

PROCEDURE 2.16.5: EMAIL RETENTION

Electronic email

Generally, email messages are temporary non-vital communications and should be discarded routinely. However, depending on the content of the email, it may be considered a “record” under the record retention policy of the college. Accordingly, employees have the same responsibilities for email messages as they do for any other format of college information.

Email retention

Records includes information, regardless of physical characteristic created or received by the college and should be preserved because of informational or evidentiary value to the college. The definition includes electronic records, such as emails. The definition doesn't include preliminary drafts, notes, or intra-college memoranda not to be retained under the record retention policy.

Email itself isn't considered a record or a series or category of records; it's a means of transmission of messages or information. Retention or disposition of emails must be related to the record or non-record they contain or the purpose they serve. Thus, the retention period is determined by the content of the email, not the medium.

Attachments should be retained or disposed of according to the content of the attachment itself under the record retention policy, not the email which transmits the attachment. Thus, attachments should be retained if they constitute a document which the recipient or the sender would ordinarily retain under the record retention policy.

Personal correspondence (e.g., When are you having lunch today?) or intra-college emails (e.g. What time is the meeting today?) should routinely be deleted unless either the sender or the recipient would have retained the writing had it been sent in any other form according to the record retention policy, or unless it's subject to a legal hold under the record retention policy. Email from outside of the college should be retained by the recipient if he or she would have retained the document had it been sent in any other form, if it's a record.

Retention responsibility

The email sender is responsible for ensuring proper retention of email records sent within the college. All other copies are duplicates and may be deleted. However, if a record email was sent by a party outside the college, the recipient is responsible for retention.

Legal holds

Regardless of retention requirements, email and all other electronic copies of paper documents subject to legal holds under the record retention policy must be retained until the legal

hold is terminated. If you're subject to a legal hold and you have any questions about the preservation of e-mail, contact IT for additional information and assistance.

Email storage and back-up

Email should be considered a communication tool, not a storage mechanism. Back-up records are for disaster recovery purposes only. There will be no restoration of selected messages or selected mailboxes from the server backups. Retention is the responsibility of the sender of the message, not the back-up process. Therefore, the college will permit employees to keep emails on the server for one year after receipt. After one year, they're deleted unless they're moved to a specific folder. Back-up copies performed by IT aren't records retention. Back-up records are retained for one year.

Method of retention

Email records that haven't met their retention period prior to the expiration of one year and emails subject to legal holds should be saved by one of the following methods:

- Print the email, and store the hard copy in the appropriate file. Printing and retaining in hard copy is a perfectly acceptable means for long-term preservation of email in the regular course of business. Preservation, however, for a litigation hold requires messages to be preserved electronically, if they exist(ed) electronically at the time the preservation duty arose.
- Electronically move the email out of your inbox, and move it within a folder.

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