

BUSINESS TRAVEL AND STATE GOVERNMENT

**Report: Colleges, Agencies
Spend Millions Each Year**





BY RICHARD BREEN

Universities encourage their students to broaden their horizons and travel. Apparently, they put their money where their mouths are in South Carolina.

Clemson University and the University of South Carolina top the list – by a wide margin – in an annual ranking of state agency travel expenditures compiled by the office of the state Comptroller General.

The State Travel Report for fiscal year 2014 lists Clemson with \$12.97 million in travel-related expenditures. USC is not far behind, at \$12.63 million.

The Medical University of South Carolina is No. 3 at \$6.37 million. Other schools in the top 10 include:

4. College of Charleston
(\$3.54 million)
6. South Carolina State University
(\$2.04 million)
8. Coastal Carolina University
(\$1.60 million)
9. Winthrop University
(\$1.56 million)

The totals reflect spending on in-state and out-of-state travel and include expenses such as conference registration fees. The report looks at 113 agencies that received money in the state's 2014 budget, ranging from colleges to elected offices (such as state Treasurer) down to the state Conservation Bank, which ranked last on the list, with \$690.76 in expenditures in 2014.

"The General Assembly directs the Comptroller General's Office to compile this report every fiscal year," said S.C. Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom in an e-mail response to a reporter's questions. "An important purpose of the travel report is to highlight in a single, concise report the travel dollars being spent by any and all state-supported entities and to identify the top travelers within each agency."

Indeed, the report also ranks the top 25 individual spenders at each agency or institution. No. 1 at Clemson was Dr. Ganesh K. Venayagamoorthy, a professor in the electrical and computer engineering department. He spent slightly

"Members of the public can read it and ask for explanations or direct questions to any agency on the report, including questions about annual fluctuations in travel spending,"

more than \$65,000 on travel during fiscal 2014.

"More than 95 percent of Dr. Venayagamoorthy's travel was paid by research funding or self-generated revenue," said Clemson spokesman John Gouch via e-mail. "He is an internationally recognized expert in smart grid

technology."

At USC, assistant men's basketball coach Perry Clark topped the list. He was No. 1 in the state overall, with more than \$70,000 in expenditures.

"Coach Clark spends a considerable amount of time and effort recruiting outstanding potential student-athletes from areas far and wide to attend South Carolina," said USC spokeswoman Emily Feeney via e-mail. "The athletics department budget takes into account all monies needed for recruiting. These monies are generated from athletic department revenues and are spent within state policies and guidelines."

Thanks to ticket sales and television contracts, the athletic departments at major schools such as Clemson and USC tend to be financially self-sufficient and don't use taxpayer dollars for activities such as recruiting. But in terms of pure dollars spent, the amount is significant.

Steve Smith, Daryl Oliver, Earl Grant, and Mike Winiecki, all either men's or women's basketball coaches

S.C. Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom



at Clemson, occupied four spots in that school's top 10 for travel spending. Gamecocks football assistants Deke Adams (ninth), Everette Sands (11th) and G.A. Mangus (12th), as well as head women's basketball coach Dawn Staley (13th) were among the top-spending travelers at USC.

"Recruiting is the foundation of a strong program and enhances the ability of all South Carolina athletic teams to compete for SEC and national championships," Feeney said.

Gouch pointed out that Clemson's network of extension offices throughout the state contributes to its higher travel expenses. He also added that when adjusted for inflation, Clemson employee travel expenses are down 14.7 percent compared to fiscal 2008.

In FY 2013, Clemson and USC were also No. 1 and No. 2. From 2013 to 2014, spending was up by 4.9 percent at Clemson and 7.2 percent at USC. Spending was also up at several agencies, including:

- Judicial Department
- Transportation Department
- Vocational Rehabilitation Department
- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services

Spending dropped at other schools and state agencies in FY 2014. The College of Charleston slashed travel spending by 42.8 percent. S.C. State, which has been suffering a

**WELLS
FARGO**

Achieving great things for our community

When someone comes along who has the courage and vision to turn dreams into reality, the future looks brighter for everyone.



Holt Chetwood, winner of the 50 Most Influential of 2014, thank you for creating a lasting legacy of success.

Global Business Succeeds in Central SC



Over **80** foreign-affiliated companies representing **23** countries.

NEARLY **\$10.3 BILLION** in capital investment
and **62,500** new jobs.

MARKETING & RECRUITMENT • PROJECT MANAGEMENT •
RESEARCH • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING

Representing Calhoun, Clarendon, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington,
McCormick, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland and the City of Columbia.

1201 Main Street, Suite 100
Columbia, SC 29201

803.733.1131 | centralsc.org

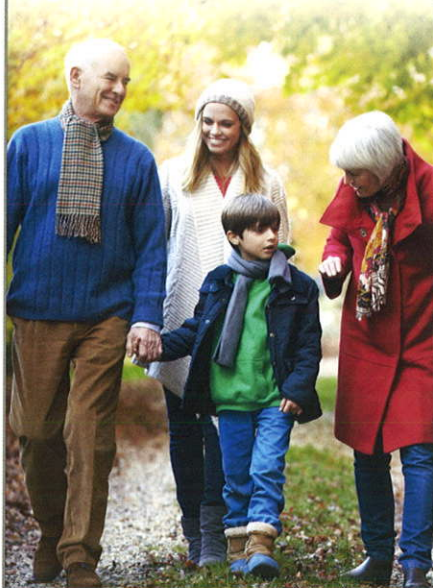
Central/SC
Business Friendly. Business Ready.

Together we'll go far



© 2015 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved.
Member FDIC. (1229395_13961)

You always
make sure
they're prepared
for what's next.



Now let us make sure
you're prepared.



Individual
State
AND
Federal
tax

services for
just \$95
for those over 50
regularly \$149



803-318-7332
110 Wildewood Park Dr.
Suite B,
Columbia, SC 29223
(South of the Village at Sandhills
just off Two Notch Road)

ATTORNEY CPA
scott royan

thebridgefinancialadvisors.com

budget crisis, was down by nearly 16 percent.

The Department of Employment and Workforce, which ranked 17th in the latest report, slashed its travel spending by nearly 41 percent, from \$1.17 million down to approximately \$691,000 in FY2014. The Department of Health and Environmental Control was No. 5 on the travel list in FY 2013 as well as FY 2014, but cut spending by \$308,000, or nearly 9 percent.

Two other large agencies that trimmed spending were the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, and the Department of Revenue and Taxation.

Due to the number of state-funded colleges, universities, and technical colleges in South Carolina, schools dot the list from top to bottom. The one that spent the least was USC Lancaster, which ranked 88th with \$33,818 in expenditures.

As for Eckstrom's office, it ranked 107th on the list, with \$7,310 in expenditures.

Individually, Eckstrom rang up \$1,218.31 in travel expenditures in FY 2014, including \$1,000 on registration fees. He said those fees were to attend conferences by the National Association of State Comptrollers and the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers.

"Both of these are working conferences attended by statewide financial officials from states across the U.S.," Eckstrom said.

The report also separates spending into travel by state employees and non-state employees.

"Non-state employees include members of an agency board or commission, an agency volunteer, or persons working for an agency on a temporary, short-term contract basis," Eckstrom said.

Spending by non-state employees ran the gamut from zero at places such as Trident Technical College and the Workers' Compensation Commission to \$1.98 million at USC. Schools again led the list, with a top five of USC, S.C. State, MUSC, Clemson and College of Charleston.

A section of the report allows for each institution or agency to give a brief description of the types of travel they engaged in.

For example, the Department of Agriculture points out, "many of our employees visit with major chain receivers, food service companies, food and agricultural product brokers, and varieties of others involved in the food, fiber, and beverage industry both in state and out of state. Our consumer service inspectors, fruit and vegetable inspectors, and poultry inspectors must travel to ensure compliance with our petroleum, weight/measure, and food statutes."

The Arts Commission's explanation reads: "The majority of the agency's in-state travel expenditures are for county coordinators (Arts Coordinators) to visit constituents throughout the state for grant advisement, planning, meeting facilitation, grant project monitoring, speaking to civic and educational groups, etc. There are also expenditures related to professional development meetings, conferences, and leadership programs. Out-of-state expenditures are generally for attendance at meetings related to funder-driven national initiatives and professional development conferences."

Others, such as that for the state Commerce Department, are more cryptic: "The South Carolina Department of Commerce is the economic development and industrial recruiting arm of the state. Our employees travel to promote and improve economic development for South Carolina."

Eckstrom said the annual report can be used as a management tool.

"Obviously, agency directors should review it, compare their agency's travel to the travel performed by agencies of similar mission or size, and require their top travelers to cost-justify travel dollars they spend," he said. "By the same token, legislative budget writers should use the report during annual budget discussions and deliberations with each agency."

The annual report is posted on the Comptroller General's Office website to promote financial transparency, Eckstrom said.

"Members of the public can read it and ask for explanations or direct questions to any agency on the report, including questions about annual fluctuations in travel spending," he said.

To view state agency travel expenditures going back to fiscal year 2004, visit: www.cg.sc.gov/publicationsandreports/Pages/travelreports.aspx