

## GRINNELL COLLEGE TRAVEL EXPENSE POLICY

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# Travel Expense Policy

Effective Date:	September 1, 2025
Approved by:	Germaine Gross, Vice President for Finance & Treasurer of the College; Nancy Combs, Associate Vice President for Finance & Assistant Treasurer; Senior Leadership Policy Review Group; and Anne Harris, President of the College
Policy Owner:	Vice President for Finance and Treasurer of the College
Policy Manager:	Controller, Procurement Manager
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## Purpose

The Grinnell College Travel Expense Policy establishes travel expense reimbursement requirements related to Grinnell College ("College") activities. It ensures efficient use of the College's resources and compliance with Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") requirements. This policy applies to all College-related travel expenses.

## Scope

This policy applies to all business travel expenses incurred by the College's faculty and staff (collectively referred to as "Travelers"). This policy also applies to employees responsible for coordinating travel ("Travel Coordinators") for other employees, College-sponsored guests and visitors (e.g., guest lecturers or researchers, consultants, prospective faculty or staff), and group travel (e.g., athletics, music ensembles, course-embedded travel). This policy also applies to individuals who review travel expenses ("Expense Reviewers"). All College departments are responsible for adherence to this policy. The College will reimburse allowable, reasonable, ordinary, and necessary travel expenses in accordance with IRS regulations. The IRS defines ordinary as "common in your field of trade, business or profession;" and necessary as "helpful and appropriate for your business." The IRS states that meal and entertainment expenses cannot be "lavish or extravagant."

## Grant-Funded Travel

Grinnell College Travelers and Travel Coordinators using external grant funds (federal or private grants) to travel must follow grant-specific requirements for ordinary and necessary expenses. However, if Grinnell's Travel Expense Policy is stricter than a funder's guidelines, grantees must follow Grinnell's policy. This is consistent with the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") Uniform Guidance 2 CFR § 200.403 which requires that the costs incurred "be consistent with policies and procedures that apply uniformly to both federally financed and other activities of the recipient". Certain grants have different requirements for allowable expenses. Grants funded by federal agencies will follow Federal cost principles as outlined in the OMB Uniform Guidance. See the [Grants and Fellowships Handbook for Faculty and Staff](#), your grant-specific terms and conditions or reach out to [the Office of Corporate, Foundation, and Government Relations \("Grants Office"\)](#) for additional guidance on grant-funded travel.

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### General Notices and Requirements

The principle underlying all travel policy guidance is for the College to incur the lowest practical and reasonable expense while completing the travel process in an efficient and timely manner. Every effort should be made to make business travel arrangements that keep College expenses to a minimum while providing a reasonable level of comfort and convenience for the Traveler. The safety of the Traveler is of utmost importance when travel arrangements are being considered.

Any exceptions to the Travel Expense Policy must be approved in writing by either the Vice President for Finance or the Associate Vice President for Finance, with notice before making a reservation and/or incurring any expense.

This policy does not apply to individual student travel. See section 8.II for information on "Group Travel".

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### Travel Policy

#### 1. Travel Booking

Travelers are expected to take advantage of the College's negotiated contracts for airfare, hotel, and car rental bookings through the College's travel management service. The travel management service must be used for all travel bookings with limited exceptions, e.g. through conference hotel booking links, or if locations not serviced by the travel management company require local coordinators. Booking personal travel through the College's travel service is not allowed.

#### 2. Methods of Payment

##### i. College Credit Card

- a. Travelers and Travel Coordinators with a college Credit Card must use the card for travel expenses (except per diem allowances). Personal expenses on the college credit card are not allowed. Fraudulent charges need to be reported within 30 days of notice. If fraudulent charges are not reported within 30 days, the cardholder may be responsible for the charge.

##### ii. Personal Funds

- a. Travelers who do not have a college credit card are allowed to use their personal credit card, debit card or cash and request reimbursement from the College. Additionally, Travel Coordinators who have college credit cards are permitted to purchase travel for Travelers without college credit cards (refer to Section 4.ii for more details).

##### iii. Travel Cash Advance

- a. Travelers can apply for a travel cash advance according to the following rules:
- b. A cash advance request must be completed between 10 and 30 days before the start of a trip. The budget officer must authorize the request.
- c. The minimum cash advance that can be requested is \$100. Requests over \$500 must include an itemization with the request.
- d. Only one outstanding cash advance is allowed per person.
- e. A promissory note must be signed before a cash advance request can be processed.
- f. A cash advance must be cleared within 30 days from the trip end date via submission of an expense report with itemized receipts, including the submission of the expense report, and/or the return of unspent cash advance funds to the College. Failure to comply will result in a payroll deduction.

#### 3. Travel Expense Reporting

##### i. Submission

Employees should submit expense reports through the College's automated travel and expense system within 30 days after the trip end date. Expense reports submitted after 30 days are out of compliance. Expense reports submitted after 60 days will be escalated for additional review and may be treated as taxable income (per IRS guidelines). Failure to submit expense reports in a timely manner could also result in the suspension of the employee's college credit card.

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### ii. Receipt Requirements

An itemized receipt is required for all expenses (excluding per diem and personal car mileage). Receipts must show the name of the payee (i.e., vendor name), the amount, the transaction date, and list of products or services purchased. Credit card slips are not acceptable substitutes for receipts.

## 4. Employee Responsibilities

All employees are responsible for ensuring that expenses are charged appropriately and in compliance with the Travel Expense Policy, and that expenses requested are allowable, reasonable, ordinary, and necessary. Employees in these roles are also responsible for the following:

### i. Travelers

- Using a college credit card for travel if the Traveler has one.
- Obtaining an itemized receipt for all expenses incurred and completing their expense report within 30 days.
- Following up with their Expense Reviewer regarding their unreviewed expense reports until reports are reviewed.

### ii. Travel Coordinator

- Assessing economical yet comfortable accommodations that align with a trip or event budget (e.g., College Carpool compared to other transportation).
- Organizing special accommodation for travel, meals, and lodging when needed.
- For Grinnell guests and visitors, coordinating directly with local resources that have special arrangements with the College (e.g., hotel partners).
- Working with group sponsors to plan the least expensive and most practical arrangements for meals.
- Using a college credit card for travel if the Traveler/Travel Coordinator has one.
- Coordinating with Traveler to ensure all required documentation is submitted timely.
- Following up with their Expense Reviewer regarding their unreviewed expense reports until reports are reviewed.

### iii. Expense Reviewer

- Validating the incurred expenses and ensuring the appropriate documentation is attached to the expense report.
- Reviewing the expense report within five business days of receipt by the submitter.

## 5. Air Travel

### i. Airfare

Airfare must be booked through the College's travel management service. Related air travel topics include:

- Airline Credits:** If an airline ticket is purchased and the trip is subsequently canceled, the travel management company will apply the flight credit to future business trips booked by the Traveler. Business flight credits are not to be used for personal trips.

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- b. **Airline Reward Programs:** The College currently participates in the following airline reward programs: United Perks Plus, Delta SkyMiles, Southwest Rapid Rewards, and American Airlines Business ExtrAA. Travelers with reward account information on their travel service profile can apply mileage or rewards earned to personal travel.
- c. **Personal Travel:** If a Traveler plans personal travel around a business trip, (e.g., weekend travel before a conference or extending international travel for sightseeing), they must document at the time of booking the cost of travel with and without the arrangement for personal travel (e.g., a screen shot of comparative ticket prices). The Traveler is responsible for all costs related to personal travel. Failure to provide documentation on the cost breakout of personal versus business travel in the expense report will result in the Business Office estimating the expense of personal travel and adjusting any reimbursement accordingly. Travel expenses associated with family members or other non-College people traveling with you are not reimbursable.
- d. **Special Travel Accommodation:** Special accommodation required for travel due to extenuating circumstances (such as for a medical condition) must be approved by the [Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources](#) in advance of purchase.

### ii. Service Class

- a. Basic Economy is not allowed as it restricts seat selection and does not usually allow for changes or refunds if travel plans shift as a result of schedule changes or emergencies.
- b. Economy Class (or equivalent) is required for continuous flights of less than 7 hours.
- c. Economy Plus (or equivalent) is permitted if booking includes a flight that equals or exceeds 7 hours (flight time without layover).
- d. Business Class (or equivalent) is permitted if booking consists of air travel (flight time and layover) that exceeds 12 hours. In addition, Vice President approval is required prior to travel.
- e. First Class is not eligible for reimbursement.

### iii. Other Airline Reimbursables

- a. Baggage fees are reimbursable as follows:
- b. For standard trips: the baggage fee for one bag is reimbursable.
- c. For trips greater than 21 days and international trips, the baggage fee for up to two bags is reimbursable.
- d. Additional checked bags may be allowed if the Traveler must transport Grinnell College work materials and if the baggage fees are less expensive than shipping costs.
- e. Travel service booking fees are reimbursable and vary by the level of service.
- f. Airline Wi-Fi fees are reimbursable if the Traveler is required to work while on the plane.

## 6. Lodging

The hotel class must be reasonable and appropriate for business purposes and location. Travelers must stay in standard or equivalent rooms. The lodging start date can be up to 24 hours before and after the event for business travel. Lodging costs must be itemized in the expense report. Additional guidance:

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- i. **Cancellation:** If a late hotel arrival is expected, the Traveler is responsible for contacting the hotel in advance to confirm that a late arrival is permissible. The College will not reimburse no-show charges unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- ii. **In-Lieu of Hotel Lodging:** If a Traveler chooses to lodge with a friend or family member instead of staying at a hotel, a reimbursement of up to \$75 per trip for a 'meal or gift in lieu of' hotel costs is permitted. Receipts for the gift or meal expenses must be provided, and a detailed explanation of such items must be included with the expense report. Cash payments, gift cards, or other cash equivalents given to the host are prohibited. The gift or meal must be purchased and presented to the host during the trip.
- iii. **Laundry Service:** Reimbursable after 5 consecutive nights of lodging.
- iv. **Airbnb, VRBO or other Alternative Lodging:** The College prefers that Travelers stay at hotels and other commercial properties since they offer insurance that covers their guests in case of injury or property loss. The type of properties offered via Airbnb and other similar services vary widely in the type of coverage available for guests. Because of this, the College does not recommend the use of alternative lodging (not vetted by the travel management service) for business. Travelers may use services such as Airbnb or VRBO, but the College is not the contracting party for any agreements (electronic or otherwise). If a Traveler chooses to book alternative lodging outside of the travel management service referred partners, the agreement will be between the service provider and the Traveler. The Traveler assumes personal responsibility for any incidents or liability that may occur associated with their use of such services.
- v. **Local Grinnell lodging:** If booking lodging in Grinnell for campus visitors or guest speakers, contact the Procurement Manager for special pricing or arrangements that can be reserved outside of the travel management service.

### 7. Ground Transportation

Ground transportation for College business is reimbursable according to these rules:

- i. **College Carpool:** The College maintains a fleet of cars and vans that can be reserved through Facilities Management (extension 3300) for business purposes. A driver must be an employee of the College, have a valid driver's license and wear a seat belt while operating a College vehicle. All vehicles are covered with collision and liability insurance. Consult the Transportation page on the College's website for specific terms and procedures for use.
- ii. **Taxi and Car Service:** Rideshares (e.g., Uber and Lyft), and taxis are allowable. Car service is allowable in countries where it is the recommended method of transportation to ensure the Traveler's safety. Uber Black (or equivalent) and car rental share (e.g., Turo) are not allowed.
- iii. **Rail (Train) and Buses:** Rail and bus travel is allowed.
- iv. **Personal Vehicle Use and Mileage Reimbursement:** The mileage rate for driving a personal vehicle covers all expenses related to using a privately owned vehicle. The rate will be calculated using the Mileage Calculator in the travel expense system. Traveler must subtract the roundtrip mileage between their home and primary office location (regular commuting mileage) from their total trip mileage. This requirement applies to both office-based and hybrid employees. It is the obligation of the owner of a

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personal vehicle being used for College business to carry adequate insurance for his or her protection and for the protection of any passengers. In the event of an accident, the employee is responsible for his/her own auto insurance deductible. The use of College fleet vehicles is encouraged for trips of longer duration – such as trips exceeding 100 miles round trip.

- v. **Parking:** Parking fees are reimbursable. Travelers are urged to use long-term, lower cost parking lots at the airport whenever possible. Valet parking is reimbursable when other reasonable parking options are not available.
- vi. **Car Rental:** Car rentals should be limited to situations where other means of transportation are not practical, economical, or available. Travelers are encouraged to choose compact or mid-sized cars whenever possible and should be at the lowest available rate per day. Travelers should observe this guidance when renting cars:
  - a. Car rentals must be made in the Traveler's name.
  - b. Travelers must decline additional travel insurance on domestic car rentals since the College's policy covers rental cars.
  - c. Refueling or recharging vehicles is reimbursable when Travelers refuel/recharge before returning the car to the agency. Fuel surcharge fees, resulting from failure to refuel before returning the rental car, are not reimbursable.
  - d. Car rental upgrades, premium radio, navigation, and car seats are not allowable expenses and will not be reimbursed.

### 8. Travel Meals

The following rules apply to meals for travel:

- i. **Per diem for meals and incidentals:** Overnight business trips are subject to a per diem ("daily allowance") for the cost of meals (including gratuity) and incidentals (such as tips for various services). Travelers are not required to submit receipts. Visitors, guests, and students (traveling as groups or at conferences) are not eligible for per diem reimbursement.
  - a. College credit cards should not be used for per diem allowances.
  - b. The College will reimburse the Traveler using standard domestic or international per diem amounts. Domestic per diem rates vary by location and are reimbursed according to the [U.S. General Services Administration \("USGSA"\) rates](#). Meals at international locations are reimbursed using the [U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rates](#).
  - c. Travelers may request partial reimbursement on the first and last days of travel based on their active travel status:
    - i. Per Diem Included for First Day of Travel:
      - Breakfast: When travel begins before 6:00 am
      - Lunch: When travel begins before 12:00 pm
      - Dinner: When travel begins before 6:00 pm
    - ii. Per Diem Included for Last Day of Travel:
      - Breakfast: When the travel extends beyond 8:00 am
      - Lunch: When travel extends beyond 2:00 pm



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- Dinner: When travel extends beyond 8:00 pm
- d. Meals provided or paid for by the College or external parties (e.g., at a conference, professional meeting, or breakfast provided at a hotel) must be reported and will be deducted from per diem reimbursement.
- e. When multiple College employees travel together and meals are eligible for per diem, travelers must pay for their own portion, request separate checks, and claim per diem.
- ii. **Group travel meals with students:** Travel Coordinators should use discretion when planning the location and payment of group meals and consider trip/department budgets and practicality. A group leader must submit claims for reimbursement of expenses paid for on behalf of others (e.g., by credit card or cash advance) and include the names of individuals on whose behalf expenses were incurred, along with an itemization of the expenses, and other pertinent supporting documentation.
  - a. **Per Diem Exception:** Faculty and staff may opt out of per diem for a specific meal if they participate in a group meal that includes students. This exception applies only to that particular meal, not the entire trip. In such cases, faculty and staff must indicate that the meal was provided in the per diem section of the expense report. The submitter must include an itemized receipt and document the purpose of the meal, name of each attendee, and their relationship with the College (for any non-employee participants).
- iii. **Travel business meals** (with non-employees): A travel business meal refers to when a group (at least one Traveler and one non-employee) shares a meal while conducting College business on a trip. Travel business meals may be reimbursable in rare and specific circumstances, such as meetings between Investment Office professionals and investment fund managers, or meetings between Office of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) professionals and potential donors. When requesting reimbursement for a travel business meal, the submitter must include an itemized receipt and document the purpose of the meal, name of each attendee, and their relationship with the College.
  - a. Travel business meals are not permissible when all participants are College employees or non-employees are peers from other colleges.
- iv. **Alcohol for Group and Travel Business Meals:**
  - a. No alcohol may be purchased for students, even if they are of drinking age.
  - b. Alcohol purchases, for non-students, should be reasonable and appropriate.

### 9. Other Travel Expenses

Additional rules surrounding other travel expenses are as follows:

- i. **Cell Phone Charges:** Charges related to traveling internationally are reimbursable with phone bill documentation. Prior to international travel for College business, the temporary activation of an international service plan added to an employee's existing cellular service plan will be reimbursed. Free and available Wi-Fi accessible tools (emails, MS Teams, other ITS-approved software) should be used when possible before incurring charges.
- ii. **Visa and Mandatory Immunization Fees:** Mandatory immunization and visa fees for international College travel are reimbursable, if specifically obtained for a College related trip.

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- iii. **Tips:** Tips for transportation and meals (other than per diem) are reimbursable at the standard 15%-20% with receipt documentation. Any tip over 20% will be a personal expense and will not be reimbursed by the College. Tips for per diem meals are part of the per diem daily allowance and are not an additional reimbursement.
- iv. **Currency Exchange Fees:** The College will reimburse Travelers for currency exchange fees. Travelers must use their college credit card for expenses (excluding per diem), as it offers safe and economical exchange rates.
- v. **ATM Fees:** The College does not recommend carrying substantial amounts of cash while traveling. For international or group travel, using an ATM with a personal debit card is often a good option, as it provides favorable exchange rates and reduces the need for cash. Personal debit card ATM fees for cash withdrawals will be reimbursed only with receipt documentation, and only for international or group travel where cash may be necessary. ATM withdrawals using college credit cards are prohibited.
- vi. **Training and Professional Development Registration Fees:** Expenses for training and professional development will be reimbursed if they are related to the Traveler's primary job at the College and have been approved by their supervisor.
- vii. **Multiple Key Travelers Traveling Together:** Travel by a group of Travelers in the same aircraft, automobile, or other mode of transportation is discouraged when the Travelers' College responsibilities are such that an accident could seriously affect the functioning of the College. Key employees, such as the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, or a substantial number of employees from the same department should consider this risk when making travel arrangements.
- viii. **Rental Car Insurance (for international rentals only).** Travelers should purchase and will be reimbursed for international car insurance.

### 10. Non-Reimbursable Travel Expenses

Certain travel expenses are considered personal in nature and are not reimbursable. These include, **but are not limited to**, the following:

- i. Personal expenses.
- ii. Room upgrades, in-room movies, in-room safe, refrigerator, mini-bar expenses, gym, massage, sauna.
- iii. Costs incurred due to failure to cancel transportation or hotel reservations in a timely manner.
- iv. Insurance on domestic rental cars (Travelers must decline additional travel insurance as the College policy covers rental cars).
- v. First-Class airfare.
- vi. Passport fees.
- vii. Meals, travel or lodging expenses for a spouse, domestic partner, companion, dependents, children, or others not traveling on College business.
- viii. Excess baggage charges for personal items (e.g., golf clubs, skis).
- ix. Charges related to pre-screening or expedited travel (e.g., TSA-PreCheck, CLEAR, Sentri, NEXUS, or equivalent).
- x. Additional costs related to personal entertainment during travel, including golf outings, fun runs, museum tours, spa, movies, fitness center, or health club fees (in and outside of hotel). If such activities are included as part of a conference agenda at no additional cost, then they are permitted.

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- xi. Haircuts, grooming, toiletries, clothing, and other personal care expenses.
- xii. Medical costs, including over the counter or prescription medicine.
- xiii. Fines for vehicle violations (speeding or parking tickets, fees for unpaid tolls, etc.) or for personal misconduct.
- xiv. Personal car repair or maintenance.
- xv. Vehicle towing due to traffic/parking violations (regardless of whether it is personal or College vehicle).
- xvi. Gasoline, if mileage reimbursement is used.
- xvii. Lost, damaged or stolen individual property (including cash and luggage).
- xviii. Insurance: Life, flight, baggage, or any other forms of travel insurance.
- xix. Mobile phone accessories (chargers, power cords, cases, etc.)

### Compliance

Compliance with this policy includes adherence to any related policies and appendices, which together form a framework designed to support our shared responsibilities and ensure access to the benefits this policy provides to the campus community. Non-compliance is subject to the terms outlined in the faculty, staff, and student handbooks and related policies, as applicable.

Violations of the Travel Expense Policy may result in:

- i. Denial of reimbursement.
- ii. Recoupment of non-reimbursable expenses from the Traveler through payroll deduction or a check written to the College.
- iii. Disciplinary actions as per the College's policies and handbooks.
- iv. Potential revocation of the Traveler's college credit card.

### Summary of Changes

The revised policy provides more detailed guidance on travel coordination, allowable travel-related expenses, employee responsibilities, and expense reporting. Key changes include using the College's travel management partner for air travel, ground transportation and lodging; new guidelines on class of air travel and lodging choices, a per diem allowance to cover meals and incidentals for trips involving an overnight stay, and deduction of regular commuting miles from personal vehicle mileage.

### Related Policies

[BUS-400-P](#) [Non-Travel Meals, Food and Hospitality Policy](#)

### Appendices and References

<u>Document ID</u>	<u>Title</u>
BUS-100-T01	<a href="#">General Business Office Definitions</a>
NA	<a href="#">Travel Policy Frequently Asked Questions</a>