

Appendix A

Establishing A Records Retention And Disposition Program: The Basics

Public colleges and universities in Ohio vary in size and in resources. As a result, each conducts programs of records management in ways appropriate to the institutional context. The following identifies basic issues and concerns that need to be addressed in any program in which the objective is to manage the retention and disposition of records rationally and effectively. These are matters of authority, communication, procedure, and monitoring. At the end of this section are sample forms that can be adapted for use in programs of records management (forms are not available on CD).

Authority

There are two kinds of records management authority: programmatic and approval. Programmatic authority establishes the records program as policy for the institution and identifies the person or office to direct the program. A source of programmatic authority is the board of trustees.

Programs of records management should be assigned to one office. The designated records manager should have awareness of what kinds of records exist at the institution and where they are located. With this knowledge, the records manager can inform appropriate offices of changes in requirements in a consistent manner.

Approval authority establishes who makes decisions about the disposition of records. Some institutions may wish to establish a records committee to review and approve schedules. Others may vest approval authority in one person. A committee can serve as a source of guidance for the program as a whole, or as a review board in matters of dispute. Typically, records committees include the archivist, representatives from legal counsel, internal auditing, and the treasurer, or another office with fiscal responsibility, planning and budgeting.

Communication

Regardless of where authority is located, a program of records management requires regular communication with all departments. Methods commonly used

to ensure that records management remains an active and viable program include an annual contact to remind appropriate personnel about the records management program and schedules, a procedures manual, workshops, newsletters and circulars. Another approach is to designate records officers in each division to communicate with records creators and to work in liaison with central records management.

Procedural Issues

Gathering information about records at the college or university is critical to the function of any program of records management. Knowledge of where specific records are kept and by whom is necessary in order to direct inquiries and to alter schedules when legal requirements change. In addition, compliance with the records program must be monitored in order to determine its effectiveness.

Typically, records management programs use forms to identify locations of series—groups of files serving a similar purpose. These may be completed by the offices themselves or done by the records management officers. The former has advantages of actively involving the creators of records. The latter, while time-consuming, typically yields more consistent and more thorough information. Usually, a records program begins by focusing on the records of major offices first. After the inventory is completed, a schedule for records retention and disposition can be completed for each office. This document states how long each series is to be retained and whether it is to be destroyed. The purpose of *Records Retention for Public Colleges and Universities in Ohio: A Manual* is to guide decisions about retention and disposition. Information on the schedules should include a number unique to the office (in case of changes in titling), a name and brief description of the records series, and a reference to the retention group in the *Manual* that explains the retention and disposition of the records. The schedule should also include helpful information about whether the record series originates in the office or is a copy received from another unit. In addition, the schedule should clearly state if the series should be disposed of directly by the office, transferred to a records center (if available) for a specific number of years, or transferred for permanent retention to the archives. In reaching these decisions, appropriate consultation will be necessary. Both the office administrator and the person(s) responsible for approving records retention and disposition should sign the schedules.

The final procedure is the filing of a certificate of records disposal form to report that the records retention schedule is being implemented, and to identify that documents have been disposed of according to institutional policy, in case of a legal inquiry or audit. The person responsible for the disposition will need to sign the certificate. Some institutions may require that the records manager/committee also sign and maintain the document.

Monitoring the Program

The *Ohio Revised Code* places responsibility for records management in the public colleges and universities themselves. To prove that academic institutions are meeting those legal requirements there must be evidence of regular contact with offices and progress in records management.

At a minimum, records managers should show evidence of regular effort to make the records policies and programs known to all departments. Ideally, there should be contact annually with each office to make certain that all records are identified on the schedules and that disposal or transfers have occurred. If a records center exists, then records managers should monitor the center and notify offices when their records are ready for disposal.

Finally, every records program should have some statistical evidence of records management activities. This could include a report of the volume of records disposed, as documented by the certificates of destruction, the number of schedules created or revised, and the frequency of contacts with offices about issues and questions of records management.

List of Sample Forms

Authority Statement

Inventory Forms

Records Retention & Disposition Schedule Forms

Certificates of Records Destruction