

UC Santa Barbara
Policies

Policy 7060

Issuing Unit: Administrative Services

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VITAL RECORDS

I. REFERENCES:

- A. University of California Records Disposition Schedules Manual (see pink tab in the last volume of the UCSB Policies Manual)
- B. University of California Business and Finance Bulletin, RM-4, Vital Records Protection.
- C. UCSB Policies Manual, Policy 7055, UCSB Archives.

II. POLICY:

A. Definition:

There are two kinds of University records which are classified as vital:

1. Records which are essential to the protection of the rights of individuals.
2. Records which are essential to the protection of the University's rights and/or the execution of its public (contractual) obligations.

Examples of the first type of vital records are current payroll records necessary to pay employees, master student academic records necessary to show completion of course work, and the employee service records required for protection of tenure and retirement status.

The second type of vital records is exemplified by drawings and specifications required to repair and maintain the University's facilities; deeds and other records necessary to establish University ownership of buildings, equipment, and land; and the records of current contracts between the University and other public or private agencies.

Vital records should not be confused with archival records. Vital records are current records which require special protection; they may or may not have historical value. Archival records are records which have significant historical value. See UCSB Policy 7055.

B. Campus Responsibility:

The campus Records Management Coordinator (Assistant Chancellor, Budget and Administrative Operations) is responsible for administering the Vital Records Program at UCSB.

C. Identification of Vital Records:

1. Pre-identified Vital Records:

The following are those records held by the University which have been pre-identified to be vital:

Student Grade Record Card, including University Extension
General Ledger, including Manual of Accounts
Library Card Catalog and Shelf List
As-Built Drawings
Promissory Notes and Evidence of Other Receivables
Central Payroll Records
 Employee Folders (Accounting Office, Payroll)
 Employee Records (Academic Personnel, Staff
 Personnel)
Health Plan and Life Insurance Enrollment, Change, and
Cancellation Forms (U1630)
Gift and Other Donation Files, by Donor
Ownership Records of Vehicles, Vessels, and Other Major
Assets
Equipment and Inventory Records
Contracts and agreements.

2. The list above is not intended to be all-encompassing; additional vital records may be identified by departments in accordance with the criteria above. Exact identification of a particular record as vital can be accomplished only on a judgmental basis. The owners or users of the record are most able to apply such judgment.

Many types of records are of great importance but not of vital importance. Such records require much effort and expense to reconstruct, if lost, or have intrinsic historical value. The vital records program does not involve these important records, although the standards and methods of protection outlined below may well be applied by any department to them to the degree that the values, risks, and available resources for protection make appropriate.

D. Protection of Vital Records:

Primary methods of records protection are as follows:

1. Preservation of existing duplicate copies at another location. Many records already have a form of "natural protection" because of the regular paperwork routine. If such duplicates exist for a vital record series, the preservation of these duplicates is a very effective method of protection. The likelihood of both copies being destroyed at any one time is extremely low. This method is equally effective for long- and short-term retention, durable or fragile records, and high- or low-access requirements.
2. Creation of special duplicate copies for preservation at another location. Special, duplicate "security" copies of many University records series are now being created. Methods of creating these copies range from direct

reproduction on copying machines to microfilming, duplication of magnetic tapes, and production of special "protection" carbon copies at the time of original typing. This kind of protection is as effective in all ways as the first method above. However, the cost of creating duplicate copies is relatively high.

3. Preservation of source records which would be used to reconstruct vital records. In many cases documents which are sources for vital records are held by the University or by another agency. If such sources can be identified and agreements made on holding them for the length of time protection is required, this method of protection can be as nearly effective for all situations as the first two above. Effectiveness is reduced only slightly because several source document series may be involved, any one of which might be destroyed. The overall cost of this method may be higher than the first method, because larger volumes of source records must be retained for longer periods than would ordinarily be the case. However, the net cost of these methods will usually be much less than the cost of creating special duplicate security copies.
4. Storage in special equipment such as fire resistant cabinets, safes, or vaults. Original and unique copies of vital records can be protected from most hazards through the use of special storage equipment. While the protection thus obtained is not absolute, its relative effectiveness is only slightly lower than the first three methods. However, of all protection methods, the use of special storage equipment is usually the most costly. This method should be considered only when the other methods are physically not feasible.
5. Removal of hazardous conditions from area of storage. By removing unnecessary hazards such as combustible materials and steam or water pipes and by eliminating undesirable conditions such as air-borne chemicals and extremes of heat or humidity, a relative improvement can be achieved in protection of records. Since the effectiveness of this method is low, it should be considered only when other methods are economically unfeasible.
6. Relocation of records to a less hazardous area. Because of differences in construction, some University buildings are less hazardous for records storage than others. The effectiveness of relocation as a method of protection can be equal to or slightly better than that for the removal of hazardous conditions. Cost will be equally low or lower. However, when requirements exist for frequent access to the records, this method may prove infeasible. If relocation is considered, the campus Records Coordinator should be consulted to determine the relative safety of various storage places.

More than one of these methods can be used to protect a given vital record series. It is not uncommon to protect the active portion of a series through the preservation of existing duplicates while protecting the inactive portion through other means, such as microfilming.

E. Selection of Methods of Protection:

The most important factor guiding the selection of a method of protection for vital records is the ratio of protection from hazards to the cost of that protection. Since it is possible to attain no more than relative security, the best choice is the one for which the cost of security is most closely in line with the degree of risk. Beyond the evaluation of actual risks of loss for vital records, other factors have a measure of importance in the selection of protection methods:

1. **Need for Accessibility:** Vital records which must be close at hand and available for use at all times may require different methods of protection from those records infrequently used.
2. **Length of Retention:** The best methods for protecting vital records of short-term nature may be different from those methods best for long-term or permanent records.
3. **Physical Qualities of Records:** Susceptibility of records to destruction from heat, water, chemicals, and aging varies with both the record medium and the duration of retention. Magnetic tape and film often require different protection from that needed for paper documents. Paper itself varies greatly in its ability to withstand aging.

Please direct questions about these policies to Meta.Clow@vadmin.ucsb.edu. For questions or comments regarding the format of the above information, please contact webcontact@ucsbuxa.ucsb.edu.

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