

Background Information: Graduate Certificate in Records and Information Management

The field of records and information management, RIM, is defined as the systematic control of records throughout their life cycle. A “RIM Professional” is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of positions such as records managers, corporate librarians, imaging specialists, legal professionals, IT managers, consultants, and educators. RIM professionals are found in a wide variety industry, business, government, legal, healthcare and financial settings..

With the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002, effective and efficient information management became an organizational priority and a legal obligation demanding significant attention. Enacted in the wake of corporate and accounting scandals at Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, and others, Sarbanes-Oxley requires that senior executives take personal responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of corporate financial records. An organization’s records – the paper and electronic evidence of its activities – lie at the heart of information management.

A survey conducted in April, 2007 by ARMA International, the leading professional organization in the RIM field, indicated that nearly half of the organizations surveyed are not training their employees on how to manage properly corporate records and information. ARMA also learned that the majority of practicing RIM professionals hold a bachelor’s degree and are seeking advanced educational opportunities to enhance their careers.

ARMA has recently completed a comprehensive study to define the core competencies needed to succeed at all levels in RIM. These competencies (i.e., the knowledge, skills, characteristics or traits that contribute to outstanding performance in RIM) fall into six broad categories:

1. Management Functions
2. RIM Practices
3. Risk Management
4. Communications and Marketing
5. Information Technology
6. Leadership

The 15-hour graduate certificate is designed to address the most pressing educational needs of RIM professionals that are not being addressed in any other degree program. These needs, defined by ARMA members and RIM professionals, focus on the RIM-specific competencies. Future enhancements to the certificate will incorporate additional elective courses that address more completely the full set of

competencies. The goal is to ensure that anyone pursuing the certificate will have the opportunity to select courses that cover each competency area. Since there is no way to address all six competency areas effectively in a 15-hour program, it will be up to the individual student to assess his/her level of competency and to plan a responsive program of study.

The Library and Information Science Program (LIS) also offers Graduate Certificates in Archival Administration, and Information Management, and the RIM Certificate is designed to complement these. The RIM Certificate differs from these existing certificates in that it addresses management of business information in its active state and in the electronic world; the Archival Administration Certificate focuses on non-active records and preservation while the Information Management Certificate centers on the tools needed to use technology efficiently and effectively in gathering, storing, and disseminating information.

The LIS Program will meet the educational demands of its current students as well as those in the external RIM community by offering a complementary, yet distinct, certificate. This RIM certificate is the first graduate program in the country to focus specifically on the field of records and information management, separate and apart from archives.

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