Departmental Policy on Annual Travel Budgeting

May 2013

Every tenured/tenure-track faculty member desiring to travel on Official Department Business (ODB), may, upon submission of a written request to the Chair, reasonably expect to be reimbursed for a portion of the expenses incurred as a result of such travel.

Definition of “Annual”: determined by the Chair, normally Fiscal Year.

Definition of “ODB”: the presentation of teaching/research/outreach related material that is consistent with the nature of the applicant's appointment and the mission of the Department. Attendance at important meetings may also qualify if it can be demonstrated that a substantial enhancement of the individual's career and/or Department mission will result. Examples: presentation of papers at meetings, invited colloquia, attendance at a workshop where new skills will be acquired.

In order to finance such travel, the Chair will set aside an Annual Travel Budget (ATB). Based on the size of the ATB (which may oscillate annually), individual requests will normally be capped at a specified amount. Although a suggested cap is $2,000, this figure will be determined by the Chair depending on the anticipated size of the ATB in any given year. Individuals may not reasonably expect to be reimbursed for annual travel expenses that sum to an amount in excess of this cap.

If applicable, individuals shall first exhaust their SPONSORED travel funds (grants, startup, etc.) before requesting funds from the ATB. Individuals shall not be penalized for having sponsored funds, and may therefore reasonably expect to additionally have access to the full ATB amount that would be granted if such sponsored funds were not available.

Guidelines for Determining the Size of Individual Requests

When determining how much to fund an individual request from the ATB, the Chair will normally start with a base amount identical for all requests (perhaps ranging from $500-$1,000 depending on availability of funds). By considering the merit of the request according to the prioritized guidelines below, the Chair will then determine how much extra funds to provide, bearing in mind that the total amount should not normally exceed the cap already mentioned above. The following guidelines are ranked from highest priority (1), to lowest priority (4).

1) Inverse seniority. Assistant Professors have priority over Associate Professors, who have priority over Full Professors. Horn and Endowed Professors should not expect to receive travel funds from the ATB.

2) Nature of travel. Invited talks at large highly visible meetings have the highest priority. Individuals presenting papers have priority over those just attending. Travel to a funding agency in order to attempt to secure funding is also of high priority.
3) Productivity (if not a new hire). A variety of metrics may be used, at the Chair's discretion, to determine an individual's productivity. In general, and all other things being equal, individuals contributing more to the mission of the Department can usually expect to have higher priority.

4) Accumulation from previous year. Individuals who did not request ATB funds in the previous year may reasonably expect to receive a higher amount than if they had. Tracking accumulations beyond 2 consecutive years may be logistically difficult.

Important Points to Consider

- To qualify for ATB individuals must show that a benefit (to self and Department) will result. This benefit should be consistent with the nature of the applicant's appointment and promote the general mission of the Department, especially with regard to increasing its visibility.

- The ATB is crucially important due to Lubbock's geographic isolation. (This would not be the case if TTU was close to large metro area where there would be greater opportunity to attend relevant talks/meetings.)

- Some travel money should be reserved for graduate students who will be presenting at meetings. Priorities: (i) PhD students in their final year; (ii) students who have passed prelims.

- Individuals on a Visiting appointment should get some travel funds.

- Students and Visiting Faculty should abide by the same rules as faculty members. That is, a written request should be submitted to the Chair, and additional sources of funding should be sought, e.g., graduate school.