**CLIENT CERTIFICATES**

**USAGE CASE: SIGNING MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENTS**

**Requirement**

Faculty, students and staff routinely create Microsoft Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and PowerPoint presentations. Once those files have been created and distributed in digital form, it is often difficult to ascertain their provenance and integrity: how do we really know that a letter of recommendation really came from its apparent author? How do we know that a budget spreadsheet accompanying an electronic bid submission wasn't altered after it was prepared and submitted?

**Suggested Solution**

On Windows, users of Microsoft Office can digitally sign the Microsoft Office documents they create. (Digital signing is unfortunately not available for Microsoft Office on the Macintosh)

**What's Minimally Needed**

• *Microsoft Office (Windows Only)*

• *A Client Certificate:* In order to be able to digitally sign Microsoft Office documents, the document author needs a client certificate. Client certificates are available at no charge, and typically require only the completion of an online web form, and then clicking on a link sent to the user's email address. We assume that the client certificate you want to use has been installed on the system that you're using to prepare your Microsoft Office document.

**Mechanics of the Process**

• *Prepare the Microsoft Office Document As You Normally Would*

• *Save and Sign The Document:* Once you've completed the document, save it as you normally would. Now go to the circular Office Menu button and come down to Prepare, Add a Digital Signature. If desired, provide a note about why you're signing the document, then click "sign." A small red ribbon will be added to the lower left edge of the Microsoft Office window. That icon indicates that the message had a valid digital signature, and that it has not been tampered with or otherwise altered after it was prepared, saved and signed.

This document has been digitally signed as an example, and will display the signature ribbon if opened in Microsoft Office (Windows only).