

Amherst College Records Release Policy
Approved by the Amherst College Board of Trustees, October 15, 2016

In light of its commitment to support all manner of scholarship and research, the Amherst College Archives restricts access to college records only to the extent necessary to honor legal requirements and privacy considerations. The Archives will make records available to the public according to the following schedule, unless other, unanticipated or new legal requirements preclude doing so.

Personnel records: Closed until death of the the employee. If no record of the employee's death exists, closed until 90 years after the date of creation.

- Examples: Records of job searches, performance reviews, promotions, reappointments, tenure decisions, and disciplinary/grievance procedures.

N.B.: This policy on personnel records applies to all employee records, including those in the categories below. In other words, the death/90 period trumps dates established for personnel records that may reside in other collections.

Dean of Students records: Closed a minimum of 10 years after date of creation. After 10 years, closed until the death of the record's subject. If no record of the subject's death exists, closed until 90 years after date of creation.³ If such records mention the confidential affairs of other students, the records remain closed until the death of those other students (or 90 years after date of creation).

- Examples: Student records including applications and supporting materials, financial aid records, correspondence, disciplinary information, information on academic performance including poor performance and honors and awards, GRE and other test reports; Dean of Students Office records including correspondence, minutes, reports, committee material, judicial board material, and additional unknown materials (archivists rarely view the contents of these files).

Board of trustees records: Closed until 50 years after date of creation.⁴

- Examples: Meeting minutes and binders, committee materials including minutes, Folger Library material, correspondence with students, alumni and faculty, investment and endowment information, biographical material on trustees, salary information, by-laws, reports, additional unknown material.

President's office records: Closed until 50 years after date of creation.

- Examples: These records are primarily composed of correspondence with students, faculty, staff, trustees and others on a wide variety of subjects; also included are reports, speeches, personnel information, disciplinary information, minutes, legal documents, financial information, printed information, additional unknown material.

Dean of the faculty records: Closed until 50 years after date of creation.

- Examples: Faculty meeting minutes and related materials, Committee of Six meeting minutes and related materials, grant records, fellowship records, general administrative files from the Dean of Faculty and Dean of Faculty's Office, individual personnel files for faculty and staff, and additional unknown material.

³ As of August 2016, the oldest living alumni are members of the classes of 1937 and 1938.

⁴ 50 years is the period established at Dartmouth College. See https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/recmgmt/Access_Policy.html for the policy that significantly influenced this policy.

General administrative records: Closed until 30 years after date of creation.

- Records from offices not named above that manage the day-to-day work of the college.
Examples: non-personnel records from academic departments, campus organizations, and standing and ad-hoc committees.

Records in general distribution at time of creation: Open without restriction.

- Examples: announcements, official college publications, calendars, brochures, and public reports.

N.B. Student transcripts are not held by the Archives & Special Collections; the registrar mediates all access to transcripts.

Caveats

- During restricted periods, records remain available to the office of origin, to the staff of Archives and Special Collections, and to other officers of the college as necessary. Researchers who desire access to restricted records must apply in writing to Archives and Special Collections, explaining their need and designating the specific portion of the collection they wish to use. Archives and Special Collections will transmit the application to the appropriate office, and, if appropriate, to college legal counsel. Archives & Special Collections staff will make requested materials available for review to the appropriate office(s), but A&S staff will not review the content of that material on behalf of those offices.
- Archives staff ensure compliance with college policy.

Dissemination & Digitization:

From collections of unrestricted records (including records once closed but now open), the library and the archives may, at their discretion, identify and then digitize and disseminate—through web sites or other electronic or non-electronic means—material of wide interest and/or usefulness to researchers and other parties.