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STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

February 13, 2013

Dr. Eric J. Bitterbaum
President
State University of New York College at Cortland
21 Graham Avenue
Miller Building Room 408
Cortland, NY 13045

Re: Selected Employees Travel Expenses
Report 2012-S-144

Dear Dr. Bitterbaum:

According to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution, and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we recently audited the travel expenses of five employees of the College at Cortland (College).

Background

New York State's executive agencies spend between \$100 million and \$150 million each year on travel expenses. These expenses, which are discretionary and under the control of agency management, include car rentals, meals, lodging, transportation, fuel, and incidental costs such as airline baggage and travel agency fees.

The College's mission is to provide an academic community dedicated to diverse learning experiences for students to grow as engaged citizens with a strong social conscience fostered by outstanding teaching, scholarship, and service. The College spent \$4,156,664 on travel expenses from April 1, 2008 through March 31, 2011. Of that amount, \$2,945,008, or about 71 percent, was for reimbursements to employees for travel expenses, direct payments to vendors, and cash advances; and \$1,211,656, or about 29 percent, related to charges on State-issued travel cards.

The Office of the State Comptroller sets rules and regulations for payment of expenses employees incur while traveling on official State business. The Comptroller's Travel Manual helps agencies and employees understand and apply the State's travel rules and regulations,

and provides instructions for reimbursing expenses. In general, when traveling on official State business, only actual, necessary and reasonable business expenses will be reimbursed.

The audit at the College is part of a statewide initiative to determine whether the use of travel monies by selected government employees complies with rules and regulations and is free from fraud, waste, and abuse. Auditors focused their audit efforts on the highest-cost travelers in the State, each of whom incurred over \$100,000 in travel expenses during the three year period ended March 31, 2011, as well as on other outliers. As a result of this analysis, we examined the travel expenses for five College employees whose travel costs totaled \$696,909.

Results of Audit

The travel expenses for the five College employees selected for audit were documented and adhered to State travel rules and regulations. All five employees were athletic coaches who were responsible for team travel expenses associated with in-state and out-of-state sporting events, including transportation, meals and lodging. Some of the coaches also incurred expenses for recruiting trips.

Audit Scope, Objectives and Methodology

We audited selected travel expenses for five College employees for the period April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2011. The objectives of our audit were to determine whether the use of travel monies by selected government employees complied with rules and regulations and is free from fraud, waste and abuse.

To accomplish our objectives, we analyzed travel expenses incurred by and on behalf of State employees for the three years ended March 31, 2011. Our analysis identified five College employees whose expenses ranked among the highest in the State and appeared risky in the area of lodging. We examined these employees' travel expenses, including reimbursements and credit card charges, for the three State Fiscal Years ending March 31, 2011.

As part of our examination, we obtained vouchers, receipts, and credit card statements for all transactions. We then verified that documentation supported the charges and showed the expenses incurred were for legitimate business purposes. We reviewed the College's internal policies and procedures and determined the travel expenses selected for examination were approved and complied with this guidance, as well as with OSC procedures. Finally, we matched timesheet and travel records to ensure the travelers were working on days for which they requested travel reimbursement, and reviewed E-ZPass records, where applicable, to match against travel vouchers.

We conducted our performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions

based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

In addition to being the State Auditor, the Comptroller performs certain other constitutionally and statutorily mandated duties as the chief fiscal officer of New York State. These include operating the State's accounting system; preparing the State's financial statements; and approving State contracts, refunds, and other payments. In addition, the Comptroller appoints members to certain boards, commissions and public authorities, some of whom have minority voting rights. These duties may be considered management functions for purposes of evaluating organizational independence under generally accepted government auditing standards. In our opinion, these functions do not affect our ability to conduct independent audits of program performance.

Reporting Requirements

We discussed the results of our audit with College officials who agreed with our conclusions and waived the opportunity to provide formal written comments to be included in this final report.

Major contributors to this report were Melissa Little, Nadine Morrell, Sharon Salembier, Rick Podagrosi, and Andrew Davis.

Please convey our thanks to the management and staff of the College for the courtesies and cooperation that they extended to our auditors during this review.

Sincerely,

John F. Buyce, CPA
Audit Director

cc: Bruce Perine, College at Cortland
Thomas Lukacs, Division of the Budget