USF System Records
Public Records, Confidentiality, and Retention

The Florida Public Records Law provides that most USF System records are public and open to inspection by any person requesting such access. Certain records may contain information that is confidential and therefore exempt from disclosure. Confidential information which may not be disclosed includes, but is not limited to, student records and social security numbers.

This compliance-in-a-nutshell document will answer several of your USF System records questions relating to public records, confidentiality, and retention; and will provide you with guidance that will help you do the right thing; however, this guidance is not intended to substitute for an employee’s consultation of USF policies.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

1) “Public records” are defined very broadly in Florida and include e-mail, sound recordings, photos, and just about anything made or received in the transaction of official business.

2) Always remember that as a public employee, you are subject to public scrutiny, so use common sense – “would I want this in the newspaper”?

3) Prior to destroying any record, university procedures must be followed. The USF System has established record retention schedules that provide the length of time that every public record must be maintained.

4) Be aware that even public records may contain confidential information that may not be disclosed, such as social security numbers, medical information, information regarding students, and evaluations of employee performance.

5) If you receive a public records request, immediately notify your supervisor. In most cases, the Office of the General Counsel should be contacted for assistance in responding to the request.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

- USF System Policy 0-106: USF Records—Public Records Law Compliance and University Record Confidentiality
- USF System Policy 0-019: Confidentiality and Disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI)
- USF System Policy 5-012: Records Retention and Disposition
- USF System Regulation 2.0021: Student Records

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT FOR MORE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE?

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