# Managing Records: Handbook for University Offices
Ferris State University
Records Management Manual

November 2003
Revised October 2009

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1950, following the passage of the Smith-Vanderberg Act, Ferris Institute changed from a privately held cooperative to a state institution. In 1987, Ferris State College became Ferris State University. As a public institution, Ferris State has certain recordkeeping requirements, which are mandated by the state. Records occur in a variety of formats including paper and electronic records.

An active records management and archival program, however, provides numerous benefits in addition to merely fulfilling state requirements. It improves administrative efficiency by arranging for transfer and disposal of obsolete records and preserves documents of administrative and historical value through transfer to the University Archives.

The University Archives and Records Management Program (UARMP) administers, preserves, and services the university's records including: records generated by administrative and academic units; records generated by committees, commissions, and governance organizations, both faculty and student; records which document events, athletic and cultural activities, campus organizations, residential units, and other aspects of campus life; and records generated by alumni activities. The archives also collects records of organizations related to the University and selected personal and professional papers of university faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

The University Archives and Records Management Program has prepared this manual to help employees maintain well-organized active files, and to anticipate the transfer of appropriate inactive University records to the archives. Questions about the policies and procedures described in this manual should be directed to the University Archives and Records Management Program, (currently located in FLITE 358) at either 591-3731 or to Melinda_McMartin@ferris.edu.

# PRINCIPLES OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

*Did you know?*

- *Executives spend approximately 3 hours per week searching for lost files?*
- *Offices typically keep 30% of records that they do not need to keep? In storage they keep an additional 40% of unnccessary records?*
- *Cleaning out one file cabinet can save the University over $1000?*
- *Destruction of records in a systematic fashion could minimize legal problems?*
- *Records management can increase retrieval and office productivity?*

**Records management** has been defined as "the systematic management of the creation, maintenance, retention, destruction and preservation of records." It can be likened to a course in cell biology where records are charted into a life cycle process. The stages of the cycle are:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1) Creation- | At this stage, physical form and informational content are established. |
| 2) Active Use- | In the office. |
| 3) Inactive Use- | In the office, but perhaps filed away in the cabinet in the corner. Referred to infrequently. These records belong in an Inactive Records Center. |
| 4) Disposition- | Either destruction or transferral to University Archives. |

Because of the vast proliferation of records in recent decades, it is important to establish controls in order to facilitate retrieval, or an office is likely to be overwhelmed. There are just too many pieces of information created and used by an organization to make it possible to keep everything. Records management attempts to control records throughout the life cycle. During creation, records are controlled through forms management and copy management. During the use and maintenance phases, records are controlled through filing systems. (Is it centralized? Is it numeric, alphabetical or a combination?) Disposition of records also facilitates control for the proper and feasible maintenance of records once past the active stage.

The goals of an records management program are to:

- Improve the office productivity
- Eliminate errors in filing and retrieval
- Reduce liability
- Preserve vital records
- Facilitate the exchange of information.

Records management uses a variety of procedures to control the flow of information. Here are some common terms associated with records management that are used throughout this manual.

**Active records**: records in an office used at least once a month.

**Administrative value**: the usefulness of records to the originating office for carrying out daily activities.

**Appraisal**: the evaluation of records to determine their value and proper disposition.

**Archives**: an area that preserves records of enduring value.

**Convenience copy**: extra copy of a document kept solely for convenience or reference. This is a non-record.

**Disposition**: final stage in a record's life cycle involving either destruction, transfer to inactive storage with specified destruction date or transfer to the University Archives. This is when a record no longer has administrative, fiscal, or legal value.

**Filing**: the process of sorting and arranging, classifying or categorizing and storing records so that they can be retrieved when needed.

**Fiscal value:** the usefulness of records for information about fiscal obligations of the organization.

**Historical value**: the usefulness of records for historical research concerning an organization's function and development or for information about persons, places, and events.

**Inactive records**: records in use less than once a year by the office.

**Inactive records center**: an area for storing inactive records.

**Informational value:** factual data about persons, events, problems, and conditions of the record creator, which may be useful in studies about the records.

**Life-cycle**: theory that paperwork of an institution goes through distinct phases: creation, use, storage, and disposition.

**Non-record**: stocks of printed or reproduced documents kept for supply purposes.

**Originating office**: office which produces record.

**Official copy/Record copy**: office which is designated as record office for that record, record not needed to be kept by other offices. Listed on retention schedules.

**Permanent records**: records having sufficient historical or other value to warrant permanent or continued preservation beyond the time they are needed for administrative, legal, or fiscal purposes.

**Record:** recorded information regardless of form or medium.

**Records Retention schedule**: the timetable and description of a record's series life cycle including instructions for disposition.

**Record series**: a group of identical or related records that are usually used and filed as a unit, because they result from the same activity or function, or have some relationship arising from their creation, receipt, etc. and that permit evaluation as a unit for retention scheduling purposes.

**Records survey:** an identification and evaluation of all the records in the office for the purpose of creating a retention schedule.

**Retention**: the process of holding documents for use.

**Scheduling**: the process of analyzing and appraising the value of a given set of records and preparing a retention schedule for disposition.

**Transfer**: movement of records from one custodian to another (i.e. office to University Archives). The transfer list details records being moved into the archives or inactive records center.

**Vital records**: records containing information required to re-establish or continue operation of an organization in the event of a disaster; records containing unique and irreplacable information necessary to recreate an organization's legal and financial position, and preserve the right of the organization.

## AUTHORIZATION

The following business policy letter was submitted to the Vice-President for Administration and Finance and approved by the Presidents Council in January 2010.

**BUSINESS POLICY**

To: All Members of the University Community 2010:06

Date: January 2010

**University Records Management**

I. **POLICY**

A. The records of the official activities of Ferris State University as defined in the following section are the property of Ferris State University.

II. **SCOPE.**

A. University records are all records prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by administrators, faculty acting in administrative capacities and staff of university units in the performance of an official function, including student records.

B. Records mean a document, paper, letter or writing including documents, papers, books, letters or writings prepared by handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating or photocopying; or a photograph; film, map, magnetic or paper tape, microform, magnetic or punch card, disc, drum, sound or video recording, electronic data processing (may include word processing files, databases, web documents and any other electronic produced format) material or other recording medium, and includes individual letters, words, pictures, sounds, impulses or symbols, or combination thereof, regardless of physical form or characteristics. Record may also include a record series if applicable.

III. **RESPONSIBILITIES**.

A. It is the responsibility of the respective offices to coordinate with the University Archives and Records Management Program (UARMP) to ensure that records are maintained appropriately and that those records that document the history and activities of the University community are transferred to the archives.

B. Individual offices are also responsible for making certain that 4 copies of official University publications (publications produced as a result of University operations and represent the University as a whole – examples may include: campus directories, school newspapers, Ferris magazines, students handbooks and audited financial reports) are deposited immediately upon publication in the University Archives. The UARMP will arrange for deposit of appropriate publications in the Library of Michigan as required.

# ACCESS POLICIES

University records are public records and once fully processed are generally open to research use. Records held within the Inactive Records Center that are not archival are only available to the originating unit. Units may be asked to fill out documentation for return of records.

Records that contain personally identifiable information will be restricted in order to protect individual privacy. Certain administrative records are restricted in accordance with university policy as outlined below. The restriction of university records is subject to compliance with applicable laws, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

**Categories of Restricted Records**

- Personnel related records, including search, review, promotion, and tenure files, are restricted for thirty years from date of creation.
- Student educational records are restricted for seventy-five years from date of creation.
- Patient/client records are restricted for one-hundred years from date of creation.
- High level administrative records such as deans and vice-presidential records are restricted for twenty five years

For further information on the restriction policy and placing FOIA requests for restricted material, consult the university archivist.

## IMPLEMENTATION FOR UNITS

All units need to designate a records officer for their area. This person will serve as point of contact for the University Archives and provide updates to schedules. This person will also authorize the release of records held within the Inactive Records Center.

If offices are not under an approved state schedule, they need to follow the survey process as detailed in this manual.

## THE RECORDS SURVEY

The purpose of the records survey is to identify all the records created by an office/unit, and to note the extent and nature of their use. It is an opportunity to discover and fix problems with the current recordkeeping system, and anticipate future problems.

The University Archives and Records Management Program will work with departments to conduct a records survey. Please contact the UARMP for assistance. Staff will set up an initial meeting to discuss with the department the functions of the department and the types of records that document that function. They will then go over the Records Inventory form with the department. (See appendix for Records Inventory Form)

By-products of the records survey can provide information for an office on: identifying problems, program planning, system design, procedural improvements, vital record identification, historical record identification, establishment of better indexing/retrieval systems, and background for automation projects.

## USING RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES

Records retention schedules are one of the core documents of a records management system. These schedules detail the life cycle of a record. They identify the record series and prescribe how long series must be maintained, as well as their ultimate disposition of either destruction or preservation.

Retention schedules must be approved by the State of Michigan. A general records schedule has been approved by the state and is included in the appendix of this manual. It contains descriptions of many common types of records in the University. **This schedule is not intended to cover records that might be unique to a department or office.** Special schedules for such records are developed in cooperation with the University Archives and Records Management Program and offices during the survey process and will be added to the manual at a later date. Office retention schedules are reviewed anually.

To read the retention schedules, work from left to right. The first column entitled "Record Series/Description" is a brief title that captures the function of the record (i.e. Correspondence or Publication."), and a paragraph detailing the types of records commonly found. This list does not need to be all-inclusive. Record series titles are created by the department and archivist, and will be as consistent as possible across University offices. Column 2, or "Department Retention" details the estimated high-reference usage for the records. The third column "Records Center Retention" identifies legal requirements for keeping records that may no longer be frequently used. The fourth column, "Archives" describes the ultimate disposition of the records that have some historical information. Not all of these records may be kept permanently, but they must be reviewed by the University Archives and Records Management Program prior to destruction. Other records, such as receipts and bookkeeping documentation may say "Destroy." These records are not permanent and should be transferred to the records center for destruction. **NO RECORDS MAY BE DESTROYED WITHOUT PROPER CERTIFICATION.** (See Destruction of Records.) Non-records as detailed in the retention schedule, may be destroyed in offices without certification. If there are any questions of what constitutes a record, and whether certification is needed, contact the University Archives.

## TRANSFERRAL OF RECORDS

Before transferral of records to the Archives, a records survey of the entire office is strongly advised by the University Archives and Records Management Program. General information on the records survey may be found in the records survey section.

Records must be transferred in standard one cubic- foot boxes, preferably acid-free. The UARMP has a limited supply of boxes, which may be requested for the transfer of records to either the archives or inactive records center. Boxes must have lids. DO NOT USE BANKERS BOXES, WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO HOLD THE CONTENT OF AN ENTIRE FILE DRAWER. Usually, approximately 2/3 of a file drawer will fit into a one cubic-foot box.

1. Fill boxes from front to back, keeping material in original order. For records arranged chronologically, the earliest records should be in front. If records are arranged alphabetically, place "A" in front. If records require more than one box, number boxes in order.

2. Prepare a list of box contents, which includes the number of the box and the title of each folder as written on the label. Attach the list to the records transfer form, and send it as an email attachment to the University Archives and Records Management Program within 30 days.

3. Complete a Records Transfer Form. This form is available in the Appendix and from the University Archives and Records Management Program.

4. Call the UARMP at x3731, and notify them that a transfer is in process.

5. Deliver material to the archives through interdepartmental moves by calling the Physical Plant and following normal work-order procedures. Records transfers of less than 15 boxes may be done through University Archives if staffing permits. Materials may also be delivered to the University Archives, when prior arrangements have been made with the University Archivist.

*Upon receipt, the University Archives and Records Management Program staff will assign an accession number to each group of materials. This number will consist of three parts: the initials of the Records Center (RC), the year of accession, and the number of the accession as it is received in consecutive order for that year. For example, the 18th accession received in 2002 will have an accession number RC-2002-18. The originating office will receive notification of receipt of the material in the form of a copy of the inventory with accession number. Keep receipts on file for later retrieval of material.

## STORAGE OF RECORDS

Inactive records may be stored for University departments in the Inactive Records Center. In order to transfer records to the Inactive Records Center, follow procedures for transferral to UARMP, but mark materials for the inactive record center on form rather than archives. Records received will be given a date for destruction or transferral into the archives. Receipts must be maintained by the office, as the accession number will be the locator by which records are found for later retrieval.

For retrieval of records located in the Inactive Records Center, call the UARMP at x3731. The staff will retrieve records as quickly as possible. Records may also be reviewed between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. in the University Archives reading room in Alumni 101.

Documentation may need to be filled out for return of records at the discretion of the University Archivist.

# DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS

Not all records are of archival nature and indeed should not be retained past their scheduled retention. In order to protect the University and individuals involved, records not scheduled for permanent retention that contain private or sensitive material must be destroyed. Generally, records which contain personal information such as birth dates, social security numbers, bank account numbers and other items require confidential destruction. State law requires that a copy of certification be filed every time a destruction is requested. Certification is not necessary for non-records.

1. Certificates of Records Disposal are completed for records when the schedules indicate they are to be destroyed or transferred to the University Archives. They are completed at the time of destruction or transfer by departmental records personnel.

2. The designated records officer for each office will send the completed Certificate of Disposal to the University Archives and Records Management Program 30 days prior to the intended destruction. The State of Michigan requires at least a 30 day notice of intended destructions and the UARMP is responsible for this notification. Materials will be reviewed with General Counsel.

3. The University Archivist will review, sign, and return a copy of the form to its originator. A copy is maintained in the files of the University Records Management Program for the Department. The department copy is a non-record which can be destroyed.

4. Records may be destroyed.

# Appendix A- General Retention Schedule

This Retention and Disposal Schedule covers general records common to most offices at the University. The records described are necessary:

1. for the continued effective operation of the University,
2. to constitute an adequate and proper recording of University activities, and
3. to protect the legal rights of the University and its students.

Specific originator or departmental records may have unique record retention schedules for a variety of reasons including the need to conform to explicit federal or state regulations. In that regard, departmental record retention schedules may be inconsistent with or fall outside of this general record schedule, and will take precedence over this general schedule. Employees are urged to consult the University's Archivist for assistance in this regard.

If departments are unable to retain records for the length of time set out in this general record schedule due to space constraints, consult the University's Archivist for assistance and storage at the Record Center.

| Item No | Record Series, Title and Description | Department Retention | Records Center Retention | University Archives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GS.1 | **Transitory Correspondence**. Transitory correspondence is written communication of short-term interest, which has no documentary value. This type of correspondence has limited administrative and evidential value, which is lost soon after the communication is received. Transitory correspondence do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction or become a receipt. Examples of transitory correspondence include routine requests for information which require no administrative action, policy decision, special compilation or research. This type of record also includes notifications of an upcoming meeting and similar records. | CR+1 | Destroy-ID | |
| GS.2 | **General Correspondence.** General correspondence may exist in a variety of formats including memos, letters, notes and electronic mail messages. If the correspondence pertains to a specific project or case, it should be filed within that project or case file. | CR+2 | 5 years | Yes |
| GS.3 | **Managerial File.** These records are used to support activities of the departments. Document types may include periodic activity reports (narrative and statistical), special reports, topical correspondence, research materials, project planning notes, organizational information, Unit Action Plans, and other information necessary for the performance of the function to which the department has been assigned. Managerial files do not | ACT+5 | 5 years | Yes |

| Item No | Record Series, Title and Description | Department Retention | Records Center Retention | University Archives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | include files related to specific subjects, individual students, employees, accounting, or other related files. | | | |
| GS.4 | **Policies, Procedures and Directives.** These records include manuals, policies, procedures, executive orders, information sheets, memos, etc. They do not include distribution and reference copies, or the documentation used to create the policy, procedure, or directive. | SUP | 1 year | Yes |
| GS.5 | **Meeting Records.** These records may include agendas, supporting documentation, original signed minutes, and tape and video recordings. If tape and video recordings are transcribed, the original recordings can be destroyed. These records do not include meeting notices and bulletins and documentation of expenditures. This series includes advisory boards, committees, and task forces of the University. | CR+5 | 3 years | Yes |
| GS.6 | **Staff Meeting Minutes.** These are minutes taken during staff meetings but do not include individual notes taken during the meeting by participants, which may list tasks the participant must do, etc. Agendas are not necessary for staff meetings when minutes are available. | CR+2 | 3 years | Yes |
| GS.7 | **Budget Documentation.** These files are maintained for budget planning and allocation purposes for each department. They do not include the official budget records, which are maintained by the Budget or Finance Office. | CR+5 | 1 year<br>Destroy | |
| GS.8 | **Bookkeeping/Accounting/Inventory Documentation.** These records are departmental bookkeeping, accounting and inventory records. These may includes copies of purchase orders, POWCS, purchasing card transactions with original backup records, travel records, vouchers and related cost and asset control records. | CR+7 | Destroy-ID | |
| GS.9 | **Departmental Personnel and Payroll Records.** These records are files maintained by departments regarding employees and student employees within each department. These generally include copies of Employee Assignment Action forms (EAA's), performance evaluations, Intent to Hire forms, Drug Free Workplace letters, excused absence forms, recap time sheets, and other copies of similar records, but do not include records pertaining to work study or similar financial aid records for student employees. The original records are maintained in Human Resources and Payroll and are subject to applicable federal and state laws. | ACT+5 | Destroy-ID | |
| GS.10 | **University Publications.** Publications and documents which are published and/or distributed outside of the University. (Supported | ACT+1<br>(Upon creation, | | Send to<br>Archives at |

| Item No | Record Series, Title and Description | Department Retention | Records Center Retention | University Archives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | by Public Act 540 of 1982 and Executive Directive 1983-2, the Library of Michigan must receive two (2) copies of each document which is published and/or distributed outside the University.) | transfer 5 copies to Archivist. Archivist shall send two (2) copies to Library of Michigan.) | | point of creation |
| GS.11 | **Search Committee materials.** These series of records include documentation pertaining to the posting and search of candidates for open University positions. These may include the posting, advertisements, letters of application and resumes, and Appointment Activity Record. | ACT+7 | Destroy-ID | |
| GS.12 | **Student Records.** These records are records pertaining to students of the University. Retention schedules for specific departments/divisions developed in accordance with applicable state and/or federal law shall apply. | See specific departmental schedules. | | |
| GS.13 | **Other Business Records.** These records are other business records that are identified in the approved November 15, 1994 Business Affairs Schedule, which is incorporated herein by reference. These records may include such records generated for Risk Management, Administrative Services, Finance, etc. | See 11-15-94 Approved Business Affairs Schedule. | | |
| GS.14 | **Non-Records.** These records are records that do not document significant activities of the University and are further identified in the March 19, 2002 approved Non-Record Schedule. | See 3-19-02 Approved Non-Record Schedule | | |

Key:

ACT = Active
CR = Creation
SUP = Retain Until Superceded
CY = Calendar Year (current)
ID = Immediate Disposal
FY = Fiscal Year (current)
PM = Permanent
y = year(s)

## Non-Records

Non-Records are such items as: extra copies; convenience copies, FSU publications not generated by your unit, drafts, transmittal letters; notes, notices memos (of community events, holidays and items such as catalogs and trade journals. If you have any questions about what is a non record, please contact the University Archivist.

Appendix B. Records Transfer Memo

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

# Records Transfer Memo

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***To:*** *UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM* | | **Page**<br>_____ of _____ | **Date** |
| From: | **Division** | **Department** | |
| | **Originator's Name** | **Telephone Extension** | |
| **LOCATION** | | **Email address** | |
| **BOX/FOLDER LIST** | | | |
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| **INACTIVE RECORDS CENTER**<br><br>**ARCHIVES** | **# DONOR/OFFICE** | **# OF BOXES** | **DATES** |

Appendix C. Certificate of Destruction

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

# Certificate of Destruction

For Records on Approved Retention Schedule

| | | AUTHORITY |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Date of Approved Schedule or Manual** |
| **Date** | **Records Officer** | |
| **Division** | **Department/Unit** | **Phone / E-mail** |
| **Location** | | |

| Records Disposed Of | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Dates Covered | | |
| Records Series (Include series title, schedule number and retention group number) | From | Thru | Estimated Volume (Cubic Feet) |
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☐ **Destroyed** ☐ **Transferred to Records Center for destruction**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Title** |
| **Signature** | **Date** |