SUBJECT: Financial Affairs  
Policy: 503.1 Travel Policy  
Effective: February 2006  
Revised: August 2019  
Reviewed:

Introduction & Purpose
Traveling is a necessary function of college business. Great Falls College Montana State University complies with Montana Board of Regents policy and state of Montana statutes regarding travel.

Policy
Employees will travel in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible while still able to accomplish the purpose of the travel. Whenever possible, employees will utilize technology to interface with out-of-state agencies and other entities in an attempt to reduce travel expenditures.

All travel will be approved in advance by the department head or designated representative. A Chrome River travel pre-approval must be completed for any out of state travel.

The number of personnel attending a given function requiring travel will be held to the absolute minimum.

Transportation will be the most economical in terms of direct cost to the college and the employee's time away from the office.

Employees using automobiles in an approved travel status will obey all posted speed limits and traffic laws.

Great Falls College MSU will not pay any employee's travel costs to attend a function that does not benefit the college. To promote employee initiative and efforts of self-improvement, the department head may provide an employee time off with pay to participate in the desired function.

Related Policy
Montana Board of Regents Policy 807.1 Employee Travel
Montana Operations Manual Employee Travel
Montana Code Annotated 2-18-5 Travel, Meals & Lodging

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503.10 INTRODUCTION

The Legislature creates laws governing travel, the Montana Department of Administration prescribes regulations to follow, and the effective managerial controls and enforcement rest with Great Falls College-Montana State University.

The three references with information regarding state employees' travel are:

- Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)  
- Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM)  
- Montana Operations Manual (MOM) Volumes I, II and IV  

Personal contact is often the most economical and practical method of achieving effective communication and objectives. However, an employee should follow these guidelines when considering travel:

All travel will be approved in advance by the department head or designated representative. A Travel Request and Authorization form must be completed and on file in the Business Office for any out of state travel.

The number of personnel attending a given function requiring travel will be held to the absolute minimum.

1. Transportation will be the most economical in terms of direct cost to the State and the employee's time away from the office. All commercial air travel will be by the least expensive service available. Trips should be scheduled to avoid unnecessary backtracking and overlapping.

2. Employees using automobiles in an approved travel status will obey all posted speed limits and will make every effort to maximize the benefits to the State of the travel.
3. Although Great Falls College MSU is encouraged to assist and support other states and organizations, the College cannot do so at its own expense. Therefore, only travel that will benefit the state of Montana will be allowed. If another state or organization is willing to pay travel costs for a Great Falls College MSU employee for lecturing or providing other assistance, the department head may contribute the employee's personal service costs to the project.

4. Great Falls College MSU will not pay any employee's travel costs to attend a function that does not benefit the College. To promote employee initiative and efforts of self-improvement, the department head may provide an employee time off with pay to participate in the desired function--if the time-off with pay conforms with the provisions of ARM title 2, chapter 21, sub-chapter 15.

503.12 TRAVEL ADVANCES

Travel advances may be obtained by GFC MSU employees or students to avoid hardship or undue strain on personal finances. Applications for travel advances should be filed with the Business Office at least 10 working days in advance of the departure date. Due to audit recommendations, advance checks will be requested through the State Auditor's office. Only unanticipated travel advances will be written on campus. If the travel is out of state, the justification section of the Travel Authorization and/or Travel Advance Request form MUST be completed. Advances will not be given for amounts less than $50.00. A travel advance may be denied to anyone abusing this privilege or who has not followed the designated time schedules for application or filing dates. A travel advance is for the convenience of the traveler and is an advance expenditure of travel. The travel advance request must be approved and funded in the same manner as any claim.

A signed Travel Request and Authorization Form must be submitted to the Business Office to process the Travel Advance.

Trip Cancellation--If a trip is canceled after an advance is received, the advance should be repaid in full to Accounts Payable in University Business Services office no less than 10 days after cancellation.

503.13 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION:

The Travel Request and Authorization Form is required for all GFC MSU employees or students who wish to travel out-of-state.

It is important that the traveler apply for the authorization as soon as possible since a copy of the approved authorization must be on file in the Business Office before any travel advance, Purchasing Card Form, Requisition Order, or Travel Expense Voucher is processed.

503.14 REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES
Reimbursable travel expenses include only those expenses incurred while traveling on official State business. These expenses are divided into six groups:

**TRANSPORTATION-MODE OF TRAVEL:**

**Commercial Airfare**—State travel policy requires travelers to use the State Purchasing card for individual employee (not team or large group) airfare purchases. This applies to ticket purchases made through a travel agent, purchased directly from an airline, or purchased from an online travel source. Please note that this is for individual travel only, and does not apply to team or group travel, for which we often issue a check.

IN LIEU OF AIRFARE, an employee may wish to use other than the most economical and expeditious mode of transportation to complete a travel oriented work assignment. For example, an employee may prefer to drive a private vehicle to a particular destination rather than fly. To drive would require more travel time and more cost than airfare. When other than the least expensive class service is used, a full explanation of the justifying circumstances MUST be included with the claim. The employee will be given "air travel equivalent"—the most economical airfare in lieu of mileage and allowable meals and lodging as though the trip had been made on a commercial airline. The remaining travel time (in excess of air travel time) would have to be completed on the employee's time (non-working hours of vacation).

**CANCELLATION OF TICKETS AND REFUNDS**—In the event a purchased ticket is NOT used, the ticket must be returned to University Business Services as soon as possible for a refund. UNUSED TICKETS SHOULD NOT BE SURRENDERED TO THE TRAVEL AGENTS. If a lower fare is obtained after the purchase of the ticket, the travel agent should issue a check to the Montana State University, not the traveler.

**GIFTS AND BENEFITS**—Any benefits derived from approved, justified travel becomes the property of Montana State University and MUST be turned over to University Business Services. These may include airline promotions, such as frequent flyer credits, rebates, coupons, etc.

**State Owned Vehicles**—GFC MSU maintains two cars for MSU employees to use for official travel. Requests to use a campus vehicle should be made through a School Dude work request. If a campus vehicle is not available, employees are encouraged to use a rental car through Enterprise. State and rental vehicles are to be used for official business only. No GFC MSU employee will use or authorize the use of a state-owned or rented motor vehicle for personal or private use.

**Personal Vehicles**—GFC MSU employees may use their personal vehicle and received reimbursement at the state approved rate. See policy 503.3 Mileage Rates for reimbursement guidelines. No GFC MSU employee will be compensated for driving their own vehicle unless it is used for State business.
Employees are encouraged to use College owned or rental vehicles while on College business. Employees utilizing personal vehicles shall carry their own insurance with business use protection. The employee's personal vehicle insurance coverage is considered primary.

Personally owned vehicles are only protected for liability to third parties for an employee's negligent act(s) in the exercise of official University business. Such liability coverage is secondary to the named insured's personal auto policy. Property damage to an employee's personal automobile is not covered for collision or other than collision by the University's motor vehicle insurance coverage.

The current Montana Highway map will be used to determine mileage among all points of travel. All vicinity mileage must be justified with an explanation on the Travel Expense Voucher.

Reimbursement will be from the work location if travel begins or ends during the travel shift and from the home residence if the travel begins or ends outside the travel shift.

It is usually necessary to begin traveling prior to the time established for a meeting appointment, a conference, etc. Business activities may terminate late in the day and because of bad weather, fatigue, and the unavailability of transportation, it may not be feasible for the employee to return promptly to campus. In such cases, travel expenses are allowed for a reasonable amount of time preceding and following the actual business activities that necessitate travel. Because circumstances vary, the "reasonable" criterion will have to be applied on an individual basis.

Mileage rates can be found on the Travel Expense Voucher, under Policies & Procedures/Forms.
MEALS:

The following travel allowance schedule is used to reimburse MSU Employees in accordance with State policy. Rates for in-state and out-of-state meal allowance can be found on the Travel Expense Voucher, under Policies & Procedures/Forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEALS</th>
<th>TIME FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>12:01 am – 10:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Day</td>
<td>10:01 am – 3:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>3:01 pm – 12:00 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departure time and return time is normally considered to be when an employee leaves from and returns to campus. However, if the employee departs from or returns directly to his/her residence without stopping at campus, this starting and/or ending time should be used in computing the travel allowances.

A "travel shift" is defined as that period of time beginning one hour before an employee's regularly assigned shift and ending one hour after the employee's assigned work shift.

To be eligible for a meal reimbursement while traveling on official business, the employee must have been in a "travel status" for more than three (3) hours within the meal time frame and be a distance of at least 15 miles from campus or home, whichever is closer. In the event that meals are included in a registration fee, no meal allowance should be claimed for that meal.

A receipt for meals is not necessary to obtain reimbursement (except for International Travel).

Travel by air is considered to be out-of-state from the time of boarding a flight with a destination outside Montana, or returning from outside Montana. When using other modes of transportation, the geographical location will determine in-state and out-of-state meal reimbursement allowances. Travelers not flying must indicate the time of crossing state lines on their Travel Expense Voucher.

LODGING

Lodging reimbursements rates used by MSU employees rates can be found on the Travel Expense Voucher, under Policies & Procedures/Forms.

Reimbursement for out-of-state lodging is based on federal per diem schedules and is actual cost NOT TO EXCEED the prescribed maximum standard rate for the location plus taxes. A number of locations have been assigned a higher maximum lodging rate. Lodging Rates are available on under Policies & Procedures/Forms.
DISCOUNTS—Many hotels and motels have an educational or state discount. Travelers should always inquire about these discounts.

ORIGINAL RECEIPTS—In order to claim lodging reimbursement, an ORIGINAL receipt from the lodging facility MUST be attached to the Travel Expense Voucher. Other receipts, such as credit card receipts, canceled checks, etc. are not acceptable.

NON-STATE EMPLOYEE TRAVEL—If an employee is sharing a room with a non-state employee, the lodging rate for single occupancy MUST be stated and claimed (i.e. a spouse travels with the employee).

LODGING PROVIDED—In some instances, lodging is provided to the employee but no charge is assessed. Therefore, no expense can be claimed. Examples of this would be:
  - Industry or governmental seminars where lodging is provided "on-campus"
  - Lodging is included in the registration fee.
  - A cabin is provided for backwoods work.

REQUEST FOR ACTUAL COST LODGING—IN-STATE/OUT-OF-STATE—In some instances, lodging will be more than the standard federal rate. For those occasions, this section of the Travel Authorization Form may be completed.

REGISTRATIONS

Travel expenses included in registration fees—If lodging and/or meals are included in the registration fee, the lodging and meal expense cannot be claimed for reimbursement. Whenever lodging and/or meals are included in a conference or registration fee, they must be noted on the Travel Expense Voucher.

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

Miscellaneous business expenses associated with travel are reimbursable. Individual expense items of $25.00 or more per day MUST be supported by paid receipts. All miscellaneous expenses are reported in the "Other Expense" column of the Travel Expense Voucher and must be explained in the space provided at the bottom of the form with sufficient information to be verified. Examples of allowable miscellaneous expenses include: needed work supplies purchased on an emergency basis, taxi fares, business telephone calls, etc. Miscellaneous expenses do NOT include tips and taxes on meals.

ITEMIZED RECEIPTS—When a traveler incurs any expense of $25.00 or more per day, an original receipt must be filed to assure reimbursement. Credit card statements and canceled check are not acceptable receipts. Any exceptions must be approved by University Business Services.

NO RECEIPT—NO REIMBURSEMENT
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

All travel to a location outside of the United States is managed by MSU Bozeman’s Office of International Programs. Employees and students must work with the Director of Operations and MSU prior to making any travel plans. Full policy and procedure can be found on MSU’s website: http://www.montana.edu/international/studyabroad/healthandsafety.html

503.15 TRAVEL EXPENSE VOUCHER

Travel Expense Vouchers must be filed within ten (10) days after the trip has been completed. Failure to do so may lead to denial of future advances. Original receipts must accompany the Travel Expense Voucher with detailed information for all allowable expenditures. If a travel advance was received, it must be recorded and deducted from the gross amount of expenditures. If the expenditures exceed the advance, a final reimbursement will be issued to the traveler. If the travel advance exceeded the expenditures, a deposit reimbursing the state MUST accompany the Travel Expense Voucher.

With each travel expense voucher is a complete set of instructions. To speed up processing time, please submit the information in the following order:

1. Travel Expense Voucher 2019
2. Receipts—If they are small, tape to an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper. More than one receipt may be attached to the same sheet.

If a reimbursement is owed to the State, staple check and completed cash receipt to the Travel Expense Voucher and send to the cashier.

503.16 NON-STATE EMPLOYEES TRAVEL

Reimbursement for non-state employees is limited to:

1. Job Applicants
2. Honorariums
3. Visiting Lecturers
4. Consultants
5. Workshop Personnel
6. Other non-state employee travel may be approved on an individual basis.