

Personnel Files and Payroll Records

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Personnel files and payroll records and their contents are considered proprietary information and are strictly confidential. The practice of the university is not to release the contents of personnel files or payroll records except by operation of law.

Availability of Personnel Files for Inspection

Personnel files are available for inspection by authorized university officials, including immediate supervisors, on a need-to-know basis. They are also available for inspection by the employee. Any employee wishing to review her or his personnel file is required to make an appointment. The employee will be permitted to review her or his file within a reasonable period after the request is made.

Before allowing the employee to review her or his file, each dean or director should contact the Office of the Provost (for faculty) or Personnel Services (for non-faculty employees) or the Office of the General Counsel to insure that information to be reviewed in the file conforms to legal requirements. Under the law, certain kinds of records need not be made available for inspection by the employee. These include letters of reference and documents relating to the investigation of possible criminal offenses.

In all instances, individuals reviewing documents will be accompanied by an authorized university representative. As deemed appropriate in the review noted above, copies of documentation contained in personnel files will be provided.

Availability of Payroll Records to Current or Former Employees

A current or former employee may request a copy of his or her own payroll records no more than three years old from University Payroll Services. Payroll Services will provide a copy of the payroll records within 21 days of the request. Payroll Services will require

Issued by: Todd R. Dickey
Senior Vice President

Chrysostomos L. Nikias
Provost and Senior Vice President,
Academic Affairs

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confirmation of employee identity and may charge the current or former employee for the reproduction of the records. Detailed payroll records also are available online via eTrac at www.usc.edu/eTrac.

Release of Employee Information Outside the University

Releasing to third parties information that has not been authorized for release by the employee can have serious legal implications for the university. Except as is required by law, no information will be released either orally or in writing from an employee's personnel file other than job title and dates of employment. The only exception to this is if the inquiry is internal, coming from another university department that is considering hiring the employee in question.

Inquiries from prospective employers of faculty should be directed to the appropriate dean. For staff employees, University Payroll Services is the only entity authorized to respond to employment inquiries or to engage the services of a third party vendor to do so on the university's behalf. In either case, only the employee's job title, most recent hire date, termination date (if no longer employed by USC), and total time with USC will be provided.

An employee may authorize the release of salary information (e.g., for purposes of credit evaluation) by providing specific authorization for the institution requesting the salary information. Payroll Services is the university entity authorized to respond to, or engage the services of a third party to respond to, inquiries regarding income information.

Release of Information to Comply with Subpoena

All subpoenas served for the purpose of obtaining information contained in university personnel files must be directed immediately to the Office of the General Counsel, ADM 352.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the General Counsel at (213) 740-7922.

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