



**TO:** All Employees

**FROM:** Radenka Maric, President  
Anne D'Alleva, Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

**DATE:** July 10, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Guidance on Essential University Travel

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As outlined in the [recent message regarding the FY 2026 budget](#), the University is facing serious and persistent budget constraints that will require ongoing discipline in how we allocate resources. One of the immediate areas for cost containment is travel.

While we continue to support the important work of our faculty and staff, we must significantly reduce discretionary travel and focus only on what is mission-critical. To that end, we are issuing this guidance to clarify what constitutes **essential** travel.

This guidance supplements our existing [Travel and Entertainment Policy](#) and applies to all faculty, staff, and students. Pre-approval through Concur remains a requirement. Travel requests should be submitted with sufficient time for direct supervisors and fiscal officers to review the request. Reimbursement for travel expenses is contingent upon pre-approval, and failure to follow appropriate procedures may mean that the University will not reimburse travel expenses. Please note this guidance may evolve as we continue to review and update our travel policies and procedures as well as evaluate the university's financial outlook.

*Please note, additional review is required for high-risk travel, including travel to countries with restrictions that require review by [Export Control](#).*

**General Expectations:**

We recognize that travel is vital for the purpose of research, scholarly engagement, professional development and other necessary functions of the University. These guidelines are intended to balance academic and professional priorities with responsible stewardship of university resources. All travelers should approach university travel with a mindset of necessity and value. As a baseline, it is expected that:

- Travelers and units will seek the most cost-effective options for transportation, lodging, and registration and avoid higher-cost travel even when it is more convenient. Keep in mind that ground transportation will often be more economical within 200 miles.

- Virtual attendance is always the first option considered when available, especially for conferences, meetings, or training.
- Travelers should be judicious in both the frequency and duration of travel. Stay only as long as needed or required. Plan itineraries to minimize hotel nights and per diem costs by scheduling travel efficiently.
- Travel to higher education conferences must be purposeful and limited. Where multiple individuals are invited or interested in the same event, wherever possible, we will send only one delegate, with the expectation they will share key takeaways with colleagues. The Provost's Office will oversee travel to conferences such as NECHE, AAC&U and APLU for which we normally allow multiple attendees. For conferences related to academic disciplines, please see the below guidance under essential or allowable travel.
- Approach meal spending with the same sense of fiscal responsibility guiding all other aspects of university travel. If meals are provided as part of a conference or meeting, they must be excluded from per diem calculations.
- The University expects economy flights to be used by all travelers. For flight segments over 8 hours, the University may support an exception for extended leg room or other options within the economy flight class. First class flights are never allowable.
- The traveler ensures the account they'll be using to cover the travel expense has the funds available to do so and must verify with their department before requesting or booking travel

#### **What Qualifies as Essential Travel:**

- Required to fulfill terms of a grant or contract, or to meet accreditation requirements  
Travel is allowable when it is specifically required to carry out the activities of a funded grant or sponsored project, or to meet obligations set by an accreditation or compliance body, and when those activities cannot reasonably be completed virtually.
- Invited speaker, plenary or keynote roles  
The traveler has received a formal invitation to serve as an invited, keynote, or panel speaker, plenary presenter, or honoree at a professional event of clear reputational value to the university.
- Presentation of Research/Scholarship at Disciplinary Conference  
Researchers are expected to limit their attendance to the most impactful conferences advancing research/scholarship each fiscal year regardless of fund source. Although in general the university recognizes the value of attending conferences in broad support of scholarship and professional networking, for FY26, researchers must be formally presenting their work at the conferences they attend (e.g., speaker, panelist, poster session, presentation of paper) unless fully funded by AAUP professional development funds. International conference travel limited to no more than two trips per fiscal year unless fully funded by a grant or other external source.

- **Research, Fieldwork, or Data Collection**  
Travel to access physical archives, conduct in-person interviews or investigations, perform site-specific fieldwork, or use specialized facilities or equipment unavailable remotely, and is essential to the timely completion of the traveler's scholarly or creative project when no viable virtual alternative exists.
- **Critical University Function**  
The travel directly supports essential university operations (e.g., legal obligations, donor engagement, recruitment of students or faculty, visit to instructional site or other service learning/experiential learning requirements) and there is no viable remote or local alternative.
- **Credentialing or Licensure**  
The travel is required to maintain a license or professional certification necessary for the employee's role, and the requirement cannot be fulfilled remotely.

**Non-Essential but Allowable Travel:**

Travel fully funded by external entities or AAUP/UCPEA professional development funds is allowable, but must follow the expectations of the travel policy and utilize the most cost-effective modes of transportation, as outlined in the general expectations.

**What Does *Not* Qualify (unless externally funded):**

- Attendance at conferences solely for professional development or networking, except for when fully funded by contractually bargained funds including AAUP and UCPEA professional development funds as noted above.
- Participation in advisory or governance roles where virtual options are available.
- Travel where a remote or hybrid participation option exists.
- Vague or speculative periods of research travel without clear itinerary and intended outcomes.
- Travel for guests without clear justification on how this guest travel meets standards outlined above for essential travel.
- Off-site meetings for UConn employees. Please note that the University does **not** support off-campus retreats.

**Required Standards for Travel Requests:**

To support consistent review, please include a short justification in your Concur Travel Request that states how the request meets the standard for essential travel. Supervisors must ensure that each approved travel request contains appropriate justification aligned with these guidelines.

Examples:

- *“Presenting federally funded research at [conference name] as specified in [name of externally funded project] project budget.”*
- *“Invited keynote speaker at the [conference name]] – one of three speakers, invitation letter attached.”*
- *“Representing the University at the X national convention for the purposes of recruiting students to the program.”*

Where the trip will be more than 10 days during the academic year, or where there are any complex travel arrangements (e.g., multi-destination trips, unusual costs tied to the research, or multiple travelers on a single request), travel requests must include a document with a clear explanation of the travel, an itinerary with a justification for each location, details and affiliation of all travelers, and any other information relevant to atypical costs (e.g. a location only accessible by car service, which is typically not allowed). If this information has already been provided in a budget approved through Sponsored Program Services, the request can simply note this fact.

For any travel requests, documentation is always helpful and encouraged as it ensures approvers have something to verify against with regard to travel dates, trip purpose, meals provided, etc.

### **For Travel Request Approvers**

It is essential that all employees who have a role in approving travel are clear on the nature of the trip and are confident that it meets the requirements for essential travel laid out in this guideline. Supervisors are generally the best qualified to evaluate the essential nature of travel in relation to the traveler’s UConn role. Approver due diligence ensures travelers will receive reimbursement for expenses as outlined in their initial request. Questions regarding the appropriateness of an individual’s travel should route through their supervisory chain.

General questions about travel, including the University Travel and Entertainment Policy and use of cost-effective travel options, can be sent to University Travel ([travel@uconn.edu](mailto:travel@uconn.edu)).

Questions specific to this essential travel guideline can be sent to [provost@uconn.edu](mailto:provost@uconn.edu) or [president@uconn.edu](mailto:president@uconn.edu).