


MEMORANDUM

Office of the Provost **To:** Faculty

Lloyd Armstrong, Jr. **From:** Lloyd Armstrong, Jr. 
Provost

Date: June 9, 2004

Subject: Guidelines on Document Retention

The Academic Senate e-mail task force has requested that guidelines be provided to faculty to suggest what e-mail, paper records, and electronic data should be maintained, and for how long. Here is a brief guide, based on advice of experts and the practice of peer universities. (More information will be forthcoming for departments and business offices.) There are five basic guidelines:

1. You *may at your discretion* retain whatever you wish as paper records in your files, or you can save whatever e-mail and electronic data you wish on your own PC. Alternatively, you can save this material on your own disk, Zip drive, or other electronic media for long term storage, but:

- a. You should look at individual pieces before deciding to retain them, and
- b. If you decide to retain items, save them into detailed subject matter folders (whether they are hard copy or electronic).
- c. E-mail correspondence important enough to retain should also be printed out to avoid computer backup problems.
- d. E-mail attachments important enough to retain should be opened and stored by subject matter in the underlying program (word processing, data base, spread sheet) or retained on a disk, Zip drive, or other electronic media. **Advice on how to do e-mail storage on your own PC is at www.usc.edu/emailbackup.**

2. Email correspondence and electronic data you save on our own PC *will not be deleted* unless you do so yourself, but email that is kept on the central email servers *will be deleted* after six months according to the policy previously announced in my memorandum dated February 4, 2004.

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3. In addition to retaining whatever material you wish on your PC (or on a disk, Zip drive, other electronic media, or in hard copy) you may transfer email to the new Email Archive environment, if you have reviewed it and determined it meets two criteria:

- a. remote access is required, so storage on your own PC is not sufficient; and
- b. you have moved it into a detailed subject matter folder.

Advice on how to transfer items to the E-mail Archive environment is at www.usc.edu/emailbackup. To establish an email archive account, each user will need to provide his or her dean a brief statement documenting the need for such an account. Upon approval of this request, the dean will inform ISD.

4. If you are discarding paper records that mention individual names or otherwise could involve rights of privacy or confidentiality, ask your department or school office to shred the files. Whether you are maintaining or discarding material, please remember that records that contain confidential information require enhanced protection. (This includes education records, protected health information, customer information, personnel records, Social Security numbers, personal information, and research records. More detail on this can be found in the Information Security Policy, www.usc.edu/policies.)

5. Certain material *should be retained*. The length of time varies by category, as follows:

Research Records and Data. Retain for three years after the submission of final expenditure reports or three years after completion of research, whichever is longer. This applies to documentation that the work was performed and funds expended in accordance with government requirements, and all permissions received from the funding agency, as well as research data supporting published conclusions. You may also offer research data to the University Library or your department for them to retain as long as scientifically useful, if they so desire.

Investigational Drug Scientific Data. Special time limits apply to scientific and research data and records involving investigational drugs. Turn these over to the school or department.

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Financial Data on Contracts and Grants. Turn these over to the school or department.

Teaching Records. Grade books and other records of grades should be retained for four years. Final exams and all other graded work which affected the course grade should be retained for one year after the end of the course.

Dissertation Drafts. Retain until superseded by a subsequent draft or final version. This applies to the most recent draft, with comments by the committee.

Other Student Records, including advisement records, and admissions material. Turn over to the school or department. Do not maintain student or admissions records yourself.

Legal Materials. Turn over to the Office of General Counsel. Do not discard any material related to a lawsuit, claim, complaint, charge or grievance, or where any participant has retained a lawyer or expressed an intention to sue. Notify the Office of General Counsel what materials you have. When you have no further use for the materials yourself, send them to the Office of General Counsel for them to maintain or discard.

Historical Material. Offer to University Archives. Documents, photos, and other material of value for the history of the University and its programs should be offered to the University Archivists for them to determine whether to maintain permanently.

University Business Records. Turn over to school or departmental office.

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