



**CAREER CENTER POLICY  
CREDENTIAL FILE PROGRAM**

*Last Amended: Spring 2008*

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**ARTICLE I: Purpose of Credential File Program**

The original purpose of the credential file program was to provide students and alumni with a central location in which to store current letters of reference (no more than five years old) and other documentation that may be related to the pursuit of employment, entrance into graduate school, or other venue in which letters of reference may be applicable. Effective January 1, 2009, the Luther College Career Center will no longer be providing its credential file service.

**ARTICLE II: Credential File Options**

Students and alumni who wish to establish a credential file will be advised of two options:

**Option A: Self-managed Credential File**

Description: A *Self-managed Credential File* is a file that is completely managed by the student or alum. The Career Center will educate the students and alumni as to how to go about organizing and managing their credentials, as well as providing them with cover sheets adorned with the college's logo. The file remains in the possession of the student or alum.

Updating File Contents: Students and alumni are responsible for updating the contents of their Self-managed credential files. The Career Center strongly discourages students and alumni from keeping any documents that are more than five years old. Alumni who have a credential file and wish to switch to self-management must submit a *written request* to the Career Center by December 1, 2008 stating they would like to have the non-confidential documents released to them for self-management.

Cost: There are no costs beyond the copying and mailing expenses for which the alumni is responsible.

**Option B: Establish an account with Interfolio, Inc. ([www.interfolio.com](http://www.interfolio.com))**

Description: Interfolio is a secure, web-based tool that allows people to store, manage and send electronic and print files. Interfolio offers individuals one central place to store their most important documents, while also providing the means to distribute these materials to any institution. Alumni may submit both non-confidential and confidential materials to Interfolio.

Updating File Contents: Documents may either be mailed to Interfolio or submitted electronically. All documents in your online dossier will be scanned and stored electronically.

Cost: Account fees are either \$15.00 per year or \$45.00 for five years. Multiple mailing options are provided at an additional cost per mailing (mailing fees begin at \$4.00 per request).

**ARTICLE III: Processing Credential File Mailing Requests**

**Effective September 1, 2008**, the Career Center will no longer be processing credential file mailing requests. Alumni who contact the Career Center will be advised of their options to either personally retain their credential file for self-management or transfer their file to Interfolio, Inc. for management.

**Requests Must be Submitted In Writing**

All credential mailing requests from students and alumni must be received in writing, and be accompanied with total payment. Multiple mailing addresses (locations to which credential files should be sent) may be submitted in a single request.

**Current Letters of Reference**

Only letters of reference written within the past five years will be included in mailing requests (calculating backward from the date on which the request was made). Letters of reference written more than five years prior to the request date are considered outdated and should be replaced with current references.

**Deceased Reference Writers**

The Career Center strongly discourages students and alumni from disseminating letters of reference from individuals who are deceased. It is standard practice for hiring officials to follow-up via telephone with reference writers to ask additional questions that may not have been addressed in the content of the letter. Thus, the Career Center strongly encourages students and alumni with credential files (even those self-managing) to replace letters of reference from individuals who are deceased. This even applies to situations where the letter of reference was written recently (within the past five years). It is the responsibility of the student or alum to monitor the contents of his or her file.

#### **ARTICLE IV: Purging Credential Files**

All credential files not retrieved by alumni or transferred to Interfolio, Inc. by January 1, 2009 will be confidentially destroyed.

#### **ARTICLE V: Waiving Rights to Confidential Documentation: Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Luther College policy regarding the Family Education Right to Privacy Act of 1974, amended in 1976, states that a candidate for employment, graduate school, or professional school who has established a credential file within the Career Center has the right to inspect and review all materials in his/her file unless he/she waives his/her rights to do so either at the time of creation of the credential file, or thereafter with individual documents.

Those students/alumni who waive their right to inspect and review the documents within his/her credential file understand that the documents may be forwarded to an institution, organization, or private party only upon the student's/alum's request. Upon receipt of the credential file, the institution, organization, or private party will be instructed by the Career Center not to permit any other party to have access to the information without the student's/alum's written consent. By waiving their right to inspect and review their file and/or individual documents, students and alumni transfer custodianship to the Luther College Career Center, and the file and its contents are subject to the Career Center's current policies and procedures relating to treatment and management of credential files.

#### **ARTICLE VI: Using 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Vendor(s): Interfolio, Inc.**

For students and alumni who wish to use a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to manage their credential files, the Career Center will collaborate with the vendor chosen by the student or alum to expedite the file transfer. The student or alum bears the responsibility to ensure that the 3<sup>rd</sup> party has a systematic process in which confidential materials are handled. Typically some kind of transfer form is supplied to the student or alum. The Luther College Career Center has facilitated similar credential file transfers with Interfolio, Inc. \* *Interfolio is an independent contractor not affiliated with Luther College. Luther College does not benefit financially from the use of Interfolio by Luther alumni or students. Once an account with any third party is established for management of the student's credential file, Luther College is relieved of all rights and responsibilities concerning the student's/alumni's file.*

#### **ARTICLE VII: Determining the Confidentiality of Credential Files and/or Letters of References**

##### **Letters of reference written on or before December 31, 1974**

All letters of reference written on or before December 31, 1974 are considered confidential, whether or not they are labeled "confidential."

##### **Letters of reference written on or after January 1, 1975**

Letters of reference written on or after January 1, 1975 should contain a written disclosure (in some form), per regulations outlined in FERPA (see S. 1232g) that indicates whether or not the document was submitted confidentially. In the event no clear identifier is present on the individual document, it will be considered "open", which makes it viewable by the student or alum about whom the letter is written. Alumni who established a completely "closed" file by signing the "waiver to access" form cannot view any of the documents regardless of individual confidential markings or lack thereof.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: Credential Files of Deceased Students and Alumni of Luther College**

*Copies* of the contents of credential files (including confidential files) of students or alumni who are deceased may be given to immediate family members per their request. This includes parents, stepparents, siblings, grandparents, and children.

#### **ARTICLE IX: Releasing Confidential Letters of Reference**

The Career Center will release confidential documents, mainly letters of reference or other performance appraisals, when written consent from the reference writer is sent to and received by the Career Center. The student or alumni must make such requests, and the reference writer must specifically state the permissibility to release the confidential letter or evaluation to the student or alumni. Confidential letters of reference written by individuals who are deceased must remain confidential (see more on deceased reference writers in Article III).

#### **ARTICLE X: Credential Files & Permanent Records**

Per Luther College Records Management policy (amended June 2001) credential files are not considered permanent educational records, and under no circumstance will these files, or any of the individual documents, be held in perpetuity. Transcripts and student teaching evaluations are considered permanent records, and they will be retained in perpetuity by the Registrar's Office.

#### **ARTICLE XI: Credential File Policy Changes & Updates**

Changes and/or updates to this credential file policy can be made without notice to students and alumni who currently use or have previously used the credential file service within the Career Center. The director of the Career Center must approve all final changes to this policy.

#### **ARTICLE XII: Application of Credential File Policy**

This credential policy applies to all credential files, confidential and open, regardless of the date on which they were established with the Career Center (or other previous offices now known as the Career Center).