Policy Number	706 000
Policy Title	Electronic Signature Policy
Responsible Officer	Vice President, Information Technology
Responsible Office	Information Technology Services
Summary	This policy sets forth the requirements for using electronic signatures to conduct electronic transactions and establishes the associated technology standards. The organization encourages the use of electronic signatures, electronic transactions, and electronic records to increase efficiency and save resources where their use meets legal, policy and security requirements.
Definitions	CIU Officials - See Decision Making Policy on the HR Forms page under "Documents." • **Electronic Signature:** a digital method of identification that is attached to or logically associated with an electronic record which then is executed or adopted by a signatory with the intent to be bound by and/or to authenticate to the "electronic record. • **Electronic Record:** a record of information created, generated, sent, communicated, received and/or stored by electronic means. • **Electronic Transaction**: an action or set of actions that is conducted or performed, in whole or in part, by electronic means and/or via electronic records. Agreements that are concluded, executed, and documented electronically are prime examples of electronic transactions. • **Security Verification:** a method employed to verify that the application of an electronic signature, a digital signature, or a related performance is that of a specific person or to detect changes or errors in an electronic record. Security verification may include the use of algorithms, codes, identifying words or numbers, encryption, callback, or other acknowledgment. • **User Authentication:** the process of securely verifying the identity of an individual prior to allowing access to an electronic University service. • **User Authorization:** the process of securely verifying that an authenticated user has permission to access specific electronic University services and/or perform certain electronic operations, including the application of an electronic signature for the purpose of completing electronic transactions.
Approving Body	Academic Council; Administrative Council
Approval Date	03.03.2023 (Acad C); 02.10.23 (Admin C)
Last Revision	April 2023
Re-evaluation Date	April 2026
Departmental Impact	All CIU, Ben Lippen Employees and Students

Failure to follow the following policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Policy Statement

To increase the efficiency of transactions that require approval or authorization by signature, the organization supports the use of electronic signatures, if their use meets legal and security requirements. This policy establishes requirements for electronic signatures in lieu of handwritten signatures in connection with official activities, to ensure that electronic signatures are used consistently with our policies. This policy applies to all members of the community and governs all uses of electronic signatures in connection with business activities.

This policy does not mandate the use of electronic signatures or otherwise limit the rights of parties to conduct transactions on paper, nor does this policy apply when a handwritten signature on a paper record is required by applicable law. This policy does not apply to facsimile signatures used on checks issued by CIU.

Rationale
This policy was developed to provide general guidance of the use of electronic signatures and the technology standards that support electronic signatures at CIU.

Policy Procedures
Electronic signatures are valid wherever a traditional ink signature by the same signer would be valid, except in those cases where another authority governs another aspect of the transaction, and such authority does not accept electronic signatures. Known examples of such exceptions include:

- Clerk of court

Electronic signatures may be used by employees, students, and vendors. CIU/BLS will accept electronic signatures interchangeable and consistently with how it accepts traditional ink signatures.
Electronic and Digital signatures may take the form of:

1. A scanned ink signatures
2. A signature captured using a digital pen or pad
3. An image of a prior signature applied by software (such as Abode)
4. An encrypted certificate with a signature and additional information
5. A signature supplied by a third-party web platform (such as VeriSign)
6. A user that authenticates to the system using their login credentials and the system captures their name/id

Only organization officials have signature authority to sign contracts, agreements, and similar documents that commit to a course of action and bind the organization. (To be clear, any contract executed, or obligation incurred by individuals who do not have this authority obligate themselves personally, and not the organization.)

All individuals with signature authority are responsible for activities conducted under their user ID and are expected to take all necessary precautions to safeguard their password and files to prevent inappropriate use. Sharing passwords or other access tokens is prohibited.

Individuals are expected to report any actual or suspected fraudulent activities related to electronic signatures immediately to any manager or supervisor in the appropriate department. Confirmed violations of this policy will result in consequences aligned with the CIU and BLS Employee Handbook.

Technology Standards for Signatures on Contracts
The electronic signature tools below are the standard tools to create contracts for electronic signatures. These tools should be used to conduct electronic signatures on contracts and are only needed to create electronic documents for signature. These tools do not need to be purchased for individuals to only sign documents electronically.

- Adobe Acrobat Pro/Adobe Sign (primary) - (e.g., contracts/agreements)

The above application should be used to create contracts requiring electronic signatures over other tools such as DocuSign and RightSignature. However, external organizations may send contracts to our employees in DocuSign, RightSignature, and other eSignature applications. Employees can sign such contracts initiated by external organizations. For questions or assistance purchasing software, visit the Technology Purchases web page or contact itadminassist@ciu.edu.

Storage of Electronically Signed Contracts
When a department collects an electronically signed contract, they must store the finalized copy in a shared

OneDrive (SharePoint) location. Electronic files should be stored so that the finalized copy can be retrievable. Electronic contracts need to be retrievable for academic and legal purposes. For assistance with the storage of electronically signed contracts, contact the IT Help Desk.

Technology Standards for Signatures on Forms
The electronic signature tools below are the standard tools to add to forms for electronic signatures at CIU and BLS. These tools should be used to conduct electronic signatures on forms and are only needed to create electronic documents for signature. These tools do not need to be purchased for individuals to only sign documents electronically.

- Etrieve (primary) - (e.g., Registrar, Admissions, HR, Student Life documents)
- Formstack (secondary) - (e.g., employment applications, other HR forms)
- Microsoft Forms (tertiary) - (e.g., student/staff forms, surveys, and questionnaires)

For questions or assistance purchasing software, visit the Technology Purchases web page or contact itadminassist@ciu.edu. Note that Microsoft Forms and Etrieve are at no additional cost to a department.

Records Management and Retention Protocol
Signatures are an integral part of a record. Therefore, records management is a necessary part of standard business operations. Good records management practices include making and preserving records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures. If the record needs to be preserved, whether for a finite period or permanently, then good records management protocol ensures the trustworthiness of the electronically signed record over time. All electronic records shall be retained in accordance with the record retention requirements prescribed by CIU Records, Retention and Destruction policy. Found at: Records and Retention policy.

Training for Technology Signature Tools
The Office of Information Technology is responsible for training individuals on the proper way to create electronic documents for signature in the standard tools listed above. Contact the IT Help Desk if you need training or have questions. The Office of Information will maintain an electronic signature comparison matrix to promote clarity on when certain applications should be used for contracts, forms, and surveys.

Exceptions
To request the consideration of an exception to the standard electronic applications above, submit a ticket to the IT Help Desk.

References:
Records and Retention Policy
Decision Making Policy

Hyperlinks
www.ciu.edu/policy