

STATEMENT OF PREFERRED TRAVEL AGENCY SERVICES AND TRAVEL SERVICES CONTRACT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

(Revised 04/04/2002)

All airfare reservations initiated on or after August 24, 1998, for employees based in Alachua County, must be made through one of the Preferred Travel Agencies. The current Preferred Travel Agencies are as follows:

AAA Travel Agency (including House of Travel)
Air Express
Carlson Wagonlit Travel
Charlotte Travel Agency, Inc. (FKA) Travel Centre of Gainesville
Continental Capers Travel Center, Inc.
Crystal Travel, Inc.
Holbrook Travel
Travel Centre of Gainesville
Lorraine Travel
STA Travel
World Class Travel
Wright Travel

The original announcement of the contracts and the University Travel Policy, Office of the Vice President, Administrative Affairs Memorandum No. 179, July 9, 1998, may be accessed at

<http://www.admin.ufl.edu/ddd/dddlist.htm>. The University Travel Services Website may be accessed at <http://www.admin.ufl.edu/division/fa/disb/dmenu.htm>.

PREFERRED AGENCY SERVICES

Each Preferred Travel Agency will provide the following services to University travelers:

- A. **Lowest Possible Fare.** The preferred agencies will provide airfare quotations that are guaranteed to be the lowest fare available at the time of quotation. The lowest fare will be determined by reviewing certain options. At a minimum, the agents will look at departure from cities other than Gainesville, including but not limited to, Jacksonville, Orlando, and Tampa. In addition they will look for companion fares and senior citizen discounts.

The agents will also price fares for any flights within a four-hour window of the estimated departure time.

It is important to note that the travel agency has no way to protect a fare when quoted. They can only protect the fare by generating the ticket. So in comparing fares that may be quoted to you at a later time, please be aware that a fare is for that specific flight and is a fare available at the specific time of the original quote.

- B. **Re-ticket Option for Lower Fares.** The preferred agencies have guaranteed that they will monitor fares to within 24 hours of departure. They have each guaranteed that the lowest fare search will be conducted through electronic automated methods that allow for continuous checking and rechecking. If a lower fare is found, they will notify the traveler for re-ticketing. The preferred agencies will reissue tickets with no added agency service charge to the University. However, if the original ticket had reissue penalties or if the carrier requires change or cancellation fees those may be charged to the University. The State Comptroller will allow payment of carrier reissue charges. As a result, when you are making the decision of whether to have the agency reissue the ticket, you will always need to take those costs into consideration. Ask your travel agent and they will be able to tell you if any airline charges will be added. If it is determined that a University traveler was eligible for a lower fare within the established times and was not offered that fare, the preferred agencies will pay the difference to the University, even if the travel has already occurred.
- C. **Electronic Reservation Systems.** A minimum requirement for qualification as a Preferred Agency is the

utilization of a computer reservation system with the capability of making reservations with all major airlines.

- D. Daily Ticket Delivery. The preferred agencies have agreed to deliver tickets, itineraries, and boarding passes on a daily basis (Monday through Friday) during normal business hours. In addition, the agencies have agreed to make provision for providing emergency ticket delivery service, when possible and reasonable.
- E. Remote Priority Ticket Delivery Service. If the agencies do business with remote locations, they have agreed to deliver tickets through a priority delivery service in order to ensure prompt and reliable service.
- F. 24/7 Year-round Agent Availability. Preferred agencies have agreed to provide a telephone access system staffed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, year round. A qualified agent who can access the traveler's records must staff the system. This will allow travelers to make changes or access information during their trips and receive emergency assistance when needed.
- G. Car Rental Reservations. The preferred agencies will arrange car rental reservations as requested by travelers. They will first attempt to utilize the Avis contract. If a rental car is not available through the contract, they will then seek the most favorable rate available otherwise. The agencies will provide justification if they upgrade a vehicle or if they do not use the contract vendor. Please note that the agents will check availability and make reservations for you. **ALL PROCEDURES FOR SECURING AND USING AVIS ACTOs REMAIN THE SAME.**
- H. Hotel Reservations. The preferred agencies will, if requested, arrange hotel accommodations and will take advantage of any discounts or special rates available, such as State, University, convention, or special travel agency rates.
- I. Conferences. The preferred agencies will, if requested, negotiate special rates for conferences sponsored by the University.
- J. Quality Assurance. The preferred agencies have committed that they will provide sufficient well-trained and professional staff to allow University travelers to receive excellent service with minimal delays, as well as sufficient telephone lines to ensure prompt service and minimize busy signals.

COMMISSIONS

The agencies have agreed to pay the University a commission on all University Business Travel. The University will receive commissions based on the volume of business for tickets issued for "business travel". Business travel consists of travel funded by University and University-related funds. Travel funded by outside entities for purposes of visiting professor lectures, consultations, site inspections and any other responsibilities that could be considered as part of an employee's assigned duties is also considered as "business travel". In addition, commissions will be paid on tickets issued to persons who accompany our "business travelers". The College/administrative unit whose employees generated the travel and commission will receive that commission. These commissions will be distributed on an annual basis.

Commissions will be based on the annual volume of business each agency does with the University, calculated using a specific structure. The commissions will be returned to each college, based upon the contribution that college makes to the volume of business with the agency paying the commission. Please note that this constitutes a return of funds to the University, not additional costs to the University.

POLICY

All airfare reservations for employees based in Alachua County, must be made through one of the Preferred Travel Agencies. The contract applies to all University funded travel. That includes travel paid directly by the University as well as travel paid for by the traveler and reimbursed by the University. Generally, it applies to travel for all employees, students and visitors. The University will not make payment to any travel agency which has not received the Preferred designation, or reimburse an employee or student for payments made to an agency which is not a preferred agency.

Exceptions

There are special circumstances that might occasionally occur whereby an exception can be granted to use an agency /airline agent other than a preferred agency. They are as follows:

- A. Headquarters outside Alachua County. For those locations outside Alachua County the use of the Preferred Agencies is not mandatory. They are however welcome to use the Preferred Agencies and, as noted earlier, it is required that the agencies provide prompt reliable service if they accept business from these locations.
- B. Senior citizen fares offered directly by an airline resulting in a fare that is lower than a published fare available to the Preferred Agencies. Although this is listed as an exception, please check with your agency to make sure they cannot obtain these discounts for you. The exception applies only if the discount cannot be obtained through a Preferred Agency.
- C. Consolidator fares offered by another agency that results in a fare lower than a published fare available to a Preferred Agency. A travel agency may purchase blocks of seats and then offer them to customers at a reduced rate. This is generally found in the area of international travel and may provide substantial discounts. As noted above, this will constitute an exception if a savings results that is not otherwise available through one of the Preferred Agencies.
- D. Granting Agency Mandate. If travel is paid from funds controlled by a granting agency and use of a specific travel agency is mandated for travel arrangements, the travel will be excepted from the contract requirements. However, this must be the mandate of the agency and proof of such restrictions is required.
- E. Travel packages (which include airfare, hotel accommodations, meals, registration, etc. in price of conference) offered by institutions for conferences that result in a fare lower than a published fare available to a preferred agency. In addition, if travel packages and tours are arranged by the University and they require specialized assistance or services not available through one of the Preferred Agencies, this will qualify as an exception.
- F. Visitor Arranged. If travel arrangements are locally made for a visitor they should be through a preferred agency. However, if a visitor, for convenience or other reasons, prefers to make their own travel arrangements, the travel will fall under the exception category and will be reimbursed.
- G. Special circumstances that may require request for exception from the policy. These requests will be considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the Vice President of Administrative Affairs or designee.

Documentation of Exceptions

Documentation of circumstances surrounding an exception to the travel policy must be provided in sufficient detail and time to permit an administrative review of the reasons why a preferred agency was not utilized. The amount and detail of documentation will be dictated by the circumstances. For example, the exception for visitors and for travel from headquarter locations outside of Gainesville is documented by information already required on the Voucher for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses. Senior citizen discounts only available directly from the airline may be substantiated through copies of airline policy to that effect. Consolidator fares and package tours may be documented by the vendor and may be further substantiated by written statements from one of the Preferred Agencies that such fares or service were requested and were not available through that agency.

Prior approval for special circumstances is strongly recommended and may require more extensive documentation in order to fully explain the request for exception. If there are any doubts as to whether travel qualifies for an exception to the University policy, the best course of action is to contact your appropriate travel office prior to committing funds for the travel. All requests for exception to the policy should be submitted to one of the appropriate Travel Offices: University Travel Services, IFAS Travel, or Engineering Travel.

MANAGEMENT REPORTS

The Preferred Travel Agencies will prepare monthly management reports. These reports will be distributed to each Colleges/administrative unit. Reports will itemize the travel performed by each person and indicate if the traveler chose to utilize the lowest fare available; or if not, the reason for selecting a more expensive fare. It is important to note that these reports are intended strictly as a management tool for each college or administrative unit. For example, although the lowest fare must be offered, it is recognized that teaching and meeting schedules as well as other commitments may not always allow the traveler to take advantage of that fare. The reports will provide you with summary information regarding travel for your college or unit and should offer an excellent tool for budget planning and for evaluating the performance of your selected Preferred Travel Agency.

Sorting by Authority Codes

The Management Reports will be sorted by Authority Code and page breaks will be included at the department level to allow for further distribution if the college or unit elects to do so. It is critical that you provide an Authority Code to your travel agent for each of your travelers. Based on the Authority Codes you provide for each traveler, that person's travel will appear under that code for the Management Reports. In addition, the Authority Code will be utilized to allocate commissions.

The simplest method will be to provide your Preferred Travel Agency with an authority code for each Traveler's Profile. Once entered into the profile the travel agent will already have the information each time that individual travels. If you are not familiar with the Authority Codes your budget officer or payroll administrator should be able to assist you. These codes are currently utilized in both the Budget (Managing Your Money) and Payroll/Personnel systems. They are designed to represent the organizational structure of each college or administrative unit. A list of existing Authority Codes is available at <http://www.is.ufl.edu/documentation/authcode.htm>.

DINER'S CLUB GHOST CARD

A "Ghost" Card has been issued through the Diner's Club for use in booking University funded AIRLINE FARES ONLY. The "Ghost" Card can be utilized to eliminate the need for the traveler to charge airline fares to his/her personal credit card. Additional benefits provided by the Ghost Card include:

	Domestic	International
Common Carrier Accident Insurance:	\$200,000	\$500,000
Checked or Carry-on Baggage Insurance:	\$ 1,250	\$ 2,000

The ghost card is not an actual card. It is an account with the Preferred Travel Agency that allows you to charge the airfare directly to the University of Florida. Diners Club has established three accounts with each of the preferred Agencies. The accounts are General Campus, IFAS, and Engineering. When arranging travel with your Preferred Travel Agency, please let them know which account is appropriate for your travel.

A traveler may continue to pay the Preferred Travel Agency by charging the expense on his/her personal credit card if he/she so chooses.

Guidelines for Using the Ghost Card

The following rules apply to use of the "Ghost" card:

- A. YOU MAY NOT CHARGE AIRLINE FEES TO THE "GHOST" CARD IF MONIES OTHER THAN UNIVERSITY SOURCES ARE TO FUND THESE EXPENSES. For example, if a professional association will be reimbursing your airfare for travel to a conference at which you will be a speaker, the ghost card may not be used.
- B. Airline fees to be reimbursed by "University-related funds" (University of Florida Foundation, Research Foundation, College Practice Plan (such as the FCPA), etc.) CANNOT be charged to the "Ghost" card as Finance and Accounting cannot allocate these charges back to the Foundations or the College Practice Plan

(such as the FCPA).

- C. The Preferred Travel Agency must have an approved TAR (TRRIPS or paper) prior to issuance of tickets for which fares will be charged to the "ghost" card. The old "TR" has been replaced by this approved "TAR". This may be submitted electronically through the TRRIPS (Travel Request and Reimbursement Information Processing System). When Preparing a TAR, TRRIPS will provide a drop-down box that will allow you to click on your Preferred Travel Agency. This will automatically route the TAR to that travel agency after all approvals are completed. PLEASE NOTE: SUBMISSION OF A TAR TO THE TRAVEL AGENCY IS A COMMITMENT THAT SUFFICIENT FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE TO PAY THE AIRFARE. IF, AT THE TIME OF PAYMENT TO DINERS CLUB, THE FUNDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN THE ORIGINAL ACCOUNT, AN ACCOUNT MUST BE PROVIDED TO CHARGE THE PAYMENT.

Please contact Tonji Herbert, University Travel Services, at 392-2386 if you would like to be scheduled for future TRRIPS Training Workshops.

- D. No first class tickets are to be charged to the "Ghost" card. If the traveler requests a first class ticket, the traveler must personally pay the difference between the lowest tourist fare and the price of the ticket.
- E. If traveler is paying a higher price for his/her ticket in order to upgrade a ticket in accordance with a frequent flyer coupon, THE INCREASED AMOUNT MUST BE PAID PERSONALLY BY TRAVELER.
- F. Tickets issued for companion fares can be charged to the "Ghost" card only if the companion is a University employee traveling to the same destination. If the companion is not a University employee and the cost of the ticket is higher than it would be if only one person is-traveling, then the traveler must pay the difference between what the fare would be if they were traveling alone and the amount of the companion fare.

Distribution Procedures for Travel Authorization Request (TAR)

As stated previously, the signed copy of the Travel Authorization Request (or the electronic approval) will now function as the old "TR". The preferred Travel Agencies WILL NOT issue an airline ticket that is to be charged to the "Ghost" card until they have received the appropriate approval. If using TRRIPS, you will have requested the necessary approvals electronically and, therefore, the appropriate distributions are completed. If using the paper version, the original (white copy) copy of the TAR must be sent to University Travel Services, IFAS Travel, or Engineering Travel to encumber the funds. The green and yellow copies of the TAR must be sent to the Preferred Travel Agency that is ticketing your airfare. If the price of the ticket is greater than the amount indicated on the TAR for airfare expense, the agency will still issue the ticket provided the amount of the total TAR is large enough to cover the price of the airfare.

Rental Cars

Vouchers (Avis ACTOs) for rental cars can still be obtained through the current process. As noted in the discussion of Services, the Preferred Travel Agency can reserve a car for you or the traveler may reserve a car directly with Avis (state contract).

Blanket Encumbrances

Blankets may continue to be used as in the past provided you are not using TRRIPS. Before the Preferred Travel Agency can issue the tickets, however, they must have an approved copy of the Travel Authorization Request and list of authorized travelers.

SIGNATURES AND APPROVALS

- A. Contracts and Grants. If travel is to be funded from a contract or grant, the TAR must be signed by Contracts and Grants. If using TRRIPS, a request for approval can be sent to Contracts and Grants as part of the process. If using a paper version, departments should continue to obtain approval from Contracts and Grants as they have in the past (walk through or routine mail). Contracts and Grants will return all copies of the Travel Authorization Request to the department for distribution to the Preferred Travel Agency.

- B. Non-resident Aliens. If traveler is a non-resident alien (person coming to United States for brief visit and does not have a social security number), the Travel Authorization Request must be approved by Finance and Accounting (Travel Desk) prior to an airline ticket being issued and the TAR being distributed to the various areas. PLEASE NOTE: AEF funds CANNOT be used for this type of travel.
- C. Student Travel. Departments are responsible for monitoring travel performed by students to ensure the travel is not specifically for dissertations or other study-related matters of the student.
- D. Certification of Funding. As noted above, the dean, department chairman or director, when approving the Travel Authorization Request, will be attesting that there were funds available in the account at the time of signature and that, in any event, the department will be responsible for payment.

CHECKLIST

The following are some suggestions for what your Department should do to use the Travel Services Contract.

- A. Select Preferred Travel Agency(s).
- B. Determine Authority Code to associate with each traveler and provide to Preferred Travel Agency(s) along with any other traveler profile information you may wish to provide.
- C. When reserving airline tickets, tell your Preferred Travel Agency if they should charge the General Campus, IFAS or Engineering Diners Ghost Card Account.
- D. Make sure all travelers are aware of the University Travel Policy.
- E. Sign up for TRRIPS training if needed.
- F. Visit the University Travel Website <http://www.admin.ufl.edu/division/fa/disb/dmenu.htm>.
- G. Call us if you have questions!

Monica Thames-Lamar, University Travel Services, 392-1245, ext.204
Judy Futch, IFAS Travel, 392-2797
Susan Luther, Engineering Travel, 392-5891

[Back](#) to No. 99-06, University of Florida Travel Services Contracts memo.