

Indian Hills Community College Email and Instant Message Retention Policy

Purpose:

Electronic Mail and Instant Messages have become ubiquitous services that greatly enhance communication, both internally within the IHCC community and externally to clients, including prospective students, current students, alumni and the public at large.

This policy is used to establish the retention period for email and instant messages stored on servers. It also confirms responsibilities if litigation occurs.

Scope:

This retention policy applies to all email and IM systems provided by IHCC, users of the IHCC email and IM systems and any email or IM messages sent or received using IHCC systems.

Policy:

Email and instant messaging records are created for routine communication or information exchange. These messages should be considered transitory messages that do not have lasting value and should be:

1. Read and promptly deleted; or
2. Read and retained on the server for no longer than the default retention period or until their usefulness has ended (whichever occurs first), and then promptly deleted; or
3. Read and moved off the active server when job requirements necessitate retention for periods longer than the default retention period, and then promptly deleted when their usefulness has ended.

Examples of transitory messages:

- Notices of meetings or events
- Internal requests for information
- An inquiry about department course offerings or scheduling issues
- Announcements, etc.

Lasting value messages:

When the contents of an email or instant message exhibits one or more of the following characteristics, it should be classified as having lasting value:

- Has operational value
 - Administrative actions taken or planned
 - Reports or recommendations
 - Policies, procedures, guidelines, rubrics, or templates
- Has legal or evidential value (required to be kept by law)
 - Falls within a litigation hold or internal investigation
- Has fiscal value (related to financial transactions of the campus)
 - Required for financial reporting and audits
- Has historical significance
 - May arise from exceptional age and/or some significant historical event
- Has vital value (critical to maintain to ensure operational continuity after a disruption or disaster)
 - Vital records or information may fall into any one of the above value categories

Since email and instant messaging systems are not designed to be records retention or document management systems, email and instant messages that have lasting value should:

1. Be moved to dedicated storage on department/office networked file systems, with defined retention periods.
2. Not be stored with in individual users' email or instant messaging folders/files.

Responsibility for Retention of Messages with lasting Value

The burden of determining whether a specific message has lasting value should fall to the department responsible for that particular class or series of records – typically the Dean or Department Head.

Default Retention Period

IHCC email system will be configured to automatically delete messages retained for more than 365 days on email servers. This auto-delete policy applies to messages within folders: Inbox, Drafts, etc.

IHCC email system will also be configured to automatically delete messages that have been marked for deletion by users but are still sitting in their “Deleted Items” folder for more than 180 days, “Junk E-mail” for more than 60 days on email servers. “Sent Items” will be automatically removed from the server after 365 days.

IHCC will be configured to prevent the storage of instant messages on the servers.

All IHCC email and IM system users are expected to:

1. Regularly check for new messages;
2. Routinely move messages with lasting value to dedicated storage on department/office networked file system; and to
3. Delete transitory messages as quickly as possible.

Backup Files

Backup copies of IHCC email and IM system files will be kept for no more than 4 weeks. These backups are to be used for system restoration and disaster recovery and are not designed to be used for retrieval of deleted messages.

Litigation Holds

When litigation is pending or threatened against the College or its employees, the law imposes a duty upon the College to preserve all documents and records that pertain to the issues. A litigation hold directive must be issued to the legal custodians of those documents.

A litigation directive overrides this email and IM retention policy, until the hold has been cleared. Email and accounts of separated employees that have been put on litigation hold will be maintained by the Information Technology Department until the hold is released.

No employee who has received a litigation hold may alter or delete electronic records that fall within the range of that hold. These employees must allow access to these records, wherever, they may be stored.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Information Technology Department will:

- Establish and publish a policy for email and IM account administration and storage allocation.
- Provide instructions for moving messages that must be retained longer than the default retention period to users' dedicated storage on department/office networked file system.
- Provide helpdesk support.

- Manage server implementations of litigation holds that are issued by appropriate personnel.
- Suspend automatic deletion processes, as required to preserve information within the scope of the litigation hold.

Department heads will be:

- Responsible for providing records retention standards to staff and faculty with their respective units.

Originators and custodians of electronic messages, records, and information that have lasting value are responsible for:

- Appropriately identifying and retaining such records in accordance with this policy.
- Seeking assistance from their respective Department heads when unsure about how to categorize specific types of messages.

When notified of a litigation hold, employees are responsible for preserving all messages, records and information that fall within the scope of the hold.