

Handbook of Operating Procedures

STUDENT TRAVEL

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set forth The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) rules and procedures regarding student and pre-college University program participant travel and to comply with The University of Texas System policy and state law (Texas Education Code, §51.950) relating to student travel.

B. Persons Affected

UTRGV students and pre-college University program participants.

C. Definitions

1. Appropriate Administrator – a Dean, Department Chair, or Director of an administrative unit, or their delegate.
2. Organized Event – event that is initiated, planned and arranged by a member of the UTRGV's faculty or staff, or by the members of a registered student organization, and is approved by an appropriate administrator.
3. Sponsored Event/Activity – event or activity that the UTRGV endorses by supporting it financially, or by sending students to participate in it as official representatives of UTRGV.

D. Policy

It is the policy of UTRGV to promote the safe travel of students and pre-college University program participants. Accordingly, travel to an organized or sponsored event by a student(s) or pre-college University program participant(s) and located more than 25 miles from the UTRGV campus from which the travel originated, must be approved and comply with the requirements of this policy.

Examples of UTRGV student travel include, but are not limited to, class field trips; attendance at scholarly or professional conferences; university-funded student organization travel; class trips for educational or cultural enrichment; athletic, student publication, dramatic, music, or forensic competition or performances; and student leadership conferences.

Examples of student travel this policy does not apply to include travel undertaken by a student not associated with the athletic team to attend an out of town athletic event, and travel undertaken by a student to engage in class assignments, student-teaching, internships, practicums, observations or research.

E. Procedures

1. *Registration and Prior Approval:*

Each participant in student and pre-college University program travel, as described above, must be registered with the Office of the Dean of Students at least **two weeks** prior to the trip, in accordance with procedures established by that office. The Dean of Students or his or her designee must approve all student travel prior to the date of travel in order for the trip to proceed.

A faculty member supervising a student(s) and sponsoring student travel in connection with the faculty member's UTRGV work is responsible for ensuring that the student(s) registers, obtains prior approval for travel and is informed of travel rules and regulations.

2. *Safety and Mode of Travel:*

a. All Motor Vehicle Travel

i. Seat Belts

Occupants of motor vehicles shall use seat belts or other approved safety restraint devices, required by law or regulation, at all times when the vehicle is in operation. The number of occupants in a vehicle cannot exceed the number of working seatbelts in the vehicle.

ii. Alcohol , Tobacco Use, and Illegal Substance Prohibited

Occupants of motor vehicles shall not consume, possess, or transport, any alcoholic beverages or illegal substances. Operators shall not drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol; this includes over the counter or prescription medication that may impair the driver's ability. In compliance with UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 04-108, the use of all tobacco substances, including evaporator E cigarettes, is prohibited in all UTRGV vehicles.

iii. Passenger Capacity

The total number of passengers in any vehicle at any time it is in operation shall not exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity or the number specified in applicable federal or State law or regulations, whichever is lower. Twelve and fifteen -passenger vans shall not be used to carry more than nine occupants (including the driver) at any one time. Consideration should be given to decreasing the number of passengers if luggage is to be transported in the same vehicle; luggage should be stored under seats or in the rear storage area and in a manner that does not obstruct the view of the driver.

iv. License and Training

Each operator of a motor vehicle shall have a valid operator's license, be at least 18 years of age, be trained as required by law to drive the vehicle that will be used, and comply with applicable requirements of the UT System Administration Policy [UTS157](#), Automobile Insurance Coverage for Officers and Employees and General Requirements for the Use of Vehicles. Persons who drive a 12 or 15 passenger van must successfully complete a van driving training course at least once every three years. Van driving training is available through the Department of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management.

v. Proof of Insurance, Inspection, and Safety Devices

Each motor vehicle to which this policy applies must have a current proof of liability insurance card and display a current State inspection certificate, be equipped with all safety devices or equipment required by federal or state law or regulation, and comply with all other applicable requirements of federal or state law or regulations and any applicable UTRGV or UT System policy.

vi. Legal Operation of Vehicle and Driving Schedule

Operators of motor vehicles shall comply with all laws, regulations, and posted signs regarding speed and traffic control and shall not operate the vehicle for a continuous period that is longer than the maximum provided by guidelines promulgated by federal or state law or regulations or guidelines promulgated by the university, whichever is lower, without scheduled rest stops or overnight stops. A driver may not drive longer than four continuous hours without a scheduled rest stop. The rest stop must last a minimum of 30 minutes before that same driver may resume driving. Total driving time within a 24-hour period may not exceed eight hours per authorized driver. Driving shall not occur between the hours of 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM without prior approval from Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management.

b. Travel Using a Vehicle Owned, Rented, or Leased by the University

i. Service and Maintenance

In addition to those provisions in subsection E.4 each vehicle owned or leased by the University must be subject to scheduled periodic service and maintenance by qualified persons and comply with all applicable requirements of [UTS 157](#), Automobile Insurance Coverage for Officers and Employees and General Requirements for the Use of Vehicles.

ii. Operators of Vehicles

All operators of vehicles owned, or leased by UTRGV shall be employees of the University and be an approved driver. An approved driver shall have a valid

operator's license for the operation of the particular vehicle and shall have a current Motor Vehicle Record on file with the University Physical Plant. Drivers must have a rating of three points or less for the preceding 36 months, as required by [UTS 157](#).

iii. Travel by Common Carrier

When a common carrier is used for student travel covered by this policy, the University shall take reasonable steps to assure the travel is undertaken in conformance with this policy. Common carriers utilized to transport students must have the minimum UT System insurance requirements for the specific vehicle used to transport students.

iv. Rental Vehicles

All vehicles are required to be rented through the UTRGV Travel Office. All drivers of rental vehicles must be listed on the vehicle rental agreement.

c. Travel Using a Personal or Privately Owned Vehicle

- i. The use of personal vehicles by students for travel to events covered by this policy is strongly discouraged. However, students who use their own vehicle or another privately owned vehicle for approved travel are expected to follow all safety requirements set out in this policy.
- ii. The student's personal auto insurance will be primary at all times when the student uses their vehicle for university travel.

3. *Business Procedures Memorandum:*

For additional information regarding insurance, safety, and mode of travel, refer to the UT System Administration Policy, [UTS 157](#).

4. *Coordination of Travel:*

- a. Each group must designate a travel coordinator, who is responsible for submission of all travel documents, as well as for carrying all necessary documents on the trip.
- b. When possible, the advisor or group sponsor should travel with the group and serve as travel coordinator.
- c. In case of accident, the travel coordinator or designee will contact the UTRGV Police Department, who will notify appropriate personnel. All students involved in a vehicle accident are required to visit Student Health Services upon their return to UTRGV regardless of the extent of any injury incurred. Pre-college University program participants that are not enrolled at UTRGV are not eligible for medical care at Student Health Services, but must follow all requirements of their particular program.

- d. Prior to leaving, each group must receive a pre-trip orientation, which will include:
 - i. Applicable rules of conduct as per UTRGV's Student Conduct Code and this Student Travel Policy;
 - ii. Itinerary and contact information;
 - iii. Safety issues while traveling and while at the destination point.
- e. Parents or guardians of participants of any pre-college University program will receive pre-trip orientation information as per the program's guidelines.
- f. All students who travel with a group are required to stay with that group throughout the duration of the trip. Pre-college University program participants who are not enrolled as students at UTRGV must abide by the policy and procedures of their respective program.

F. Relevant Federal and/or State Statute(s), Board of Regents' Rule(s), UTS Policy(ies), and/or Coordinating Board Rule(s)

University of Texas System Administration Policy [UTS 157](#), Automobile Insurance Coverage for Officers and Employees and General Requirements for the Use of Vehicles

[University of Texas System Regents' Rules and Regulations Rule 50601, Student Travel](#)

[Texas Education Code Section 51.950, Policy Regulating Student Travel](#)

G. Dates Reviewed or Amended

May 13, 2022 - Reviewed and amended (non-substantive: updated responsible executive).