A. Purpose

Proper retention of records is essential to conduct the business of the College; to protect the legal interests of the College, students, and employees; to preserve the College’s history; and to comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. In addition, the College is obligated to preserve records when litigation is threatened or pending. For the purposes of efficiency and management of physical and digital storage resources, it is also important that unneeded records be disposed of in a timely manner.

All College personnel are required to be familiar with and to adhere to this policy.

B. Records Defined

For the purposes of this policy, “records” include documentary material, regardless of media, produced in the course of College business. The most common types of records generated and their retention periods are addressed in the College’s record retention schedule. Any questions concerning records not specified in the schedule should be directed to the Data and Record Retention Team before a record is destroyed. “Records” also include copies of original materials that are themselves different from the original (e.g., a copy of a document with marginal handwritten notes).

“Records” do not include extra copies of materials of which an official copy has been retained, nor do they include personal or transitory correspondence/materials (see Section D below). “Records” also do not include “transitory documents” (including e-mails) that are not included in any of the categories in the records retention schedule. “Transitory documents” can be destroyed when no longer needed. “Transitory documents” include items such as letters of transmittal or acknowledgment; requests for routine information; notices of staff/department meetings or events; communications to students concerning class schedules or assignments; records that are kept in the sole possession of the maker, are used only as a personal memory aid, and are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the maker of the record; personal correspondence or other documents not related to the business of the College; and the like.

C. Data and Record Retention Team

The Data and Record Retention Team is responsible for implementing the College’s records retention policy and procedures. The members of the Team are listed in Attachment B.
The Data and Record Retention Team is authorized to perform the following functions:

1. Identify records generated by and received by the College that should be retained.
2. Publish a record retention procedure schedule that complies with any applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
3. Monitor state and federal laws and compliance regulations affecting record retention.
4. Answer questions from College personnel concerning record retention.
5. Periodically review the record retention procedure and schedule and update it as necessary.
6. Develop a training and awareness program on record retention for College personnel.
7. Develop guidelines for appropriate destruction of College records.
8. Develop guidelines to maintain confidentiality of records as necessary.
9. Monitor departments for compliance with the record retention policy and procedure.
10. Authorize deviation from the retention procedures or schedule, usually for a research or other academic purpose, on a case-by-case basis.

D. General Record Retention Rules

The following are general rules pertaining to record retention. There may be additional rules and procedures governing particular types of records.

1. College personnel are required to check the record retention schedule before disposing of materials generated in the course of College business.
2. If a particular type of document does not appear to be covered by the schedule, consult with the Data and Record Retention Team.
3. Only one copy of a document should be retained, by the party or department responsible for it. Where possible, the retained document should be the original.
4. Drafts and notes concerning a document should be destroyed unless they are important to documenting official business or action of the College, in which case they will be stored with the document.
5. Except as noted in the retention schedule, the retention period runs from the date the record was created or received.

6. In the case of pending or reasonably anticipated litigation, the College will impose a “litigation hold,” which will be communicated to all persons whom the College has reason to believe may be in possession of documents that are either relevant or may lead to the discovery of admissible evidence pertaining to the case. The imposition of a “litigation hold” means that all retention periods are suspended for applicable documents and no such documents shall be destroyed or altered until notification that the litigation matter has been concluded.

7. E-mails and computerized documents should be treated like any other record and are subject to the same retention schedule.

8. Any questions as to whether a particular type of document is “transitory” and can be destroyed should be directed to the Data and Record Retention Team.

E. Records Retention Schedule

The record retention schedule, attached as Attachment A, includes records by category and the retention period in days, months, or years.

F. Record Destruction

Records are to be deleted/destroyed with methods which do not permit recovery, reconstruction or future use of sensitive information. Please reference ITS’ Definition of Sensitive Information\(^1\) for specific examples of sensitive information.

1. Paper records containing sensitive information (personally identifiable information) are to be shredded and not thrown out with miscellaneous trash.

2. Paper records containing non-sensitive information can be discarded through proper recycling means.

3. Electronic records and other non-paper media holding sensitive information are to be destroyed or erased so that personally identifiable information cannot practically be read or reconstructed.

4. Questions regarding the proper destruction of any specific document or media should be addressed to ITS Support (support@colby.edu).

\(^1\) http://www.colby.edu/its/wp-content/uploads/sites/145/2015/03/Definition-of-Sensitive-Information.pdf