

1. Electronic Mail

Generally, e-mail messages are temporary communications which are non-vital and should be discarded routinely. However, depending on the content of the e-mail, it may be considered a “record” under the Record Retention Policy of the College. Accordingly, employees have the same responsibilities for e-mail messages as they do for any other format of College information under the Record Retention Policy.

2. Retention of E-mails

The definition of “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 e-mails. The definition does not include preliminary drafts, notes, or intra-College memoranda that are not to be retained under the Record Retention Policy.

E-mail itself is not considered a “record” or a series or category of “records”; it is a means of transmission of messages or information. Retention or disposition of e-mails 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 e-mail, 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 e-mail 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 is subject to a “legal hold” under Record Retention Policy. E-mail 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, that is if it is a record.

3. Responsibility for Retention

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

4. Legal Holds

Regardless of retention requirements, e-mail and all other electronic copies of paper documents that are subject to legal holds under the Record Retention Policy must be retained until the legal hold is terminated. If you are subject to a legal hold and you have any questions about the preservation of e-mail, please contact IT management for additional information and assistance.

5. Storage of E-mails and Back-up

E-mail should be considered a communication tool, not a storage mechanism. Back-up tapes are for disaster recovery purposes only. There will be no restoration of selected messages or selected mailboxes from the server backup tapes. Retention is the responsibility of the sender of the message, not the back-up process. Therefore, the College will permit employees to keep e-mails on the server for one year after receipt. After one year, they will be deleted unless they are moved to a specific folder. Back-up copies performed by IT management and staff are not records retention. Back-up tapes will be retained for one (1) year.

6. Method of Retention

E-mail records that have not met their retention period prior to the expiration of one year and e-mails subject to legal holds should be saved by one of the following methods:

- a. Print the e-mail and store the hard copy in the appropriate file. Please note that printing and retaining in hard copy is a perfectly acceptable means for long term preservation of e-mail in the regular course of business. Note, however, that preservation for a litigation hold will require messages to be preserved electronically, if they exist(ed) electronically at the time the preservation duty arose.
- b. Electronically move the e-mail out of your in box and move it within a folder.