Western Kentucky University
Faculty Records Management 101

As the semester begins, do you find yourself swamped with the paperwork of semesters past? This article introduces the Kentucky Archives and Records Act and addresses student (public) records.

As a state agency, WKU must adhere to the records management requirements outlined in Kentucky State Archives and Records Act, KRS 171.410-171.740. The act addresses the creation, care and disposition of public records which includes documents such as student exams, papers, etc., as well as grade books and other instructor-created materials. State universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System must comply with the State University Model Schedule. This schedule outlines the minimum time records created by universities must be maintained and is available online at: http://www.kdla.ky.gov/recmanagement/schedules/kyuniversitymodel.pdf

Disposition instructions explain when and how to dispose of records. There are three main dispositions on the university general schedule:

- Retain permanently – either in office, Registrar's Office or University Archives
- Destroy after X amount of time and when certain conditions have been met
- Destroy when reference value or administrative value ends, that is, to be determined by creator/user

Record retention or the amount of time a record must be kept, is determined by assessing the information in the records series for its historical, administrative and legal use and value. It is not dependent upon the format of records; therefore the disposition will be the same regardless of whether the records are created on paper or electronically. Whether your grade book is in print, on Blackboard, an Excel file on your desktop, thumb drive or on CD the disposition will be the same. University archivists and records managers of Kentucky universities meet quarterly with staff of Records Management Services division of the Kentucky Department of Libraries & Archives to revise and maintain the schedule. The WKU University Archivist & Records Officer sends out a quarterly email regarding changes in the schedule and post the changes on the records management website.

KRS61.991 outlines the penalties for willfully concealing or destroying records with intent to violate the Open Records Law. These include fines of up to $250, 90 days in jail and possible prosecution for Class A misdemeanor for each violation. Refusing to produce records for court can result in a contempt citation. The main risk of ignoring records management is litigation. All records created by the university are potential documentation in lawsuits. That said, if you find yourself in litigation, do not destroy anything until the issue is resolved.

While the Registrar is the official keeper of students' permanent academic record, grades (whether the course is pass/fail, or credit/no credit) - grades, once submitted to the Registrar's Office, are to be maintained in the academic department one year (from the date the grades are distributed) in case of appeals. Records created in the appeals process are to be maintained in the academic department for

three years after resolution of the grade appeal. According to the 2010 WKU Undergraduate Catalog a student must initiate the appeals process within the first 2 weeks of the next semester. The appeal begins with the faculty member, can be taken to the department, to the college and ultimately to the Provost. The entire process is confined to the semester after the grade is issued. [Student Complaint Procedure, p. 346, http://www.wku.edu/coursecatalog/appendix.pdf]

Student and course records are found in the U0400 section of the general schedule. This section includes (with notated retention times):

> • Class rosters, add/drop records, tests, quizzes, projects, portfolios, homework and research papers (destroy after one year).
> • Internship records (destroy five years after the completion of the internship).
> • Advising records (maintain at least five years after student graduates or leaves the university).
> • Curriculum and instruction files which outline course content, final exams, syllabi, lists of textbooks; class schedules for faculty (destroy when obsolete)
> • General correspondence (retain no longer than two years)

U0431 Grade Information File "documents grades awarded by instructors and serves as the basis for students' official academic records. Series may include student names, student ID numbers; course titles and numbers; sections; grades awarded; student completed examinations, quizzes or papers; and instructors' signatures." This file may also contain notes on student behavior and correspondence with students. It may be in paper or electronic format in more than one location (file cabinet, Blackboard or email). The retention and disposition instructions are "destroy one (1) year after date distributed."

While projects, videos, journals and other homework can be destroyed after one year, it may be that student research projects are deserving of permanence. Excellence can be rewarded by posting final projects of note on TopScholar with the student's permission. Student projects may be returned to the student at the professor's discretion.

Grant research records are found in the Sponsored Programs Section of the schedule, U1800. Records for funded grants have a three year after completion of research retention unless otherwise stated in the contract. Whenever there are two or more stated retentions for a record it is best to use the one with the longest term.

Records of non-funded grant proposals may be destroyed when their administrative value ends.
To ensure university records are not destroyed prior to the assigned retention a Records Destruction Reporting Form is to be filed with the University Archivist prior to destroying any WKU records. This form is available online at: http://www.wku.edu/library/archive/recdestform.php

Records created as a result of participation in professional non-WKU organizations should be disposed of in accordance with those organizations' records policies. Non-WKU organizations with close ties to WKU may be within the collecting scope of WKU Archives or the Special Collections Library.

In the business world records destruction generally takes place at the end of the fiscal year. In a university setting, it makes more sense to calculate retention time from the end of a particular semester. Student records created during fall semester 2010 having a one year retention can be destroyed at the end of fall semester 2011. Grant records retention can be calculated in the same way. Routinely purging records at the end of each semester will make record keeping easier.

The WKU Records Management Program website provides additional information regarding state and federal statutes, permanent, historic and vital records and the transfer of records to University Archives.

The WKU Archivist is available for in office / department consultations by appointment, 5-4793 or archives@wku.edu.

WKU Archives was established to collect and preserve the permanent historic records of WKU. These include publications, annual reports, photographs, student/alumni and faculty/staff personal papers related to WKU. These are made available to researchers in WKU Archives by appointment.

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