**What is a record?**

All College employees create, use, and store College records every day. A record is any kind of recorded information, regardless of the medium or characteristics of the record; that is created, received and/or maintained by any employee of a public institution, including the College. Therefore, a record is defined by the contents, not the format. For example, a memo might be on paper, or a PDF attached to an email – both are memos. A record could be on paper, microfilm, CDs, discs, tapes, in Banner, emails, databases, or other systems.

- ✓ has **Content**, that is the text, data, metadata, symbols, numerals, images, and/or sounds that make up the substance of the record
- ✓ has **Structure** that is the physicality and internal organization of the Content.
- ✓ has **Fixity**, that is the quality of the Content being stable and resisting change
- ✓ has **Context**, that is the organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding a record's creation, receipt, storage, or use, and
- ✓ is maintained as **Evidence** of an organization's activity

Therefore, a record is "…any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic…" that has been created or received in the course of a University department/unit/organization's business that meets the criteria of content, structure, fixity, context as discussed above, and is maintained as evidence of the organization's activity(s).

Records may include but are not limited to:

- ✓ general correspondence
- ✓ financial transactional records
- ✓ working papers, including drafts, versions, and copies databases (including the underlying tables, as well as routine reports)
- ✓ student and course documentation and transcripts
- ✓ personnel documentation
- ✓ web sites (including Web pages, images, documents, and audio/video files)
- ✓ electronic backup media (including tapes, disks, and other storage devices)
- ✓ e-mail

**What is not a record?**

Personal notes, research and writing published by faculty, junk mail and electronic "spam", email that is strictly personal in nature, and subscriptions are not College records.

If a "record" is "…any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received…which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office…"

Then a "non-record" is any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received that DOES NOT serve to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. Non-records may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Personal correspondence

- ✓ Junk mail/spam
- ✓ Catalogs
- ✓ Journals, books, other library materials

**The Ohio Revised Code**
(ORC) defines what records are for the "public" agencies, organizations, and institutions that must adhere to these regulations:

**Laws and Regulations**
- **General Records Regulations** Ohio Revised Code Title 1, Chapter 149

  **http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/149**

- **Public Records Inspection** Ohio Revised Code Title 1, Chapter 149.43

  **http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/149.43v1**

**What is records management?**
Records Management facilitates the systematic control of College records throughout their life cycle, ensuring that records are stored and disposed of properly. Records Management ensures that records and information are easily retrievable and kept only as long as needed. Management of records reduces cost and supports efficient business functions. It also mitigates legal risk to the College and helps ensure that the public records laws are followed.

**Why should I care about Records Management?**
As a public institution in Ohio, the College is subject to a variety of laws and regulations, including the Ohio Public Records Act, which prescribes the manner in which the College must maintain and dispose of its records. In short, the College has legal and ethical obligations to manage and dispose of its records in a consistent, transparent and efficient manner. The penalties for non-compliance with these laws and regulations are significant. Non-compliance could also cause serious damage to the College's reputation. Also, consistent management of records makes it easier to complete tasks, locate information, and make better use of limited resources.

**Who is responsible for Records Management at the College?**
*We are all responsible*. Every employee is responsible for creating, storing, and properly disposing of records in conformity with the College's Records Retention Schedule. The Records Management department, in collaboration with the Office of legal Services, is responsible for guiding and communicating College-wide records policies and procedures. The Records Management team is available to work with departments to give them the tools and advice they need to address their records responsibilities.

**How do I know when I can dispose of a record?**
All College records should be disposed according to the current College Records Retention Schedule.

**What is a Retention Schedule?**
A Records Retention Schedule is a legal document that guides all decisions related to the maintenance and disposal of College records. Retention schedules are used by public and private institutions throughout Ohio and the world. The Records Retention Schedule lists categories of records that are created or received by the College, and also indicates the office that is responsible for maintaining and disposing of each category of records. The schedule further provides how long each type of record must be retained. The College's Records Retention Schedule is a living document that is revised when either legal requirements change or business practices are modified. Contact the Records Management department of the Office of Legal Services if you believe the Records Retention Schedule needs to be revised.

**How do I get a copy of the College's Records Retention Schedule?**
The College's Records Retention Schedule is available on-line via *My Tri-C Space*. On the General Tab click on KWeb. This will take you to KWeb Home. Type Records Management in the search box. The Records Retention Schedule is also available on the College's external website [www.Tri-C.edu](www.Tri-C.edu).

**Isn't it safer to just keep everything?**
**No!** Failing to dispose of records in compliance with the retention schedule puts the College at legal risk. Overflowing file cabinets and servers also make it more difficult and expensive to conduct work at the College. Also, trying to keep everything makes departments less likely to focus their energy on preserving vital records and historical records that actually need to be preserved in the College Archive.

**I don't have room for all of my paper files, but I can't dispose of them yet. What do I do?**
Storing records in the secure College Records Center may be a good choice for your department. Contact the Records Center at [Tri-CRecordsCenter@tri-c.edu](mailto:Tri-CRecordsCenter@tri-c.edu) or call Tracy Love x3184.

**Why did the College implement a 1-year retention period for all emails?**
Most College emails are of a transient nature and do not contain information subject to the College's Records Retention Schedule. However, some emails do contain agreements, contracts and other items that fall into a retention category, or need to be maintained for grant purposes or program reviews. These emails can be printed and filed, or they can be saved to a departmental shared drive until their retention time frame has been met.
Limiting email retention to 1 year significantly reduces the College's annual expenditures and enables the College to respond in a timely manner to legal requests for records.

**What is a Preservation Notice (Where to search and what to retain?)**
The Office of Legal Services has issued a preservation notice that may be related to some of your records. A legal hold is a process which aims to preserve all forms of relevant information when litigation is reasonably anticipated. Records that have met their retention but need to be preserved as detailed in a preservation notice may not be destroyed until the preservation notice has been cancelled.
The preservation notice will provide details about the subject matter that you should preserve. Some of the media records may be found are:
- ✓ Paper (onsite, Records Center or home)
- ✓ Email (CCC and personal accounts)
- ✓ Texts (CCC and personal phones)
- ✓ Microfilm/Microfiche
- ✓ Tape/Cassette/Film
- ✓ Magnetic tape/USB/Hard drives/Computers/Backups)
- ✓ Electronic Systems (shared drives, Office 365, databases, other systems)
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Voicemail

- **Who owns the records? Where are they kept?**
  - o The records are owned by Cuyahoga Community College and managed by the Records Management office. The records themselves are the responsibility of each individual unit on campus and kept in their offices, whether in filing cabinets, if physical, or on servers, if digital.
- **What is the General Retention Schedule?**
  - o The General Retention Schedule is a document that lists common records created by most departments and colleges on campus. Each entry on the General Schedule is referenced by the appropriate IUC guideline. If an item is not listed on the General Schedule, an individual unit-specific or department-specific schedule must be created.
- **What is a departmental/office retention schedule?**
  - o A retention schedule is a document prepared for an individual unit on campus that details which records they have, the classification of those records (called series), as well as the time period those records must be kept, according to guidelines set forth by the Inter-University Council (IUC), state and/or federal law, and any applicable accrediting organizations. Individual retention schedules only need to be created for items that are **not** listed on the General Retention Schedule.
- **What if I want to keep the records longer (or shorter) than the general retention schedule states?**
  - o Retention periods establish the **minimum** amount of time a record should be maintained, as per law. The Records Management Office recommends not keeping items longer than the law requires. It causes space and disorganization problems, as well as opens the College up to liability. Unless you have a legitimate business reason to maintain a record for longer than advised on a retention schedule (i.e., for accrediting cycles), please contact the Records Management Office to customize your retention schedule accordingly.

- **What is a Certificate of Disposal?**
  - A Certificate of Disposal is an official document that details the records that are to be disposed. This is very important because it covers Cuyahoga Community College's liability for those records. It must be completed for all records, both print and electronic, and applies even though an office may not have its own retention schedule.
- **What about email?**
  - It is assumed that most emails document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office, therefore, most emails are considered records. As such, they should not be routinely deleted without examining them for content. If they fit the criteria for deletion, a Certificate of Disposal needs to be filed with the Office of Records Management.
- **If my office makes digital copies of our records, do we need to keep the paper copies?**
  - It is acceptable to digitize and shred the hard copies. If digitizing, PDF/A is the preferred format. The Ohio Revised Code section 9.01 addresses this. Note that due to the unstable nature of electronic records and the changing nature of technology, the State of Ohio Archives recommends also transferring these records to microfilm before destroying original paper records (The Ohio History Connection's Local Government Records Program website is a good resource to read more about this).

**Statement on Maintaining Digitally Imaged Records Permanently**
www.ohiohistory.org
Statement issued by the State Archives of Ohio on the practice of destroying the paper copies of records that have long-term, historical, value and only keeping copies of those records in electronic format.


**Where can I obtain more information about records?**
Contact Dannita JacksonBey, Director of Records Management x4782.

**Where can I obtain more information about email retention?**
Contact Dannita JacksonBey, Director of Records Management x4782.