

# Who spent more money traveling, Swinney or Muschamp? | The State

*By Lucas Daprile*

Top athletic coaches at Clemson University reported spending more than three times as much last fiscal year their Midlands rivals, according to a newly released report from the [S.C. comptroller general's office](#).

But most of the difference is likely caused by the way both universities report travel expenses to the comptroller general.

Clemson reported spending \$16.4 million for employee travel, more than any other state agency. Over \$1.3 million of that went to 14 top athletic coaches, the report shows. By comparison, the University of South Carolina reported spending \$12.4 million on all employee travel, with \$345,997 going to top coaches, the report shows.

Clemson's top traveler was defensive coordinator [Brent Venables](#), who spent \$174,133 on travel last fiscal year. That comes out to \$477 in travel every day of the year. Clemson's second most prolific traveler was defensive tackles coach [Todd Bates](#), who spent \$173,299 on travel last year.

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"Airfare charges accounted for more than 95 percent of expenditures credited to Coach Venables and 92 percent of those for Coach Bates during Fiscal Year 2018," Clemson spokesman Joe Galbraith wrote in a statement. "Thanks to the efficiency created through charter travel, Coach Venables made 134 high school visits in 38 days last year and Coach Bates made 131 visits in 46 days."

Officials at both Clemson and USC stress that athletics travel is paid for by funds raised from athletics, and not taxpayer dollars.

It's hard to compare Clemson's travel to USC's because Clemson reported all travel on both of its university-owned planes and USC only reported flights on its administrative plane, spokesmen for the two universities said.

"Athletic recruiting of course requires frequent travel," USC spokesman Jeff Stensland wrote in a statement. "Travel on athletics planes and trips paid for by (the university's foundations) would not be included in this report."

Schools don't necessarily have to report this, said Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom.

“It’s just an accounting difference between the two,” Galbraith said.

As a result, Gamecocks football coach Will Muschamp, [who has been lauded for his ability to recruit](#), wasn’t on the list, meaning USC reported he spent less than \$25,000 traveling in and out of state last year, according to the report.

USC’s top traveler was assistant men’s basketball coach [Perry Clark](#), who spent \$47,707 on travel expenses last fiscal year.

“Travel is also used to raise much-needed funding,” Stensland said. “In terms of return on investment, last year USC brought in a record \$253.6 million in sponsored research award funding and \$133 million in private donations.”

Eckstrom said he created the report, “not to criticize, just to call for all these entities — especially colleges and universities — to be extremely careful in when they travel.”

Given that state agencies spent a total of \$81.4 million on travel last year — which is down from \$85.7 million in the [2017 fiscal year](#) — Eckstrom said he thinks there is still room to cut, pointing to South Carolina State University, as an example.

Between fiscal years 2017 and 2018, S.C. State, a historically black college in Orangeburg, cut its travel expenses from \$1.4 million to \$622,446, according to the report.

“S.C. State is one of the best travel success stories in the last couple years,” Eckstrom said. “If every other state agency did it, it would ... help a lot of families out.”

## **Top traveling agencies in Fiscal Year 2018**

1. Clemson University: \$16,393,032
2. University of South Carolina: \$12,436,158
3. Medical University of South Carolina: \$6,384,597
4. College of Charleston: \$4,044,853
5. Department of Health and Environmental Control: \$3,706,014
6. Coastal Carolina University: \$2,356,646
7. Judicial Department: \$1,442,061
8. Department of Education: \$1,409,788
9. The Citadel: \$1,383,838
10. Department of Transportation: \$1,320,632

*Source: Comptroller General’s office.*