PURPOSE

The Technical College of the Lowcountry recognizes the benefits of off-campus student or group travel in conjunction with academic, co-curricular, and college sponsored programs. The purpose of this procedure is to provide rules and regulations for college student or group field trips/travel in order to promote safety, maximize educational value, manage risk, minimize liability, and enable appropriate response in times of crisis.

PROCEDURE

For the purpose of this procedure, “field trip” is meant to convey an out-of-the-ordinary and off-campus experience requiring participant travel. Field trips/travel may be categorized as out-of-area or in-area, depending upon the nature and destination of the experience. “Out-of-area” is defined as any location outside the TCL service area of Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, and Hampton counties. “In-area” is defined as any location within the TCL service area of Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Hampton, Chatham, and Effingham Counties. Section I through Section VII of this procedure govern all out-of-area travel with TCL students, in-area and out-of-area field trips with minor participants—not including transportation to and from regular campus activities—and all travel requiring overnight stays.

With the exception of health science clinical activities, in-area field trips/travel and learning experiences involving TCL students and such as are typical to the College environment, including site visits, demonstrations, field work, lab activities and other appropriate activities
offered as a part of or supplement to learning, are governed by Section VIII of this procedure, as well as all other applicable policies and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the authorized faculty and/or staff advisor of the organized student/group travel (College department, registered student organization, academic program, College employee, etc.) to ensure compliance with College policy and procedures. If an individual student travels under this policy, a college employee must assume the responsibility for compliance with the policy and procedures.

I. Faculty and Staff Responsibilities for Field Trips

Faculty and staff must obtain written approval from their academic dean or supervisor at least ten (10) working days before a scheduled field trip or class activity away from campus.

Advisors to student organizations must obtain written approval from the Vice President for Student Affairs at least ten (10) working days prior to the field trip. Club advisors must specify how the proposed field trip is related to the course objective or club mission. Club advisors are responsible for making all trip preparations, including transportation.

All students/groups must be accompanied by a member of the faculty or a college staff employee regardless of the mode of travel, except in instances where an exception is granted for adult students to arrange their own personal travel, pursuant to Section IV of this procedure. The designated faculty or staff member is responsible for compliance with all outlined procedures.

Faculty/staff must prepare viable alternatives of equal grading value or attendance credit for students who are not able to attend a required field trip or who refuse to sign the necessary forms. Students who refuse to sign necessary forms will not be permitted to travel.

Student organizations must adhere to the College’s alcohol policy when alcohol is present at off-campus events with the exception of alcohol consumption by adult students, 21 years of age or older, who purchase and consume alcohol at a cash bar set-up sold by a licensed vendor having accommodations for security at the event.

Faculty and staff members are responsible for avoiding willful misconduct including, but not limited to:
Using alcohol (in a manner other than stated above) or controlled substances while on the trip;

- engaging in fraternization or inappropriate relationships (per State Board Policy 8-5-103);

- placing students in clearly dangerous circumstances;

- failing to take appropriate, expedient action (such as sending the student home at the student’s cost, if prudent) when it becomes evident that a student is placing himself, herself, or the group in danger; and

- hosting or condoning an occasion where any of the above is violated.

Faculty/staff must maintain Waiver of Liability and Risk and Medical Consent forms. These forms must be completed by students in advance of the travel as a condition of participation.

Individual departments or groups may have further requirements for approval of student/group travel which must be submitted to the appropriate academic dean or Vice President for Student Affairs for review and authorization in advance of the travel.

The advisor is an agent of the College acting within the course and scope of employment; however, deviations from the scope of employment constitute an individual act by the advisor. Advisors are cautioned to act pragmatically, avoid negligence, display reasonable prudence, fairness, and plain common sense. Maintaining a sense of what is fair and reasonable and using your best professional judgment will reduce incentives for the filing of lawsuits against you or the College.

II. Student/Faculty/Staff Advisor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the authorized faculty, staff advisor, and/or student participants to advise the appropriate parties of any known limitations, special disabilities, certified medical conditions, or needs that may require special accommodation.

The faculty and/or staff advisor must advise students of rules and regulations regarding conduct during the trip including, but not limited to, hotel curfew and responsibility for obligations, purchases or damages incurred by the students/group. Students will be subject to enforcement of the TCL Student Code of Conduct and local, state, and federal laws at all times while traveling on an authorized trip. The
III. Required Documentation

All requests for student/group travel must be initiated by TCL employees, as outlined in Section I, and authorized in advance. An Activity and Travel Request form must be submitted and approved no fewer than ten (10) working days prior to the date of departure.

In addition to travel authorization, the following are the minimally required documents that must be obtained from each participant prior to trip departure. Participants unwilling or unable to provide required documentation will not be permitted to travel:

A. Itinerary/Participant Permission Form. The faculty and/or staff advisor must provide “appropriate” trip information to all students traveling (e.g. pre-trip meeting/orientation, date and time of departure and duration of trip, mode of travel, number of chaperones, purpose of trip, known hazards, special clothing or equipment required because of planned group activities, weather, or other conditions, etc.) Upon receipt of trip information, all participants will be required to provide a signed permission form. The form will be signed by the student if the student is not a minor or signed by the student and parent/guardian if the student is a minor. Further, an orientation meeting is recommended for all trips, and a parent/guardian orientation is required for all trips involving minors.

B. Voluntary Assumption of Risk, Waiver & Release Agreement. In order that students, parents, and/or legal guardians may fully appreciate and assess the risks associated with the off-campus activity and make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the activity, or limit participation in certain aspects of the field trip, all student/group travelers and/or their parent/guardian must complete the Waiver of Liability and Risk and Medical Consent forms. These forms will verify that the student travelers and/or their parent/guardian understand and accept the risks involved in participating in the travel activity, assume full responsibility for their behavior, and voluntarily agree to release the College from liability for any claims or injuries that may arise from their participation in the activity. Faculty or staff advisors will maintain the completed Waiver of Liability and Risk and Medical Consent forms. Additional copies of the signed forms will be housed in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs prior to the travel departure date.
C. **Medical Coverage.** TCL assumes no responsibility for medical coverage of student travelers. It is recommended that each student, staff, or faculty member have his or her own medical and accident insurance. Any costs not covered by insurance will be the responsibility of the traveler. Insured travelers must carry their insurance cards or proof of insurance with them on the trip.

IV. **Modes of Travel/Transportation**

Absent extraordinary circumstances (specifically approved by the President or Vice President for Student Affairs), no personal vehicles shall be used by any college personnel for transporting students on field trips. This does not preclude adult students from providing their own transportation to and/or from events or sanctioned travel opportunities, providing the student notifies faculty/staff in advance of departure and provides all required documentation as outlined in Section III. In such instances, the student assumes all liability as a driver and waives College liability for his or her actions as a driver.

Absent extraordinary circumstances (specifically approved by the Vice President for Student Affairs), field trip transportation offered by Technical College of the Lowcountry shall be conducted by:

A. Fully insured, properly licensed professional drivers using either licensed commercial/charter vehicles or vehicles owned and maintained by the State of South Carolina that meet all appropriate safety standards, including but not limited to: use of passenger restraints, and occupant protection requirements.

B. Faculty members, staff, and/or club advisors driving College cars or vehicles rented by the College shall be deemed to have met the licensure and safety requirements.

Each mode of transportation requires that common and mode-specific safety precautions (e.g., seatbelts) be used at all times. In addition to following applicable local, state, and federal laws and using sound judgment when traveling, students and college personnel must follow the procedures associated with this policy according to the specific mode of travel involved. Travel conditions must be considered prior to departure on any travel involving students.

A. **Vehicles Owned, Leased, Rented or Borrowed by the College.** All drivers operating College owned, rented, leased, or borrowed vehicles as part of organized student/group travel must:
1. be a full or part-time faculty or staff member;
2. possess a valid South Carolina or other state driver’s license;
3. have a copy of their driver’s license on file in the business office; and
4. provide an official driver record from SCDMV to the business office.

B. Commercial Travel. Students traveling by commercial transportation must comply with all laws regulating travel and the rules of the specific carrier.

C. Safety Requirements: Drivers and passengers must act responsibly and use sound judgment when traveling. Further, drivers must:

1. Obey all traffic laws and regulations, including posted speed limits;
2. not drive under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or transport or possess alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, unauthorized firearms or other types of weapons as indicated in the Code of Conduct;
3. wear seat belts at all times. The number of occupants in the vehicle must not exceed the number of seat belts;
4. not exceed the vehicle manufacturer’s recommended load capacity (see owner manuals for specific instructions);
5. avoid horseplay, racing or other distracting or aggressive behavior;
6. refrain from cell phone use while driving; and
7. refrain from eating while driving.

V. Unapproved Expenses

Any unapproved travel-related expense incurred by the student, faculty, or staff traveler is the responsibility of the respective traveler. Students must be informed that the College assumes no responsibility for providing student/groups with funds in case of unanticipated delays or other incidents, which may require additional expenditures. Reimbursement for emergency circumstances may be considered.

VI. Special Requirements for Travel Involving Minors

The following requirements are specific to travel involving minors (e.g., student participants in Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, et al). These are in addition to other procedures outlined herein.

A. All participants in overnight travel and events must be rising seventh-grade students or older
B. For travel involving minors, a mandatory orientation meeting with parents/guardians must be scheduled no fewer than ten (10) working days prior to departure. Participants who are not represented at the meeting by parent/guardian will not be allowed to participate. At the mandatory meeting, all required documents will be distributed and all necessary forms collected.

C. Required documents must be received no later than five (5) working days prior to travel or student participation will be disallowed.

D. Only activities directly related to scheduled events shall be allowed, with absolutely no participation in unscheduled, unauthorized or unnecessarily risky activities. Activities will be outlined, scheduled and listed on the travel itinerary with strict adherence.

E. It is the responsibility of participants and/or parents/guardians to inform the College of any existing certified medical condition that requires medication. Further, all participants with said condition(s) must be able to keep, monitor and administer all required medications without assistance; however, if assistance is required, the College reserves the right to determine what level of assistance is reasonable and does not negatively affect the rights or participation of other students.

F. The ratio of chaperones to minor participants will comply with guidelines established by the Upward Bound program and/or the Educational Talent Search program.

G. The College reserves the right to restrict, limit or disallow student participation if extenuating or unusual circumstances exist that would cause or may cause unnecessary risk or liability to the participant, faculty, staff or other participants.

VII. Trip Contingencies and Emergencies

A. Trip Contingencies

Even with the best planning efforts, things can still go wrong. Faculty and/or staff advisors should try to anticipate complications that could arise, and develop contingency plans in advance. Examples of unplanned circumstances include, but are not limited to the following:
1. Student needs to return early because of a personal or family emergency;  
2. student violates established conduct rules; or  
3. weather or transportation delays or cancellations require overnight housing.

When such events occur, faculty and/or staff advisors should seek to understand contract limitations and restrictions, whether they arise from a rental vehicle, lodging, admission or other agreements. For example, determine in advance of the trip if any portion of pre-paid trip expenses will be refundable, etc.

B. Emergencies

In the event of an emergency (e.g., car accident, injury, hospitalization or death) faculty and staff will immediately seek professional assistance as required, and then immediately notify:

1. The listed emergency contact(s) for the student(s) involved;  
2. the Vice President for Student Affairs; and  
3. the respective academic dean or supervisor.

VIII. In-Area Field Trips/Travel with TCL Students

A. Student/Faculty/Staff Advisor Responsibilities: It is expected that TCL faculty, staff and students participating in in-area field trips/travel will exercise all appropriate caution and protocol, in keeping with applicable College policies and procedures, state and federal laws, and general safety guidelines.

B. Notification: It is the responsibility of the in-area field trips/travel organizer (faculty and/or staff advisor) to notify his or her appropriate academic dean or supervisor, and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to departure.

C. Required Documentation: Prior to departure, the in-area field trip/travel organizer (faculty and/or staff advisor) is required to provide a Field Trip Notification Form to the appropriate academic dean or supervisor, and Vice President for Student Affairs, including a roster of all participating students and faculty/staff.

D. Vehicles: Use of College Vehicles for field trips/travel is governed by TCL Policy 2-1-219 Institutional Vehicle Usage.