SUBJECT: NEW Air Travel Policy, Effective July 1, 2013

As you may know, 2011 Wisconsin Act 32 authorized the UW Board of Regents to design a UW System-wide travel program, effective July 1, 2013, that better meets the needs of higher education business travel. This memo is being sent to inform all faculty and staff of a new air travel policy that has been developed under this new authority.

The objective of the UW System’s travel program is to balance the needs of those who travel on university-paid business with the containment of travel costs. By consolidating System-wide volume, the UW System can leverage the approximately $90 million spent annually on travel, including $25 million on airfare alone. Airline and lodging providers require a consolidation of booking channels and travel processes in order to access discount programs and services. It is extremely important that we leverage such supplier discounts, as those savings will be used to offset anticipated future increases in travel rates for meals, lodging, and mileage.

The Board of Regents approved Regent Policy Document (RPD) [21-5](http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/rpd21-5.htm), *University Travel Policies*, which outline the general framework for the UW System managed travel program. Guiding principles include meeting the needs, comfort, and security of travelers; consolidating volume to leverage supplier discounts; obtaining technical and administrative efficiencies; and containing costs. Operating travel policies and procedures that fit within this Regent policy will be developed through the internal governance structure that has been created.

The first such operating policy to be developed, vetted through the governance structure, and finalized is the policy entitled *Booking and Payment of Business Air Travel*. This policy, which is enclosed for reference, will become effective July 1, 2013, and is consistent with the framework of RPD 21-5. Key points within the policy include the following:

* Airline reservations must be booked through the contracted self-booking tool or contracted agency if the travel is individual domestic or non-complex international airfare.
* People traveling on university-paid business are allowed to use a non-contracted travel agency that best meets their needs for multi-destination international travel and group travel. However, use of the UW System’s contracted travel agency is recommended in these instances since it will allow UW institutions to further consolidate and leverage their volume.
* Airfare may be procured with University purchasing cards approved for travel or corporate travel cards, as these mechanisms generate rebates, thereby increasing our travel savings.

The current contracted self-booking tool, known as Concur, can be accessed by logging into the UW System-wide Travel Services website (<http://web.uwsa.edu/travel/>) and registering, if you have not already done so. The self-booking tool and registration process are similar to other self-booking websites, such as Expedia or an airline website, but do differ in some ways to incorporate UW business rules and enhanced reporting capabilities, such as the ability to track unused tickets.

As previously noted, it is the UW System’s desire to raise travel-related payment or reimbursement rates. However, to be consistent with the cost containment principle noted in the Regent policy, the related cost increases must be offset with savings obtained through other means. Peer institutions have realized such savings by leveraging their volume and obtaining supplier discounts of 20-25% and service enhancements. The UW System has already garnered 2-5% seat discounts from major airlines serving Wisconsin.

If you would like additional information regarding the new air travel policy or the UW System’s managed travel program, please contact the UW-Whitewater Travel Office (472-3912 or travel@uww.edu); Terri Gill, UW System Travel Manager (608-263-0873 or tgill@uwsa.edu); or Julie Gordon, UW System Associate Vice-President for Financial Administration (608-262-1803 or jgordon@uwsa.edu). In addition, please refer to a new System-wide travel portal (<http://web.uwsa.edu/travel/>) that will be a one-stop shop for traveler resources including industry information, discount agreements and contracts, policies, and new business processes.