5 things you need to know about Public Records:

1. State law requires UW-Milwaukee to provide broad access to records made or received in the transaction of public business. (See, Wis. Stat. 19.35)

2. “Records” include email and other electronic records. (See, Wis. Stat. 19.32(2)).

3. The content of a record, not its form or location, determines whether it is subject to disclosure under public records law.
   a. Plan on your communications falling outside the exception for incidental and purely personal communications. This exception is narrow and you should assume that it generally does not apply. When in doubt, the best practice is to keep personal communications separate from your work resources.
   b. Plan on treating emails sent from/received to your UWM email addresses as public records, even if they were sent outside normal business hours or on the weekend.
   c. You may use your personal email to conduct personal business (e.g., you may contact your legislators as a private citizen from your personal email on your own time). However, emails sent from a personal email account that discuss UWM “business” may be subject to the public records law. In other words, use of a personal email account to avoid public records law should be avoided.

4. Importantly, Wisconsin law prohibits UWM employees from using state resources to:
   a. Advocate for governmental action or legislative change at any level (local, state, federal). This includes using UWM email or work time to contact legislators.
   b. Solicit contributions or services for a political purpose from other state employees while they are engaged in their official duties.

5. University resources include (but are not limited to):
   a. Work time
   b. UWM email addresses (regardless of whether the email was sent outside business hours or on a weekend)
   c. Other electronic resources like websites, on-line discussion boards, cell phones
   d. Office space and other facilities

If you have any questions, please call the Office of Public Records at (414) 229-2849 or stop by Chapman 180B.