Car:

- authorized when renting is more advantageous to the University than other means of commercial transportation, such as a taxi
- should be reserved in advance whenever possible
- reimbursement only up to intermediate-sized model
- obtain the best available rate commensurate with the requirements of the trip, and request University discounted rate when available (see Connexus, above).
- additional insurance costs are not reimbursable for vehicles used in continental US

Private Vehicle:

- make sure you have appropriate liability insurance coverage
- provide license plate number

Local transportation (buses, subway, taxis, Uber, ...):

- are allowed
- costs must be reasonable
- obtain receipts

Other modes transportation:

- consult your financial staff, in advance.

Indirect or interrupted routes (meaning a traveler takes an indirect route or interrupts travel for other than University business):

- Obtain advance approval
- Any resulting additional expenses shall be borne by the traveler
  - ◆ Requires that the traveler provide documentation (screenshot or other) of the cost of direct route travel. This must be done in advance, at the time that travel is booked. ◆

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## NOTABLE PHRASE FROM UC TRAVEL REGULATIONS

❖ Reimbursement of unsubstantiated expenses constitutes taxable income.

- Thus, by asking for substantiation, your staff and BFS are both following policy and attempting to prevent IRS implications of your reimbursement.

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**Safe Travels!**