

PENCILS DOWN 2027 FAQs

GENERAL

What is Pencils Down?

Pencils Down is College Board's org-wide all-hands. All full-time staff will gather in Washington, D.C. February 25–26, 2027. It's a chance to connect with intention and see our mission in motion.

When and where will the event take place?

Pencils Down 2027 will take place at the Washington, D.C. Marriott Marquis on February 25–26.

What arrangements do I need to handle?

- **Registration:** You must register for Pencils Down 2027 online by October 9, 2026. For new full-time staff hired leading up to Pencils Down, the Pencils Down team will be in touch about next steps in order to ensure all staff can join us in Washington, D.C.
- **Travel:** You must book travel through Concur between November 2 and January 8.
- **Hotel:** Information will be shared in November 2026 about how you can book your hotel room. Do not make any reservation until you hear from the Pencils Down team.

What's the dress code? What should I pack?

The dress code is professionally comfortable. Think nice jeans and sweater rather than button down or dress. Go for the comfortable shoes. The weather in D.C. can vary in February; check the forecast before you travel (but keep in mind the core activities will take place indoors). You won't need your computer during Pencils Down, but if you need it for another reason, you can leave it in your hotel room. If you'd like to participate in a wellness activity, bring something you can work out in comfortably.

What if I need an accommodation?

Qualified individuals with a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), may receive reasonable accommodation, if appropriate. If you believe you require accommodations under the ADA, please log your case with [UNUM](#) and it will be reviewed and reach out to Talent@collegeboard.org for support. Be sure to also review the [Workplace Accommodations](#) page on myBoard. If you have any questions about accommodations and attending Pencils Down please reach out to Talent@collegeboard.org.



What's the budget code for my Pencils Down–approved expenses?

The budget code is 0300850200003.

Bringing all staff to one location for Pencils Down seems expensive. Why do we continue to make this investment?

It's true that Pencils Down comes with costs. Even so, we believe that holding space for face-to-face interaction—where staff can hear from leaders, engage with each other, and connect with our mission—is an investment worth making. We build Pencils Down to help staff see how our work matters and how our efforts contribute to great impact. By gathering in person, we continue the momentum to keep doing valuable work for the students we serve.

How are the Pencils Down dates decided?

If you think finding 25 minutes for your team sync is hard, imagine looking for multiple days to convene 2,000+ people! The Pencils Down team considers a variety of factors to avoid scheduling conflicts with our other events and key program delivery dates while securing space that can accommodate a group of our size. Some years, these constraints leave us with only one or two possible date windows.

How is the location decided?

We look for locations that are accessible for colleagues across the country, close to major airports, and have ample space to accommodate us so we can step away and into a new environment.

ATTENDANCE

Who attends Pencils Down?

Pencils Down is open to all full-time employees (FTE).

Is it required?

Yes. All FTE should plan to attend Pencils Down.

Can friends or family members join me?

While we'd love to meet your friends, pets, and family, Pencils Down is for full-time College Board staff only.

What if I'm a full-time employee and I'm unable to go?

If you're unable to attend Pencils Down, you still must complete the registration form to indicate this after getting approval from your manager. Managers who have questions about extenuating circumstances and approvals can reach out to pencilsdown@collegeboard.org.



If I'm not attending (or one of my direct reports isn't), what happens on February 25–26?

Most people will proceed with a normal work schedule while FTE are at Pencils Down. Part-time employees, contingent workers, and contractors should talk with their managers about what to expect.

Given my projected workload in February, I'm concerned about taking off for Pencils Down. What will be done to alleviate those concerns?

We know it can be overwhelming to think about not working during Pencils Down. Since the whole organization will be together—and everyone will put their pencils down—we hope the collective out-of-office energy will ease most concerns. If you have specific demands tied to your role or project timelines, talk with your manager or ELT member about how to pause them so you can take part in Pencils Down.

How should non-exempt (overtime-eligible) staff report their time during Pencils Down?

As always, non-exempt staff should record all time worked during Pencils Down in Workday. This includes time spent performing standard job duties (e.g., answering emails, meetings, etc.), as well as time spent at work-related events and activities at which attendance is expected. Below are the compensable activities for Pencils Down (times where attendance is expected):

- **Thursday, February 25:** Any time spent 12:30–5:30 p.m. (*programming*); 7:00–10:00 p.m. (*evening reception*)
 - Meals will be available from 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. This will be optional—if you attend, you should log those hours.
- **Friday, February 26:** 9:15 a.m.–1:00 p.m. (*programming*)
 - Meals will be available from 8:30–9:15 a.m. This will be optional—if you attend, you should log those hours.

Purely social and voluntary activities are not compensable and should not be recorded as work time. For instance, if you go for a run with a colleague prior to the start time of Pencils Down, that is not compensable work time.

How should non-exempt (overtime-eligible) staff report time travelled to and from Pencils Down?

If you are flying or taking a train to Pencils Down and staying overnight, you may record any travel time as work, including travel to/from the airport or train station.

If you are driving to Pencils Down you may record travel time that exceeds your normal commute time as work.

A few notes:

- We encourage you to travel to Pencils Down during work hours when possible (though we recognize you must also balance other limitations like flight schedules, prices, etc.).
- These policies are specific to Pencils Down; they may differ from past or future time reporting guidelines for non-exempt staff.
- Overtime for Pencils Down is currently budgeted in each department's budget.
- Please email Talent@collegeboard.org with any questions.



LODGING

I live in the Washington, D.C. area—do I have to stay in the hotel?

Yes, all staff will stay in the hotel block.

Does everyone get their own room, or will staff have to share?

Each staff member will have their own room.

How do I reserve a room? Do I go through Concur, like I would for normal business travel?

No. An email will be shared in early November with guidance on travel and how to reserve your room. Do not book any hotel stay until the Pencils Down team reaches out with this information.

Can staff who are married share a room?

Absolutely. Reach out to pencilsdown@collegeboard.org to request this accommodation.

TRAVEL

When do I need to arrive?

Most staff will arrive in the morning of February 25 and depart in the afternoon on February 26 (one night at the hotel). Some colleagues will arrive on February 24; this may be based on role or travel distance to D.C. The Pencils Down team will reach out to let you know when you'll need to arrive.

When should I book travel to Washington, D.C.?

You'll be able to book travel starting on November 2, 2026. All travel must be booked by January 8, 2027.

I have other questions about travel to Pencils Down.

We're excited to share more details about how to book your travel this fall, including additional FAQs. Stay tuned.