

Records and Information Management

Discussion of University Records

There are many definitions of what a record is and is not, however the University of Illinois, as a state institution, recognizes the definition as put forth by the Illinois State Records Act (5 ILCS 160/2) (from Ch. 116, par. 43.5):

"Record" or "records" means all books, papers, digitized electronic material, maps, photographs, databases, or other official documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made, produced, executed or received by any agency in the State in pursuance of state law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its successor as evidence of the organization, function, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the State or of the State Government, or because of the informational data contained therein....

University Records

University Records are compiled sources of information that represent official actions and transactions conducted by and on behalf of the University and are identified as supporting University functions.

Examples of University records of enduring value may include, but are not limited to:

- Documents representing official policies (University-wide, campus-wide, internal department)
- Recorded correspondence (including email) related to business or academic matters
- Documents representing administrative decisions (University or campus planning, program development, tuition rate changes, reorganization, or consolidation of departments)
- Meeting minutes and agendas
- Annual Budget Reports
- Course catalogs and timetables
- Student grades and transcripts
- Annual Payroll Summary Reports
- Financial documents (purchasing and procurement transactions, reimbursement records)

Examples of University records of temporary value include:

- Purchasing Records for General Operations
- Monthly Budget Reports
- Time Sheets

Documents vs. Records

The distinction between a document and a record may seem merely a matter of semantics but understanding this distinction is important. For the University to remain in compliance with laws and

regulations related to records retention and disposal understanding the difference between records and non-records is essential.

Documents as Records - Documents may be records if they are created or used for providing primary evidence of or support for actions taken by individuals or departments in conducting University business.

Some *documents as records* will need to be kept for a short period of time (a short retention period). For example, documents supporting reimbursements for approved travel will only be needed for the standard period of retention for common financial transactions, usually five fiscal years plus the current year.

Some *documents as records* will need to be kept for a very long period of time (a long retention period). Records of “enduring value” are considered more or less permanent or archival. For example, documents that are records of enduring value include those that note significant administrative decisions such as tuition increases or changes in organizational structures both administratively and academically. Correspondence to or from top-level administrators (in hard-copy formats or electronic formats such as email) is also considered to be of enduring value.

Documents as Non-records but Still Valuable - Documents may be non-records and still be highly valuable and vital to the workflow of many units. Documents that are non-records may still be expected to be kept for a specific period of time to facilitate future business processes. (For example some units may want to have ready access to copies of contracts for use when drafting new contracts for similar goods and services.) For this reason departments may establish a practice of retaining non-record documents for a specified period of time similarly to how retention periods for records are established.

Documents as Non-records with Limited Value - Some documents will have very short term value and can be discarded at the discretion of each individual when they are no longer needed for their personal reference.

Examples of documents as non-records with limited value include the following:

- Drafts of reports, documents, or files
- Reference copies of reports, documents or files
- Day-to-day correspondence (setting meeting times, providing casual feedback, etc.)
- Test versions of software and datasets
- Vendor catalogs and promotional materials