

**Retention of Records**

Records management is the establishment of a systematic procedure for control of records that must be maintained and the disposition of records no longer of value. This Record Retention Policy is the result of research for the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration. It applies to all units of the Division of Finance and Administration and affects all official documents.

An official document shall be defined as any record residing in paper, film, or electronic format that is created by an office as a record of business activity.

The University does not have a public records center or a records liaison officer; therefore, it is necessary for each department to provide its own records management. All campus departments are urged to use this policy as a model for establishing a records management program.

The six areas that must be addressed when planning and implementing a records management program are outlined below:

1. Creation of an official records inventory.

A. An inventory of all official documents shall be accomplished by all offices and will be updated at least every two years. (Records Retention Guidelines are attached)

B. All information on the inventory form will be completed to the extent known. The immediate and future value of the records, both to the University and to the state as a whole, must be determined.

(1) Records generally fall into two classes, primary and secondary. Records that are created or received by a department to accomplish its assigned functions are of importance, first of all, to the department itself. They should be kept as long as they are required for this primary purpose. Some records have a secondary value that warrants their preservation, even after the primary value has expired.

(2) The ultimate disposition of records depends upon the value that any given record may have. These values can be classified into four major types:

- (a) Administrative - defined as records that are required for management of the institution.
- (b) Legal - defined as documents required by law.
- (c) Fiscal - defined as records relating to financial matters.
- (d) Historical - defined as documents that may have historical significance.

(3) Some records have more than one type of value which must be considered in the retention and disposition of records. One value, for example, may be fiscal because a check has been written to make a payment; its fiscal value ends when the payment has been made and the check is returned to the University. It may also have legal value, depending on the purpose for which it was issued. In cases where more than one value is involved, it is necessary to check to be sure all values are considered before making a decision to destroy the document.

## 2. Assignment of responsibilities of Office of Record.

A. The Office of Record is determined when the Records Retention Inventory sheet is prepared. Normally the Office of Record is the department that maintains a document that has been officially signed by all required parties and the document has been acted upon. This document is normally the original, but in certain instances this is not the case. The Personnel Action Form is an example where the original document is not the Office of Record document. The Payroll Copy would be considered the Office of Record document since it is the final, acted upon copy of the form. When the inventory form is being completed, it should be determined by the department preparing the form, who the Office of Record is going to be. Usually, there is no question about this issue, but all parties involved should be in agreement about which department will be the Office of Record.

B. The Office of Record will maintain an up-to-date record inventory, adding records and deleting records as necessary.

C. An inventory review of all Office of Records will be conducted semi-annually by an employee of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration.

D. The Office of Record will establish a filing system to facilitate records maintenance and retrieval of information. All records will be numbered for easy retrieval; e.g., Financial Affairs, FA 001. The Office of Record will index their files and indicate alpha-numeric code.

E. Office of Record files are available for review by other departments upon appointment or with permission of department supervisor. Proper identification of person reviewing files may be required.

F. The Office of Record will determine in what format the document should be stored and is responsible for appropriate long-term retention or destruction.

G. Records of different retention periods should be noted on the outside of the storage container if all retention periods are not the same date.

H. The Office of Record will establish a system to maintain adequate security for its documents.

I. The Office of Record will certify film quality of any film generated.

3. Discovery of legal requirements for records management.

A. The official inventory will be broken down in record classes.

(1) Record classes are defined as:

- a. Accounting
- b. Administrative
- c. Budget
- d. Employee
- e. Inventory
- f. Legal
- g. Payroll
- h. Purchasing
- i. Risk Management
- j. Tax

B. Research by the office of record will be carried out on each record class to determine which local, state, or federal regulations apply to each record.

C. If there are no laws governing the retention of a record, an administrative decision by the vice chancellor will be made to that end.

D. In cases where retention intervals are known to be greater or lesser than the ones stated, use the greater time span.

4. Elimination of unnecessary duplication of records.

Control of unnecessary duplication of records will be accomplished by retaining only one copy of each document in the office of record. This copy may be film or paper, depending on legal requirements. All other copies will be destroyed when activity has ceased. In some cases, departments may decide to retain duplicate records for a short period of time after the activity has ceased. This determination should be made on an individual basis by the department involved.

5. Establish procedures for records disposition.

A. No record listed on the retention schedule as an office of record document may be destroyed until clearance has been obtained from the manager of the office of record. For example, records in Physical Plant when Physical Plant is considered the "Office of Record" would require the approval of the Director of Physical Plant before the records could be destroyed.

B. Archived record clearance should be obtained from the manager of the office of record, and the University archivist in the Mullins Library, to determine if the material has historical significance and should be kept in the Library.

C. All records that are protected by confidentiality statutes must be shredded when they are destroyed. All other records may be disposed of by normal means, i.e., trash containers or recycling bins.

D. Filmed record clearance for destruction must be obtained prior to disposition from the manager of the office of record.

E. Film quality certification will be obtained from the manager of the office of record before paper copy is destroyed.

F. Records in high risk of litigation or in litigation will not be scheduled for disposition until three years after all remedies have been satisfied.

#### 6. Electronic Storage

A. Records with long retention times should be transferred to Microfiche, Optical Disk, or some other technology that offers more efficient storage than paper.

B. For those departments that need assistance in procuring microfilm and/or related equipment, the Purchasing Department will assist with the bid process.

C. Computing Services can answer questions relating to computer output microfilming.

To assist departments in determining how long documents should be retained, the Record Retention Guidelines will list some of the documents that pertain to the University. If the document is not an official document held by the department of record, in most instances the document can be destroyed when the department has completed the fiscal year. The official document can be reviewed as noted in the schedule by contacting the "Office of Record."

As departments, outside the division of Finance and Administration, prepare their Record Retention Inventory lists, the new records will be added to the Record Retention Guidelines.

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