

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • CHICAGO • SPRINGFIELD

OFFICE FOR UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
Freedom of Information Act 2016 Year-End Review

Reported to the Board of Trustees
March 15, 2017

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 of Illinois System. Under this statute, the System as a public body 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 System level and at the universities. One such example was the 2009 Urbana admissions controversy that arose through FOIA requests from the Chicago Tribune and other media. Through its processing of responsive documents, the Office for University Relations (OUR) is able to understand the scope of an issue and work proactively, with System offices and the universities, to formulate a communications strategy to handle questions from the media, legislators, and the public.

In November 2011, OUR became the central intake and processing unit System-wide for public document requests submitted under the FOIA, fulfilling a 2010 recommendation from the Administrative Review and Restructuring (ARR) process. This process replaced the four independent FOIA processing operations (each university and System offices) that were in place for over twenty years. By centralizing FOIA processing, a single point of contact for the public was established, responses across the System became more consistent, and resources were shared.

Under the direction of Executive Director Tom Hardy, Associate Director Kathy McCarthy, a licensed attorney, coordinates this centralized processing, manages the distributed FOIA processing staff, serves as liaison to requestors and to the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor, consults with University legal counsel, and finalizes all response letters. She works with a team of communications and administrative staff throughout the System, including OUR Associate Director Kirsten Ruby, 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 each university, of a FOIA coordinator (all of whom have other responsibilities). Jaclyn Banister at Urbana and Jenny Fontaine at Chicago bring their particular organizational backgrounds to the processing of university-specific requests. Jill Weathers in OUR processes Springfield, System offices, and multi-university requests, as well as any university-based requests not handled by Ms. Banister and Ms. Fontaine. Management of this team ensures coverage System-wide at all times, which is essential given the deadlines imposed by the statute.

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

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2016 SUMMARY

- In calendar 2016, 766 requests were received. This volume is higher than the number of requests received in 2012 (636 requests) and 2013 (621 requests), but lower than the 1,003 requests received in 2015 and the 857 requests received in 2014.
- The volume of requests received in 2016 appears to reflect the base line amount of requests the System will receive in a year with minimal high profile events and issues needing crisis communication. Looking back, in 2015, approximately 225 of the 1003 requests were directly related to a high profile event and/or a subject of crisis communication—resulting in 779 non-high profile/crisis communication requests. Similarly, for 2014, of the 857 requests received, 146 were related to high profile events and/or subjects of crisis communication, resulting in 711 non-high profile/crisis communication requests.
- Despite receiving fewer requests than calendar years 2015 and 2014, calendar 2016 saw the most amount of pages being produced in response to requests since FOIA operations were centralized—approximately 420,000 pages. See Appendix A for details. For comparison:
 - 2016: 420,000 pages of records produced
 - 2015: 300,000 pages of records produced
 - 2014: 110,000 pages of records produced
 - 2013: 70,000 pages of records produced
 - 2012: 102,000 pages of records produced
- While 2016 saw fewer high profile events than previous years, the 2016 request volume was still influenced by issues drawing considerable media coverage, including:
 - the canceled rally for presidential candidate Donald Trump at the UIC Pavilion
 - the hiring of athletic director Josh Whitman and football coach Lovie Smith
 - employment issues at Facilities and Services
- The trend of submitting requests as part of advocacy, whether it be personal or organizational, continued this year. One individual submitted 23 requests and another submitted 11; one union submitted 12. Likewise, companies continue to use FOIA as a means to gather commercial information. Of the 152 commercial FOIA requests received last year, 14 were filed by one sports information company and a consulting company submitted 12.
- In calendar 2016, the University's FOIA website was viewed more than 17,300 times, a 42% decrease from 2015. The homepage of the FOIA website was more than 4,600 times, the log page was viewed nearly 4,900 times and the available records page was viewed over 1,400 times. These are the pages that most directly promote University transparency. See Appendix B for details.
- Any requestor may file with the Office of the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) a request for review of the University's response. A request for review does not indicate any impropriety

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or improper handling of a request or responsive documents. FOIA responses issued by the U of I were sent by the filers to the PAC for review 20 times in 2016. See Appendix A for more information.

- Presentations regarding FOIA and departmental responsibilities were given to five groups and approximately 60-70 employees.
- As is our customary practice, Executive Director Tom Hardy, Associate Director Kirsten Ruby, Associate Director Kathy McCarthy, and all FOIA Coordinators took the yearly FOIA training offered by the Illinois Attorney General's Office.
- Throughout the year, meetings of all FOIA processing staff were held to discuss issues, processing policies, and new developments with the law.

Appendix A

Received in Calendar 2016

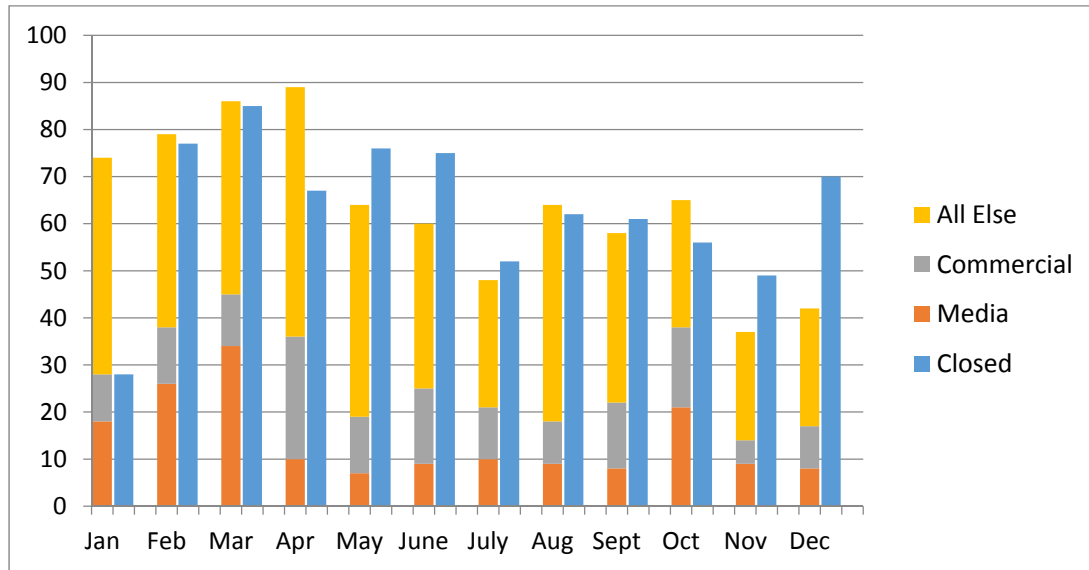
Month	Received	Closed	Pages Provided
January	74	28	8,707
February	79	77	6,912
March	86	85	172,296
April	89	67	71,404
May	64	76	8,664
June	60	75	33,041
July	48	52	9,282
August	64	62	19,886
September	58	61	8,821
October	65	56	9,401
November	37	49	12,169
December	42	70	55,864
Total	766	758	416,447
Average	63	63	34,704

- * 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, to which the requestor did not respond; or (3) the request was withdrawn.
- * Please note that some requests received in 2016 remain open as of the time this report was created.

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Open and Closed in Calendar 2016



Type of Request Received

Month	Media	Commercial	Other
January	21	10	43
February	27	12	40
March	34	11	41
April	12	26	51
May	7	12	45
June	10	16	34
July	10	11	27
August	9	9	46
September	8	14	36
October	21	17	27
November	9	5	23
December	8	9	25
Total	176	152	438
Average	15	13	37

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Requests for Review received: 20

- 2 requests for review stem from 2015 requests
- 9 were filed by one requester

The PAC responded in the System's favor in four of the requests for review. 10 requests for review are still under review. Six of the requests for review were resolved prior to an opinion being issued.

Campus of Interest Statistics

Campus	Number of Requests	Percentage of Requests	Pages Provided
Urbana	469	61.75%	115,861
Chicago	160	21.02%	76,930
Springfield	28	3.79%	735
UA	47	6.14%	197,017
Multiple universities	56	7.31%	25,904

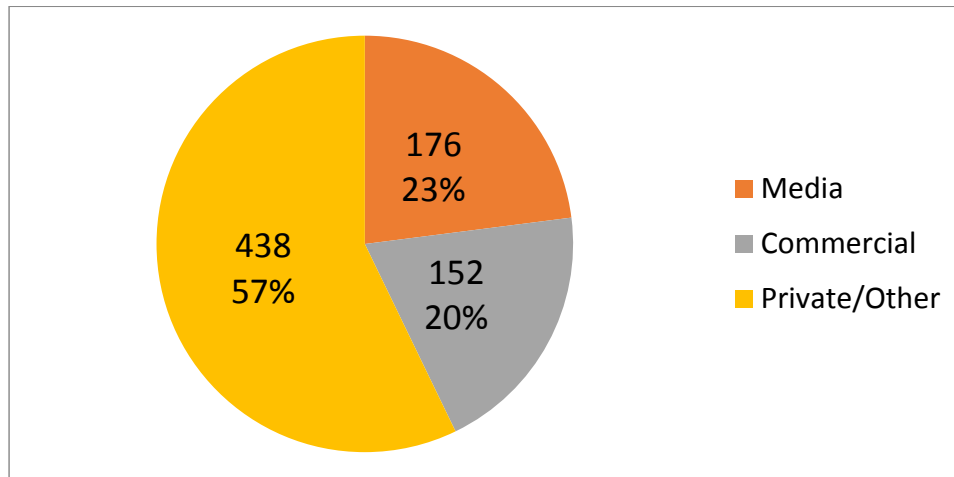
Requests by Campus

	Total	Urbana	Chicago	Springfield	UA	Multi
Number Media	176	116	28	3	11	18
Number Commercial	152	73	48	8	13	10
Number Private/Other	438	284	85	18	23	28
Percent Media	23%	65%	16%	2%	6%	11%
Percent Commercial	20%	48%	32%	5%	9%	7%
Percent Private/Other	57%	65%	19%	4%	5%	6%

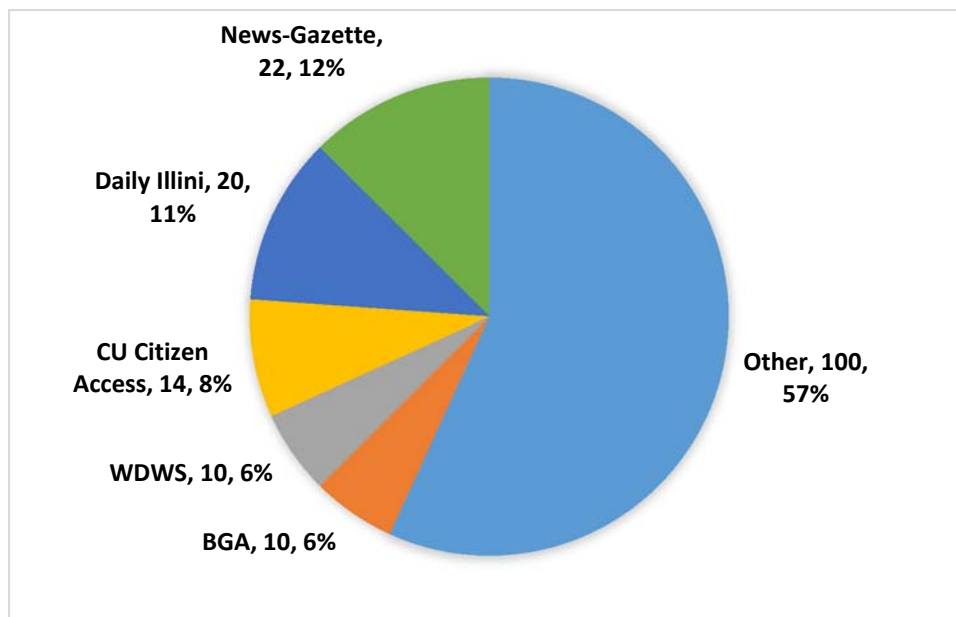
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Percentage of Requests by Requester Type



Requests by Media Outlet



71 total outlets.

Other includes outlets filing fewer than 10 requests.



FOIA Page Analytics 2016

Jan 1, 2016 - Dec 31, 2016

All Users
100.00% Sessions

Pageviews

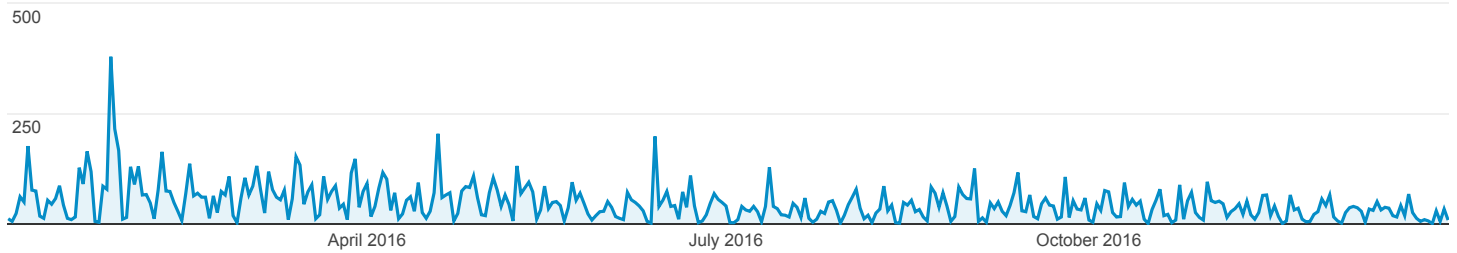
17,327

% of Total: 0.74% (2,341,102)



Pageviews

Pageviews



Pageviews by Page Title

Table with 2 columns: Page Title and Pageviews. Lists various FOIA-related pages and their view counts.

Note: Some pages are listed twice due to the changing of the name of uillinois.edu to "University of Illinois System" in the fourth quarter. For total reporting, pageviews have been aggregated.

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