Implementing Records Management Procedures for your Department/Office
LU Records Coordinator Training, July, 2012

Step 1: Inventory all records and identify those needed to document the activities and functions of your unit.

Conduct a detailed inventory of the files maintained in your unit (including materials in closets or empty offices, shared drive materials, email, etc.). Document the location, amount, and format of materials (e.g., paper, electronic, etc.). Use this inventory to identify which materials are records and which are non-records (reference materials, personal papers, or extra copies of documents.)

Step 2: Match your records to the General Records Retention Schedule.

The General Records Retention Schedule offers guidance on retention and disposition of records common to most or several departments or offices at Lawrence. Retention periods are derived from various federal and state laws, professional best practices, internal practices, and other requirements. Because not all records have these requirements, almost every unit will have records that are not specified on this schedule – but it is still a good place to start. You can view the schedule at: http://guides.lib.lawrence.edu/recman

If your unit maintains records that are not listed on the General Schedule and you think that they should be added or that your office requires its own approved retention schedule, contact the Archives.

Step 3: Assess your current recordkeeping practices.

Once you know what records you have and what their retention requirements are, you can assess how well your current recordkeeping practices meet those requirements. Some questions you should ask:

• Can your unit quickly find information from records when needed?
• Does your unit keep University records separate from personal records?
• Does your unit securely maintain and destroy confidential records (records containing personally identifiable information about students or employees, such as Social Security Numbers, credit card numbers, birthdates, etc.)?
• Does your unit maintain records in functional records series? (Records series are files or documents kept together because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, document a specific type of transaction, take a particular physical form, or have some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, maintenance, or use.)
• Are records with differing retention periods filed separately?
• Is your unit retaining records for the required length of time designated in the general schedule?
• Does your unit routinely destroy records in accordance with the general schedule?
• Does your unit transfer records to the Archives in accordance with the general schedule?

Step 4: Make any necessary adjustments to your current recordkeeping practices.

If your assessment indicates that your unit is not meeting all of its recordkeeping requirements, make the necessary adjustments. These adjustments could range from small changes in filing and retention practices to a complete filing system overhaul, depending on what you and your colleagues might decide. The Archives can provide consultation on changing departmental/office filing systems.
Step 5: Clean out records which are beyond the designated retention periods.

If you’re implementing new records retention practices, the first step is generally to clean out the records in your unit which have passed their retention periods. You may want to start with paper records before tackling electronic records. If you are destroying records for which your office holds the official copies (not duplicates of originals retained in another office) and for which there is a designated retention period, document this destruction with a signed certificate (available from the Records Management Guide.) Contact the Archives to transfer materials designated for permanent retention.

Step 6: Maintain your records on an ongoing basis.

Keep current and up-to-date with newly implemented recordkeeping practices. Be sure to:
- File new materials on a regular basis
- Protect records containing confidential information
- Clean out inactive records on a regular basis – this is often a good task for the summer and end of the fiscal year
- Contact the Archives to transfer records in accordance with the schedule

Step 7: Make sure others in your unit are aware of the policy and retention requirements for records.

Be sure all staff members in your unit know about the records management policy and their recordkeeping responsibilities. The Archives can help with training sessions, presentations or handouts, and email or phone support.

For more tips, best practices, and other information, visit the Records Management Guide at http://guides.lib.lawrence.edu/recman. Contact Erin Dix at x6753 or archives@lawrence.edu with questions.