



April 3, 2007

To: General Officers

From: Elson S. Floyd, Ph.D.

Subject: Social Security Numbers

In the current environment of computer security breaches and rampant identity theft, social security numbers (SSN) have become a liability to institutions of higher education. The numbers themselves have intrinsic value and are actively sought out by criminals in both physical and electronic formats. The real costs and opportunity costs of handling security breaches involving SSN are high. Notifications to affected individuals divert resources from the core missions of the University, and can lead to reduced giving and an overall reduced stature of the University in the eyes of the public. This has direct and serious financial and legal consequences.

It is the policy of the University of Missouri to protect, to the extent possible, the confidential nature of SSN. However, additional policies and procedures must be developed and deployed to further mitigate this threat. Accordingly, I am directing the Vice President for Information Technology to lead a project to systematically develop, document, and enforce a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to mitigate the risks associated with the University's use of SSN. The guiding principle of these procedures will be to limit the collection, storage, and access to SSN in institutional data systems. The result of this project will include physical, technical and procedural safeguards and monitoring to prevent unauthorized duplication or disclosure of SSN.

This project will address a sizable number of relevant data systems under the oversight of UM, UMHC, and the four campuses. Because of the complexity and intricacies of the interdependencies of these diverse systems, it is anticipated that this project will occur in several phases. The Vice President for Information Technology will communicate the project plans and progress to the General Officers on a regular basis.

ESF:ram

xc: Vice President Gary Allen