**Records Retention Policy at Sterling College**

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**I. Purpose and Scope**

This policy and procedure provides for the systematic review, retention and destruction of

documents received or created in the transaction of Sterling College (“College”)

business. The policy is designed to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, to eliminate accidental or innocent document destruction of records and to facilitate College operations by promoting efficiency and reducing unnecessary storage of documents. Approved by Senior Staff, this policy applies to all records of the College and is managed and implemented by the College Archives in consultation with the Vice President/CFO.

Sterling College retains and preserves vital records of its business and operations to

preserve an historical record of the College, to ensure current and future operations, and to

comply with its legal obligations.

This policy and procedure applies to all College employees and faculty.

**II. College Archives**

The College Archives acts as a central entity for the storage of records that have long-term value as well as those records deemed of permanent and, therefore, archival value to the College.

Records that have been placed in the College Archives for permanent retention will be open for

users according to the policies of the College Archives and within the discretion of the Archives

staff. For more information, see the College Archives Access Policy.

**III. Definitions.**

A. Record

A record is anything containing information reflecting College educational and business

transactions regardless of format (paper, digital, photographic, recordings, etc.). Typical records

include official publications, fiscal data, incoming/outgoing correspondence including email,

meeting minutes, reports, and student files.

**Not all records must be retained.** The list below describes items in a typical office that are not

classified as records and therefore do not need to be categorized or maintained. These materials

may be destroyed at any time if they are no longer needed by the office holding them. These

items will not appear on a retention schedule.

- large quantities of duplicate materials and all duplicates of “official copies”

- non-SC published magazines and newspapers

- published reports produced by other entities

- purchased data from other sources

- catalogues, journals or other printed matter created by other entities used for

informational purposes

- notes or working papers once a project is complete, unless they provide more

complete information than the final report

B. Active Records

Records that are generally referred to once a month or that are needed to support the current

business activity of an office or division.

C. Inactive Records

Records that have not been needed for at least one year or for which the active period has passed.

**Unless these records (both active and inactive) have been defined as permanent or archival**

**records they should be destroyed according to the time period shown on the retention**

**schedule. Inactive records should be securely stored until the end of the retention period.**

D. Permanent Records

Also known as archival records, permanent records have historical, administrative, or research

value to the College, which the College keeps indefinitely. The College Archives is responsible

for ensuring that the College identifies these records and that they are transferred to the College

Archives once they become inactive. The College Archivist assists in the identification and

classification of records as archival.

E. Retention Schedules

An internal document describing categories of records, providing a length of time they should be

kept and includes instructions for disposition. State or federal law may determine the period that

certain records must be kept. The General Retention Schedule at the end of this policy lists the

most common records at the College and provides a retention period along with any special

instructions related to disposal. **Almost every office or department will have records**

**requiring retention that are not on the General Retention Schedule. Records that are not**

**on this schedule should be added on a case by case basis in consultation with the College**

**Archives.**

F. Retention Period

Minimum required length of time for which a College office or department is responsible for

maintaining records. Custodians may hold records longer than the retention period, but the

College Archives does not provide space for storage of non-permanent records.

G. Records Destruction

The physical or electronic destruction of a record after it has become obsolete or otherwise in

accordance with this policy.

H. Disposition of Records

The terminal treatment of records, either through destruction or permanent storage with the

College Archives.

I. Records Custodians

A senior member of management who has supervisory authority over a particular business

practice, and, in that capacity, who has responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of

this policy in his or her area of authority. See further information on the responsibilities of

Records Custodians in section V, part A.

J. Litigation Hold

A communication issued as the result of current or anticipated litigation, audit, government

investigation or other similar matter that suspends the normal process regarding the retention and

disposition of College records.

**IV. Policy**

A. Overview

It is the policy of the College to ensure that its records are preserved to provide documentation of

the College’s history and to be retained for the periods of time necessary to satisfy the College’s

business and legal obligations. The records will be disposed in accordance with an established

records retention and disposition schedule. Certain records are permanent records and may never

be destroyed.

A Records Custodian will oversee the day-to-day transactions related to the office’s records related functions and manage the disposition of records at the conclusion of the designated

retention period. The designated primary contact for this policy is the College Archivist. The

College Archivist, Vice President/CFO, and Senior Staff are the final

arbiters of this policy.

B. Email

Email sent or received over the College’s computer system may constitute a form of College

record. While not all emails are business records, all College emails are property of the College

and are subject to discovery in the event of litigation against the College or any of its employees,

faculty or students. Consequently, the administration has the ability and the right to view the

email of all members of the College community.

Faculty and employees of the College are not obligated to retain all emails indefinitely; such a

policy would clearly impose an impossible burden both on the College community and on the

College’s computer network. Rather, individual employees and faculty members are expected to

exercise judgment regarding the content and purpose of the email in determining whether it

needs to be retained as a College record, and, if so, the length of the retention period. Any

questions about retention of email should be directed to the Records Custodian and/or the

College Archives.

Retention periods applicable to email messages are as follows:

1. Ordinary emails, including routine communications, internal meeting notices, and cover letters

or transmittal memoranda, need be retained only so long as is necessary to complete the action or

resolve the issue that is the subject of the email.

2. Administrative documents – To the extent that email is being used to document, either

internally or outside the College community, the formulation, planning, implementation,

interpretation or modification of a College program, policy or service, any such email constitutes

a College record and should be retained in accordance with the retention periods set forth in the

General Retention Schedule.

Emails can be retained in the following ways:

1. Emails can be printed out and filed and saved as paper documents;

2. Emails can be saved into electronic archive folders;

3. Emails can be saved on removable disks.

Regardless of the format in which the emails are saved, the Records Custodian for each office or

division has an obligation to preserve and safeguard the information in the email as if it were a

paper document. Once the email is saved in another format, however, there is no obligation

additionally to retain the email in an active email folder.

C. Litigation Holds

Where the College has actual notice of litigation or of a government investigation or audit, or has

reason to believe that such events are likely to occur, it has the obligation to take steps to

preserve documents that might be implicated in such litigation or investigation. In such event,

the College will take steps to identify all paper and digitally maintained files that may contain

documents relevant to the case, including emails, and will notify members of the College

community to preserve such documents indefinitely. If an employee or faculty member receives

such a preservation notice, it does not necessarily mean that they are involved in the litigation or

investigation. Rather, it means that the evidence that the College is required to preserve may be

in the employee or faculty member’s possession or control, and that the employee or faculty

member has an obligation to preserve such information effective immediately.

In the event of a litigation hold, all policies for the disposition of documents must be suspended

with respect to those matters that are the subject of the hold. Electronic information should be

preserved in its original electronic form on the media on which it is stored. Electronic

information should not be transferred from the media on which it is stored to a different media

for the duration of the litigation hold **unless** such transfer is necessary to preserve the integrity of

the information for the duration of the hold, and such transfers should be made only after

consultation with the IT department to preserve the integrity of the electronic data. In addition,

the employee and/or faculty member that receives the notice should similarly preserve any new

information that is generated that may be relevant to the litigation or investigation by saving it in

a segregated file.

An employee or faculty member’s failure to preserve documents after having received a

preservation notice can have extremely serious consequences for the College. Accordingly, a

failure to comply with a litigation hold will subject employees to discipline, up to and including

termination, and will be deemed misconduct that will subject faculty members to discipline in

accordance with the Employee Handbook.

**V. Procedures**

A. Essential Functions

*1. Records Custodians*

Each supervisor in a particular office or department has the responsibility for designating in

writing a Records Custodian in their office or department and ensuring that the Custodian

understands and is following with the records retention requirements applicable to that particular

unit. The supervisor is also required to sign off on either destruction of documents at the

conclusion of their retention period or any transfer of records to the College Archives.

The Records Custodian is expected to: understand the records created within the department or

office; follow this policy to make decisions on retention and disposition of records and provide

guidance to others who are involved in preparing records for storage; be responsible for ensuring

that everyone in the office is aware of this policy and follows it; consult with the College

Archives on matters related to retention and disposition of records; establish the level of

confidentiality and security appropriate to specific types of records and help the department or

office maintain and monitor confidentiality and security.

*2. Chief Compliance Officer*

The Chief Compliance Officer is responsible for notifying all relevant members of the College

community where a litigation hold is being implemented. He or she will, in consultation with the

relevant members of the College community, determine the scope of the hold, will determine

when the hold is no longer required, and will communicate the lifting of the hold on an as needed

basis to members of the College community.

B. Accessibility and Safekeeping of Records

1. Records, especially financial records, must be easily retrievable for examination by authorized

individuals, including auditors. Access to electronic records is subject to College rules regarding

information security. Records Custodians should work with the College Archives and IT

department to ensure that electronic documents are maintained in a format that preserves

accessibility.

2. In consultation with the College Archives, the Records Custodian is responsible for ensuring

that active and inactive records are secured in a way to provide appropriate confidentiality and

protection from unauthorized inspection, theft, and/or physical damage.

C. Disposition of Records

1. The Records Custodian is responsible for periodically determining which College records in

their particular office or department have reached the end of their retention period and should

therefore be destroyed or transferred to the College Archives.

2. The Records Custodian’s supervisor is required to sign off on the destruction of documents or

transfer to the College Archives.

3. Non-confidential paper records may be placed in containers for recycling. Confidential paper

records must be shredded or other arrangements must be made for the documents to be

destroyed.

4. The Records Custodian should consult with the IT department regarding the destruction of

electronic documents.

D. Records Destruction

Following a retention schedule that has been developed with the assistance of the College

Archives, records should be securely maintained for the period of retention either in the office or

department where they were created or used. Records that have been identified as archival

records must be sent to the College Archives for permanent retention.

Records that will not be listed on a retention schedule and therefore may be destroyed at any

time include:

 material that is not considered a “record” (see definition of record);

 duplicates of an official copy which is stored and retained by another office such as

personnel records, financial and budget information, copies of information used in an

employee search;

 records that have served their purpose and are no longer needed such as drafts of reports

and notes that have been turned into meeting minutes.

When there is doubt about whether or not a record may be destroyed, the custodian should

review the retention schedule, consult with the custodian of the official copy of the record if one

exists, and consult with the College Archives to ensure that there is no need to store or

permanently archive the record.

Destruction includes:

Recycling – generally appropriate for all non-confidential paper documents, including

public documents of other organizations, magazines, annual reports, newsletters,

announcements, and drafts of policies or other memoranda which are not confidential.

Shredding – using a shredder for all documents that should not be read by other after they

are no longer needed or that contain personnel or confidential information. This is

essential for any document containing personal information, information that is student

protected information under FERPA, health related information, or financial information.

E. Discipline:

Failure to follow this policy will subject employees to discipline up to and including termination

of employment, and will subject faculty to discipline in accordance with the Employee Handbook, except in the case of guest faculty, who are subject to discipline in accordance with the guest faculty member’s contract.

**VI. General Retention Schedule**

This schedule will NOT include all records that should be on a schedule. Custodians should

consult with the College Archivist to develop a retention schedule for records not mentioned here.

This schedule applies to all types of records, regardless of media or format, including documents,

email, photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, CDs, and DVDs. Retention periods reflect minimum

time periods. Records may be retained for longer periods of time at the discretion of the custodian or as required by legal counsel. Do not destroy any records while they are subject to

audit, investigation, or where investigation is probable.

Records that are in storage areas such as basements or attics are often at risk of water damage or

destruction and should be evaluated in light of this schedule. Consult with the College Archives

for additional information on storage conditions.

**VII. Addendum to General Retention Schedule**

**Committee Records and Responsibilities of Committee Chairs**

Chairs of all committees are the “official custodian” of the records related to the committee’s

work. In general, all policy development, curricular change activities, meeting minutes, agenda,

and supporting documentation will be of interest to the College Archives and result in permanent

records. A copy of such records should be sent to the College Archives. If you have any

questions, please consult with the College Archivist.

**II. Personnel Records**

The “official copy” of all records related to an employee are retained and maintained by the

Office of Human Resources for non-faculty employees and by the Vice President for Academic Affairs for faculty members.

*Students who work in jobs that are NOT part of their educational experience are treated as all*

*other employees for the purposes of record keeping. However, most students are paid to do jobs*

*as a result of a financial aid award or as an integral part of the SC education. In that case,*

*their employment information is maintained as a student record with the unique obligations*

*associated with student records.*

**III. Employment Search Committee Records**

At the end of a search, the chair of a search committee should collect from each member of the

committee all files, notes, applications, recommendations, and other material related to that

search. This material should be reduced to one “official copy” of each record with the rest

destroyed. All email and other electronic records should be printed and kept with other print

documents and the e-copy deleted from the email system. All search committee members should

delete all electronic files related to the search from their computers, email programs, and hard

drives. *In faculty searches the reduced paper file should be retained by the Vice President for Academic Affairs for 3 years and then destroyed. For all other searches, the complete paper file should be sent to and retained by Human Resources.*

**IV. Faculty Professional Papers and Records**

Faculty members are encouraged to contact the College Archives when they retire and to discuss

the retention of their papers and records for historical preservation.

**V. Records Related to Web Sites**

Because web sites have replaced many publications they are a significant archival record of the

College and its operation. Web masters and others creating web page content should capture

copies of their web site’s content as electronic files and send them to the College Archives for

permanent retention.

STERLING COLLEGE ARCHIVES

ACCESS POLICY

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The Sterling College Archives assembles, preserves, and makes accessible the official

records of Sterling College. The Archives maintains historically significant non-current

official records and publications of the College’s administrative offices, academic departments

and student groups. College archival records encompass those records stored in the Archives

that were generated or received by the various administrative departments or offices of the

College during the conduct of their business. The purpose of collecting such records is to provide

documentation of the development and growth of the College, particularly of its primary function

of teaching, its role in the community at large, the activities of its student body and alumnae/i,

and the development of its campus.

The Sterling College Archives is committed to providing researchers with the material

they need. However, due to the confidential nature of certain records, access to some materials

may be limited. Restrictions are placed on the use of records in order to protect the rights to

privacy of individuals and the institution.

Access restrictions to records in the Archives are divided into three categories:

**General Distribution:**

Records in this category are open to researchers without restriction. Records in general

distribution are the publications issued to the general public at the time of their creation, such as

announcements, official college publications, calendars, brochures, and committee reports. This

also includes the College charter, history and description of the College, building and grounds,

visiting speakers, endowed chairs and professorships, College events and commencements,

degrees, honors, awards and prizes, public relations, conferences, academic programs, and

graduate programs. After processing, records of this type are open immediately without

restriction.

*Examples*: *Sterling College Magazine*, *The Stir* , Annual Report of the President,

General Committee meeting minutes, photographs.

**Files Containing Personal Information:**

Records that contain personal and confidential information about an individual or individuals are

closed for 75 years from date of creation or until the death of the individual mentioned in the

records, whichever is longer. These records may include education records of living current or

former students and records of living current or former faculty members, administrators, or other

staff members, and donor records. Then, subject to review by the college archivist, the records

are open without restriction. During the restricted period, access may be granted if the named

individual gives permission in writing. Information that is part of the public record about an

individual is available for research.

*Examples:* Appointment/reappointment letters, course evaluations, resumes, Advisory

Committee on Appointments records, Committee on Student Work records.

**General College Records:**

General College Records are records of the administration of the College, its policies and

programs that do not fall into either of the two previous categories. After processing, records of the administration of the College are restricted to use by the office/department of origin for 20

years from the date of creation. Officers of the College or administrators of departments may

waive this time period at their discretion.

*Examples:* Correspondence among administrators on grading policy, annual reports,

documentation on strategic planning among faculty and staff, International Programs proposals.

*Exceptions to the 20-year restriction policy include:*

- *Records of a sitting administration are closed.*

- *Board of Trustee meeting minutes are closed for 50 years from the date of creation.*

- *Board of Trustee biographical and correspondence files are closed for 75 years from the*

*date of creation or until the death of the individual mentioned in the records, whichever*

*is longer. Information that is part of the public record or published about an individual is*

*available for research immediately.*

- *Selected documents in a series may have additional restrictions placed upon them if they*

*constitute an invasion of privacy or expose the College to legal liability.*

- *Records may be restricted by Deed of Gift.*

**Additional Conditions:**

Records access policies and retention schedules for individual office’s records are developed by

the College Archivist in conjunction with the office of origin.

All records are reviewed for material that contains sensitive or private information. As a result,

individual collections, or portions of them, may have restrictions placed on them that differ from

the general restrictions listed above. The standard closure period of 20 years may be reduced or

extended with the consent of the President or the office of origin.

A researcher may submit a written request for access to restricted records. This request will be

sent for approval to the appropriate office, with the recommendation of the college archivist. In

many cases, the archivist has authority to grant access to restricted materials.

Unprocessed records in any category are open only to the records creator.

Permission to examine does not imply the right to publish any part of a document.

The College Archives is subject to College-wide policy for protecting privacy and complies with

both the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability

and Accountability Act (HIPAA).