

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • CHICAGO • SPRINGFIELD

OFFICE FOR UNIVERSITY RELATIONS Freedom of Information Act 2014 Year-End Review

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is an Illinois statute that provides the public the right to access the documents and records of public bodies, including the University. Under this statute, the University must respond to most requests within a five day period, though an extension may be taken that provides an additional five days to respond.

FOIA responses have often served as the basis for significant media stories at the UA level and on the campuses (e.g., the employment of James Kilgore and the decisions not to hire Steven Salaita). Through its processing of responsive documents, University Relations is able to understand the scope of an issue and work proactively to formulate a communications strategy to handle questions from the media, legislators, and the public.

The office for University Relations processes FOIA requests regarding all three campuses as well as University Administration. Under the direction of Executive Director Tom Hardy, Assistant Director Kathy McCarthy, a licensed attorney, coordinates this centralized processing, manages the distributed FOIA processing staff, serves as liaison to requestors and to the AG's Public Access Counselor, and finalizes all response letters. She works as a team with communications and administrative staff throughout the University to ensure proper and timely sharing of information.

Request processing is assigned based on the particular strengths and subject matter expertise, including intimate knowledge of the organization of each campus, of each FOIA coordinator (all of whom have other responsibilities). Jaclyn Banister at Urbana, Jenny Fontaine at Chicago, and Melanie Kuehn and Jill Weathers in University Administration bring their particular organizational backgrounds to their processing of campus-specific requests. Ms. Kuehn and Ms. Weathers also process Springfield, UA, and multi-campus requests. Melanie Bonds joined University Relations in December 2014. Ms. Bonds handles commercial requests and is being trained to provide additional processing capacity for other requests.

The OUR executive director is the signatory of response letters as chief records officer for the institution.

2014 SUMMARY

- In calendar 2014, 857 requests were received—a 38 percent increase from the amount received in 2013. The FOIA team processed (opened and closed) 812 requests, provided more than 100,000 pages of records and reviewed more than 78,000 pages. See Appendix A for details.
- The 2014 request volume was influenced by issues of considerable media coverage such as the employment of James Kilgore and the decision not to hire Steven Salaita.
- In calendar 2014, the FOIA website was viewed more than 7,250 times. The FOIA log page was viewed over 3,000 times and the available records page was viewed nearly 1,500 times. These are the pages that most directly promote University transparency. See Appendix B for details.

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- Of the 857 requests received in 2014, 18 (2 percent) were sent to the Public Access Counselor for review. Nine of these were filed by, or at the direction of, the same requester. Three of the requests for review were resolved prior to an opinion being issued. The PAC responded in our favor to four of the requests for review and partially in our favor to one; ten requests for review are still under review.
- Presentations regarding FOIA and departmental responsibilities were given to four groups and approximately 50 employees.
- As part of her continuing education requirements, Assistant Director Kathy McCarthy attended a seminar at Elmhurst College focusing on FOIA processing at higher education institutions.
- Throughout the year, meetings of all FOIA processing staff were held to discuss issues, processing policies, and new developments with the law.

Appendix A: FOIAs Received in Calendar 2014

Month	Received	Closed	Pages Provided	Pages reviewed
January	51	35	8030	2460
February	60	44	1104	1619
March	78	75	4017	4314
April	108	77	3735	3484
May	93	95	5765	7186
June	76	75	6873	6056
July	56	80	9418	9728
August	56	64	10249	5844
September	74	61	30786	22265
October	78	77	10428	5386
November	71	58	5169	3802
December	56	71	8378	6790
<i>Total</i>	<i>857</i>	<i>812</i>	<i>103952</i>	<i>78934</i>
Average	61.21	58.00	6930.13	5262.27

*The term "closed" means (1) our office issued a final response approving or denying the request; (2) our office issued a request to narrow letter, which the requestor did not respond; or (3) the request was withdrawn.

*Please note that some requests received in 2014 remain open as of the time this report was created.

Month	Total Media Received	Total Commercial Received	Total Private/Other Received
January	14	13	24
February	16	19	25
March	9	11	58
April	31	27	50
May	11	15	67
June	9	14	53
July	8	14	34
August	17	11	28
September	26	9	39
October	19	13	46
November	17	15	39
December	8	11	37
<i>Total</i>	<i>185</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>500</i>
Average	13.21	12.29	35.71

*** Due to the way the data are saved, it is not easy to pinpoint the month when the pages were actually reviewed (i.e., if a request comes in the last week of March and responded to in April, it is unknown when the actual review took place.) For the purposes of this report, the assumption is that the review took place the same month in which the response was issued.

Requests for Review received: 18 (2% of total requests received in 2014)

Campus of Interest Statistics

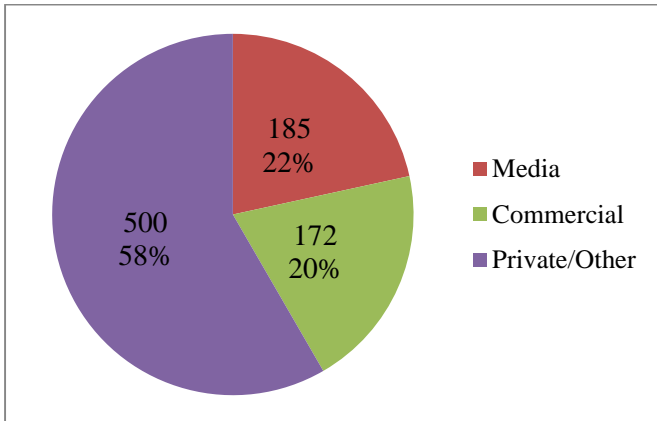
Campus	Number of Requests	Percentage of Requests	Pages Reviewed	Pages Provided
Urbana	539	62.89%	32809	40401
Chicago	142	16.57%	19452	18407
Springfield	31	3.62%	1450	1359
UA	115	13.42%	28667	46519
Multiple Campuses	30	3.50%	1997	1995

*For purposes of this report, all FOIA requests opened in 2014 are counted. For example, a FOIA received in December 2013, but responded to in 2014, was not counted as being processed in 2014. However a FOIA opened in 2014, and responded to in 2015, is included. This provides a more accurate representation of the work being done during the year. This approach is used here and in future reports to ensure consistency.

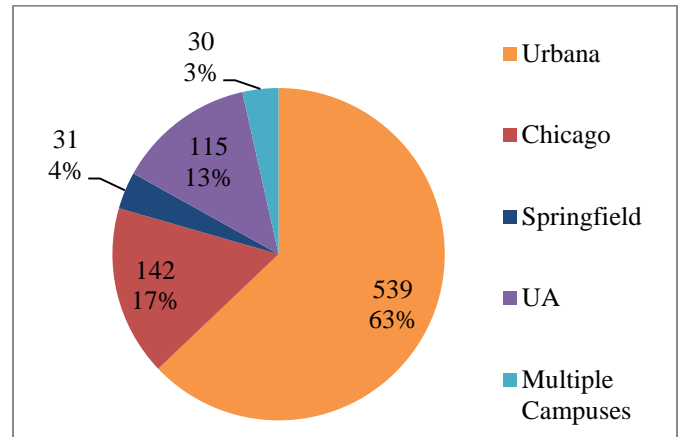
Requests by Campus

	Total	Urbana	Chicago	Springfield	UA	Multi
Number Media	185	111	27	8	31	8
Number Commercial	172	98	48	5	20	1
Number Private/Other	500	330	67	18	64	21
Percent Media	21.59%	60.00%	14.59%	4.32%	16.76%	4.32%
Percent Commercial	20.07%	56.98%	27.91%	2.91%	11.63%	0.58%
Percent Private/Other	58.34%	66.00%	13.40%	3.60%	12.80%	4.20%

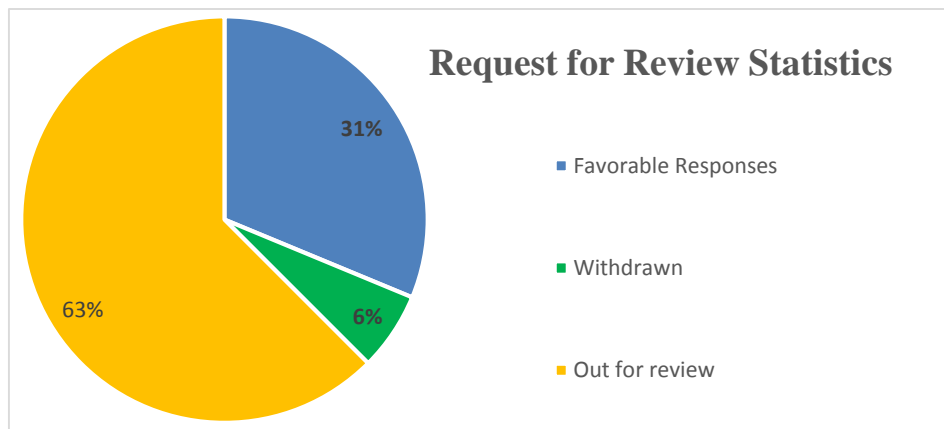
Percentage of Requests by Requester Type



Percentage of Requests by Campus



Request for Review Statistics



FOIA page analytics 2014

Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014

All Sessions
100.00%

Sessions

7,604

% of Total: 100.00% (7,604)



Sessions

● Sessions



Pageviews by Page Title

Page Title	Pageviews
Illinois Freedom of Information Act	7,270
FOIA Log - Illinois Freedom of Information Act	3,212
Filing a Request - Illinois Freedom of Infor...	1,679
Available Records - Illinois Freedom of Info...	1,449
Response Timeline - Illinois Freedom of Info...	703
Frequently Asked Questions - Illinois Freedo...	621
2013 FOIA requests - Illinois Freedom of Inf...	572
Charges - Illinois Freedom of Information Act	370
General Records - Illinois Freedom of Inform...	290
Page Not Found - Illinois Freedom of Informa...	184

Website traffic was high in January due to a specific FOIA that was of interest to Urbana social media.

The *Page Not Found* views reflect preparation for a transition of the website to updated software and a new server. This transition occurred in in January, 2015. Preparation for the change, including page testing and error resolution, was performed in the last quarter of 2014.