1. Travel Advances

    a. If it is required to be submitted electronically, why is it still required to have the paper form filled out especially since the advance is lumped in Banner, not broken out?
    The reason the paper form is still required is because of the wording on the form. This is basically a loan from WCU to the traveler. By signing the form, gives WCU the right to deduct it from the traveler's paycheck if not cleared out within 30 days of returning from trip.

    b. Would you talk through the timeline for processing an advance?
    Travel Advances must be submitted at least two weeks prior to departure date to allow enough time to process. When a traveler submits the request in Chrome River, it will depend upon the Supervisor, Accountable Officer and VC of the division (if required) on when they approve the request. Once the request gets to the Travel Auditor and it is approved, then every night around 9 to 10 pm the system automatically pulls all the approved expense reports in Chrome River and pushes the info into Banner for the next business day check run. The checks are usually processed around 4 pm each business day. Once check or direct deposit has been processed, then it leaves the Controller's Office. If it is a check with state funds, the check is held till 1 pm until funds from the state have been certified. Then the check gets put into interoffice mail. If it is Direct Deposited, then this is done on Monday's and Thursday's. Once the Controller's Office does this, an email notification is sent to the traveler just like it is for payroll. No checks can be picked up at the Controller's Office. Being it takes multiple steps to process a Travel Advance, therefore it important to get it to the Travel Auditor at least two weeks prior to travel.

    c. How do you do an advance if the professional staff is not going on the trip?
    A permanent full-time employee can be issued a travel advance for university business when authorized by the employee's immediate supervisor and accountable officer. Travel advance are not issued to non-permanent employees, non-employees, or students. Travel P-card is an option for some departments to cover expenses for travelers and students. Lodging can only be paid by card holder and no other employees. If a permanent employee requests a travel advance and issues the money to non-permanent employees and the advance is not cleared the employee will be held liable for the money and would be payroll deducted if not paid within thirty days.

    d. What if you have a staff member going on trips close together?
    If the trips are back to back. For example, leaving on Sunday traveling to Sunday and leaving again on Tuesday there is not enough time to clear an advance and issue another one. One advance can be done for both trips, however it's still up to the approvers to approve the funds if available.

e. It is required to have a travel advance submitted no earlier than three weeks (21 day) prior to the trip but there is a 10-15 business day turnaround. That does not leave much time if there is a hold up for any reason, that is if you are notified timely. Why can't we submit travel advances earlier than 21 days?
A travel advance can be entered and held in the employee's que and submitted at the earliest 3 weeks prior to the trip. It is not up to the travel auditor to hold advances in que for an extended period. This is a new change with Chrome River that is different than on paper. No reimbursements will be processed for that employee if an advance is pending approval. It also creates an issue for the travel auditor and holds up her que and could cause an advance to be processed earlier than it should be.

f. It is WCU policy that if you collect cash/check you are required to provide a receipt. Can we get a receipt for turning in cash or a check when closing out a travel advance?
Yes. Once posted to Banner a receipt can be sent to the traveler upon request.

g. How do we handle a travel advance which was paid out but was not supposed to be?
These will be handled on a case by case basis. If you received the money from a cash advance by mistake, you will create a new expense report in Banner, select the Travel Advance tile then the Travel Advance Return for the full amount. The total pay me amount will be the amount of the Travel Advance which is correct. Then re-submit the request again for the correct dates if needed.

2. If sharing the cost of travel and the split is not even, does Chrome River calculate the breakdown based upon the percentages listed? How is money divided between accounts for the different travel selections, i.e.: Lodging, Meals, Mileage?
Each line item in an expense report can be allocated to as many funds as needed. If you put in an amount say total expense for hotel equals $1000 and one person is paying $650 and the other person is paying $350 then you can key in the dollar amount and the percentages will change to reflect the percentage of that dollar amount. As long as the percentages equal 100 percent you can put any amount in the line items of the report. If you put 50/50 on the Pre-Approval, then it is just saying that each person agrees to pay half. At this point, there is no money involved so it doesn't really matter how it is allocated out. If you want to be more specific on the Pre-Approval, then notes can be put in the comment box.

3. Once travel receives a check request, what is the process i.e. turnaround time?
Check Request processing time is 2 weeks. Most of the time it is processed quicker, but this leaves enough time for auditing and processing. Accounts Payable also requires 2 weeks for check requests. This way we are all on the same page.

4. Is there a way to search for an AP address prior to filling out the form, especially for student? The current process is very time consuming.
   At the present time, there is not a way to search for the Default AP Address since it only appears on a maintenance form in Banner that can be updated so only a handful of people have access to this. For now, send an email to Leann Wheatley to verify the address. She will need the person's name and 920 number. If the address is incorrect, she will send you the new form to complete. Please note, if you are requesting to change a student's address the student will also have to sign the form for security purposes.

5. Concern has been raised regarding the length of time it takes for an employee to receive a reimbursement. Some have waited more than a month to receive their reimbursement, during which time they are accruing interest which is not reimbursable. Would you walk us through the timeline and how long it takes?
   This follows the same response as in 1b above. In addition to that response, If the Travel Auditor returns an Expense Report to the traveler, it is the responsibility of the traveler to provide or update the necessary information needed so these may take a longer to process dependent upon the traveler. If there is a Cash Advance already on the dashboard of the Traveler the next expense report entered should be to clear out the Travel Advance. Travel Advances must be cleared out before any other expense reimbursement are even looked at. The length of time to receive a reimbursement could vary depending upon the citation.

6. Room sharing via hotel. Many times, to save money, staff will room with other people while attending a conference. Staff will not get reimbursed if their name is not on the hotel reservation/invoice, even though there are two separate payments listed on the paperwork with the name of the person. Calling the hotel and trying to get them to accommodate us is extremely difficult and causes not only delays but prolongs the reimbursement. If a staff member did not make the reservation what is the process/suggestion in order for the employee to get reimbursed? When sharing a room, let the hotel know at check in that the room will be split into x number of people and the bill must have the name of the person getting reimbursed. Another way would be to have one person get reimbursed for the whole stay and then that person can return the money to the others in the room. Another way would be prior to making the reservation, ask if the hotel does direct billing, if so, then this could go through Catamart. Our travel manual states:
   "If one state traveler pays the full lodging expense for him/herself and one or more other individuals traveling on official state business with whom he/she shares a room in a commercial lodging establishment, the traveler bearing the expense should include the full lodging expense on his/her reimbursement request. A note of explanation should be included on each traveler's reimbursement request with a list of those sharing the room. The total per night lodging charge will be divided by the number of state travelers sharing the room for purposes of applying the statutory limitation."

7. Can we be notified when a travel policy, procedure, or an amount changes? A pop-up notice in Chrome River perhaps?
   Travel policies, procedures, or amount changes will be updated in the Travel Manual, however, with a new system like Chrome River we are all learning a new process so it will take time to get everything updated. One example is the way to update an address or get a 920 number for travel reimbursements. The form has been created and we are letting people the know the process when requesting address changes or 920 number requests. We are planning on sending an email with the new process change but are waiting on IT to create a report on the report portal for verifying Default AP addresses once approved by management. By waiting on IT, we only would have to send out one email as opposed to two or more.

8. Timeline for Direct Deposit?
   Direct Deposits are done on Monday's and Thursday's. Once these are processed in the Controller's Office an email notification is sent to the traveler just like it is for payroll. Then it is up to the traveler's banking institution as when and how to process that transaction in which we have no control over.

9. Email notifications to employees so they know when their reimbursement is approved and moving through the process?
   This is the great thing about Chrome River. If you want to know anything about where it is in the process the Tracking button will give you that information. The status of the expense report will be pending if still going through the approval process; Approved once the Travel Auditor has approved it; Exported once it has moved from Chrome River to Banner; and Paid once it has been processed through Banner. Each step takes one night to process before Chrome River updates the status. Each traveler has the responsibility to keep up with their own travel reimbursements so no notifications will be sent except for Direct Deposit.

10. How do you delete or remove an attachment?
    You can delete an attachment as long as the status of the pre-approval or expense report is in the status of "Pending". By clicking on the attachment you wish to delete, it brings it up for viewing on the left hand of the page. From here you will see a paperclip in the upper-left hand side with a red x on it, just click the paperclip to remove the receipt. The paperclip with the red x will not be visible once the pre-approval or expense report has the status of "Approved". This is a security feature so no receipts can be deleted once approved for reimbursement to keep the paper trail and to show auditors this was just cause for the reimbursement.

11. Hotel expenses need to be itemized? This process seems redundant since the only difference is the inclusion of the number of days of stay and we are not itemizing by the day. Should we enter each day as a separate hotel cost and itemize for one day at a time?
    The reason the hotel tile ask one to itemize is because each tile represents an account number. You do not have to remember these anymore. The hotel acts as a header line and then the itemization breaks down the hotel receipt to get the expense item to the correct account number so you would not have to remember these four account numbers. You do not have to break down each day individually when itemizing the receipt. The number of days is requested to make sure everything ties in with other expenses on your expense report. If your hotel receipt is nothing but the room, fees, and taxes, then you would only select the lodging tile one time.

12. Mileage is similar as the Hotel. It asks for the number of days of the trip but only allows for one total. Should each day of travel be a different entry?
    You do not have to key each day individually for mileage. When Chrome River was first implemented the number of days was required per how the mileage was calculated since it was based on days of travel. Since Chrome River has been live, the rules have changed that mileage reimbursement is based off total trip not by day. The numbers of days' field were left to save future programming cost if the rules change to go back to per day.

13. If only one entry for hotel and mileage should the date be the beginning of the trip or the end of trip?
    Try to use the start date (departure date) of the trip if possible. The travel auditor will verify the dates on the receipt to match the rest of the report as well.