



Tuskegee University Records Retention, Depository, and Destruction Policy

Submission Date: 01/01/2026

Approving Authority: Tuskegee University Board of Trustees

Responsible Office: Office of the General Counsel, in coordination with University Archives, Human Resources, and the Registrar

1.0 Policy Statement

Tuskegee University recognizes that its records are vital assets essential to the effective operation, historical continuity, and legal compliance of the institution. This policy establishes a systematic framework for the retention, secure storage, and destruction of all University records, in all formats (physical and electronic), in accordance with accreditation standards, and federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

This policy is enacted in direct compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Standard 10.9: Records of Institutional Operations, which mandates that the institution maintain secure, accurate, and complete records and a systematic records retention and destruction policy.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all academic, administrative, financial, and personnel records generated, received, or maintained by any department, office, employee, or agent of Tuskegee University in the course of conducting University business.

3.0 Definitions

- **Record:** Any recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created, received, or maintained by the University in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of its business. This includes paper documents, electronic files, emails, databases, photographs, audio/video recordings, and microforms.
- **Retention Period:** The minimum length of time a record must be kept in an accessible format before it is eligible for destruction, as defined by this policy and its attached schedules.
- **Archival Record:** A record of enduring historical, legal, or administrative value to the University that shall be preserved permanently. The University Archives, under the



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the guidance of the University Archivist, the University has the authority to designate records as archival.

- Destruction: The secure and irreversible disposal of records that have met their minimum retention period and are not subject to a legal hold or archival preservation.
- Legal Hold: The immediate suspension of any record destruction procedures due to pending or reasonably anticipated litigation, audit, government investigation, or other legal or administrative proceeding.

4.0 Responsibilities

- University Departments/Record Custodians: Responsible for identifying records within their area, applying the retention schedule, ensuring secure storage, and initiating the destruction or transfer process in consultation with the Responsible Offices.
- Office of the General Counsel: Provides final authority on legal retention requirements, issues Legal Holds, and approves the destruction of sensitive records.
- University Archives: Identifies and preserves archival records, guides historical value, and serves as the permanent depository for records of enduring value.
- Human Resources: Oversees the retention, security, and destruction of all personnel and employment records.
- Office of the Registrar: Oversees the retention and security of all official student academic records (transcripts).
- Information Technology Services (ITS): Manages the security, backup, and disposition of electronic records and systems in accordance with this policy.
- All Employees: Responsible for complying with this policy in the creation, handling, storage, and disposition of records in their custody.

5.0 Records Retention Schedule

The following schedule outlines minimum retention periods for key record categories. These periods represent the minimum legal/operational requirement. Records may be retained for a longer period at the discretion of the office responsible. The Office of the General Counsel maintains a comprehensive schedule.



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Record Category	Specific Record Types	Minimum Retention Period	Responsible Office
Final Disposition			

- Personnel Records Personnel file (employment application, hiring documents, evaluations, disciplinary actions, separation documents) **7 years** after separation Human Resources Secure Destruction.
- I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Forms **3 years** after date of hire OR **1 year** after separation, whichever is later Human Resources Secure Destruction Payroll registers, earnings records, W-2/W-4, **7 years** Financial Services / HR Secure Destruction.
- Tenure & Promotion Dossiers **Permanent** (Archival) Provost Office / Archives Transfer to Archives.
- Search Committee Files (for hired and non-hired candidates) **3 years** from search closure Hiring Department / HR Secure Destruction.
- Student Records Official Academic Transcript **Permanent** Registrar Permanent Maintenance.
- Student Academic File (application, coursework, degree audit) **5 years** after graduation or last date of attendance Registrar / Academic Dept. *Review for Archival Value; then Secure Destruction.*
- Student Disciplinary Records **7 years** after resolution or separation, Student Affairs Secure Destruction.
- Financial Aid Records (application, award letters, documentation) **5 years** from the end of the award year Financial Aid Secure Destruction.
- Financial & Administrative General Ledgers, Audit Reports, Annual Financial Statements, Permanent Financial Services / Archives, Permanent Maintenance / Transfer to Archives.



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- Grant & Contract Documents (after expiration) **7 years** after final payment/closeout Sponsored Programs Secure Destruction.
- Board of Trustees Minutes & Resolutions **Permanent** (Archival) Board Secretary / Archives Transfer to Archives.
- Other Accident/Injury Reports **10 years** Environmental Health & Safety Secure Destruction.
- Closed Police/Campus Safety Case Files **7 years** after case closed, Campus Police Secure Destruction.

6.0 Secure Depository & Storage

Active Records: Must be stored securely within the department responsible for controlled access to protect confidentiality and integrity.

Inactive Records: Records no longer needed for daily operations but within their retention period should be stored in a secure, organized manner, either in designated departmental space or a university-approved records storage facility.

Archival Records: Records designated for permanent retention must be transferred to the University Archives according to procedures established by the Archivist.

Electronic Records: Must be maintained on secure, backed-up University servers or approved cloud services. Access controls and version history must be enabled as appropriate.

7.0 Secure Destruction Procedures

Annual Review: Record custodians must review files annually to identify records eligible for destruction.

Certification & Authorization: Before destruction, the department head responsible must complete a Certificate of Records Destruction form, listing the records, their dates, and retention period justification. This form requires authorization from the Office of the General Counsel (for legal compliance) and the University Archivist (to confirm no archival value).



Methods of Destruction:

- Paper/Physical Media: Must be cross-cut shredded or incinerated by a university-approved vendor providing a certificate of destruction.
- Electronic Media: Data must be permanently erased following National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) guidelines for media sanitization (e.g., degaussing, secure wipe, physical destruction).
- Documentation: The signed Certificate of Records Destruction shall be filed permanently with the Office of the General Counsel as proof of compliance.

8.0 Legal Holds

Upon notification from the Office of the General Counsel of a Legal Hold, all destruction activities for relevant records must cease immediately. The hold remains in effect until officially lifted in writing by the General Counsel. Records under a Legal Hold must be clearly identified and securely stored.

9.0 Policy Review

This policy and its retention schedules shall be reviewed at least every five years by the Office of the General Counsel in consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure ongoing compliance with changing laws and accreditation standards.