

Records Management Committee Revises Disposition Schedules

The University Records Management Committee has embarked on a project to develop a new Records Disposition Schedules Manual for UC. The Schedules are guidelines for the University community on how long to retain administrative records, which records must be archived, and when records must be discarded. In addition to ensuring that necessary and valuable records are kept, the Schedules are important to the University because keeping records that are no longer needed increases the expense of storing and searching records.

The format of the current Manual was first developed in the 1960s and consists of detailed lists of individual forms and computer reports. The process that was originally developed for updating the Schedules is cumbersome and its complexity does not reflect the way the University does business today. Although the schedules for individual records have been updated periodically, many are out of date, compromising their usefulness to campus and UCOP offices. The purpose of revising the design of the Manual is to simplify the Schedules as well as to make it more flexible and easier to update in the future.

Alternative Approaches

The Committee looked at a number of methods of organizing records disposition schedules and selected a functional approach that aggregates records with similar characteristics into categories rather than enumerating them one by one. After looking at commercial products, the Committee chose instead to pattern the revised UC Manual after a model successfully used by another university.

The Oregon University System (OUS) serves the university, state college, and community college campuses in Oregon. In 1992 OUS undertook a systemwide overhaul of its records schedules, condensing eight separate manuals, some over 300 pages long, into one "functional" schedule with approximately 400 record groupings in 21 categories. By comparison, our Universitywide Manual lists approximately 1,300 individual records.

Conversion Plan

The first step taken by UC's Records Management Committee was to create a more concise list of fewer than 20 major groupings from the 61 categories into which the current UC Manual is divided. Between 200 and 300 sub-groups will then be identified.

The new top-level groupings are more descriptive of the function or process accomplished by the record, rather than being fragmented according to the particular office that utilizes the record. For example, where the current Manual has separate sections for Library Acquisitions, Storehouse, and Bookstore, as well as a section on "Purchasing & Disbursements," the revised Manual will have a section titled "Purchasing" that crosses all areas that have records pertaining to procurement of one type or another.

A sub-group of the Records Management Committee will pilot the functional method by identifying current individual listings that can be assigned to one or two of the new major groupings. The pilot will require input from operational managers at the campuses and functional experts at UCOP. In addition to getting

their feedback on the appropriate retention period, their knowledge will be valuable in helping to identify records and processes that are not included in the current Manual. Any newly identified group of records that does not fit into the revised groupings will need to have retention schedules established once the mapping of Schedules into the new categories is completed. Assuming the pilot is successful, it is anticipated the entire project will be completed in approximately two years.

Criteria for Schedules

The Committee has established criteria for the new Records Disposition Schedules Manual. The Manual must stand alone, not as part of a Business and Finance Bulletin, so that it can be updated without a high-level review process. There also needs to be an easier mechanism for updating the Schedules in light of changing needs and records. Since campus policies may be more detailed or restrictive than Universitywide ones, the Universitywide Schedules must be designed to coordinate with local schedules. Finally, the Schedules should be online, so they will readily available to all staff who work with records, and must allow for glossary searches as well as drill-down menus.

The Committee is rewriting Business and Finance Bulletin RMP-2, which governs the records disposition program, in order to accommodate proposed changes in the Schedules and the procedures for updating them. The Committee plans to review other Business and Finance Bulletins in the Records Management Program (RMP) series over the next couple of years.

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