

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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OFFICE FOR UNIVERSITY RELATIONS Freedom of Information Act 2015 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 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 UA level and on the campuses. One such example was the 2009 Urbana-Champaign campus admissions controversy that arose through FOIA requests from the Chicago Tribune and other media. Through its processing of responsive documents, University Relations is able to understand the scope of an issue and work proactively, with UA and campuses, to formulate a communications strategy to handle questions from the media, legislators, and the public.

The Office for University Relations (OUR) processes FOIA requests to 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 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 University, including OUR Senior Associate Director Ginny Hudak-David, 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 campus, of each 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 campus-specific requests. Melanie Kuehn and Jill Weathers in University Administration process Springfield, UA, and multi-campus requests, as well as any campus-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 University.

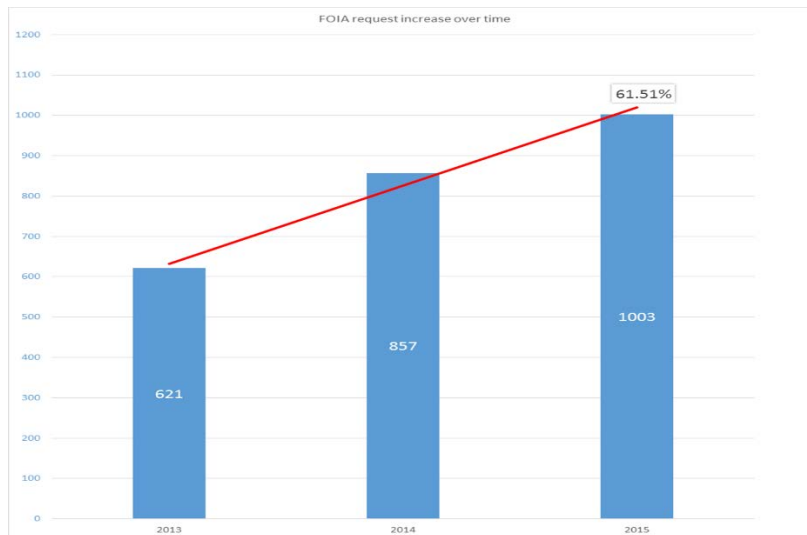
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2015 SUMMARY

- In calendar 2015, 1,003 requests were received—a 17 percent increase from the amount received in 2014 (857) and a 62 percent increase from the number (621) received in 2013.



- The FOIA team closed 978 requests and provided more than 300,000 pages of records. See Appendix A for details.
- The 2015 request volume was influenced by issues drawing considerable media coverage, including:
 - the Steven Salaita employment issue on the Urbana-Champaign campus and the ensuing lawsuit
 - the resignation of Phyllis Wise as Urbana campus Chancellor
 - the claims made against the athletic department on the Urbana campus
 - the dismissal of Urbana football coach Tim Beckman and athletic director Mike Thomas
- In July 2015, the University received a court order to produce approximately 10,000 emails responsive to a FOIA submitted by the attorney of Steven Salaita that the University had initially deemed unduly burdensome. To comply, University Relations and Urbana Public Affairs staff worked together to conduct an initial review of 45,000 pages of documents, stemming from 14,000 emails. Assistant Director Kathy McCarthy and FOIA Coordinator Melanie Kuehn both conducted additional reviews of these documents. Over 9,000 emails, representing 29,000 pages were deemed to be duplicates or non-responsive. Ultimately, University Relations issued two productions in compliance with the court order—on July 7, 2015, and October 8, 2015, respectively—and produced a total 17,000 pages of documents stemming from 5,000 emails. The document review team spent approximately 700 hours processing this production.

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- In late April 2015, the University became aware that certain administrators on the Urbana campus used personal email accounts to conduct University business and that those emails were not made available to our office in response to FOIA requests. Following an ethics inquiry into the matter, University Relations staff were charged with reviewing the emails from personal email accounts of Urbana campus administrators about James Kilgore, Steven Salaita, and the Carle Illinois College of Medicine. On August 7, 2015, University Relations released 1,100 pages of emails on the University's website as a supplemental response to the FOIA requests that may have not been properly fulfilled in 2014 and 2015.
- The combination of complying with the court order issued in the Steven Salaita case and preparing the supplemental production of personal emails was especially difficult given the overlapping timeframes of the productions, which occurred while our office was simultaneously processing a record-breaking number of FOIAs and responding to almost two dozen requests for review filed as part of an animal rights advocacy initiative.
- The trend of submitting requests as part of advocacy, whether it be personal or organizational, substantially increased this year. Ninety-five of the FOIA requests received were submitted by, or at the direction of, one individual and approximately 75 requests were submitted as part of an animal rights advocacy. Another individual submitted 17 requests; a union representative submitted 10; another non-for-profit submitted 7. Similarly, companies continue to use FOIA as a means to gather commercial information. Of the 172 commercial FOIA requests received last year, 15 were filed by one sports information company and a construction company submitted 10.
- In calendar 2015, the University's FOIA website was viewed almost 30,000 times. The homepage of the FOIA website was viewed almost 8,500 times, the log page was viewed over 13,000 times, and the available records page was viewed nearly 2,500 times. These are the pages that most directly promote University transparency. See Appendix B for details.
- Because of the mid-year departure of a FOIA coordinator in University Relations as well as the high volume of FOIA requests received, the online log page (not required by statute) has not been updated since September of 2015. Maintaining the website log is a lower priority than fulfilling the statutory obligations under FOIA. University Relations hopes to update the log later this year when the new coordinator (with a University classification as a business/administrative associate) is hired. Because of the UA hiring freeze, refilling the position was postponed pending a detailed review of necessity.
- Any requestor can file a request with the Office of the Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) for review of the University's response. A request for review does not indicate any impropriety 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 46 times in 2015. See Appendix A for more information.
- Presentations regarding FOIA and departmental responsibilities were given to five groups and approximately 50-60 employees. Assistant Director Kathy McCarthy also participated in a FOIA-focused discussion with various law enforcement groups in the Champaign-Urbana community. In coordination with the University Ethics and Compliance Office, a FOIA training document was provided to the compliance officers across the campuses.
- This office planned to conduct a broad-scale FOIA training for high-level campus administrators in the fall of 2015; however, due to the volume of FOIAs received and the limited staff available for processing,

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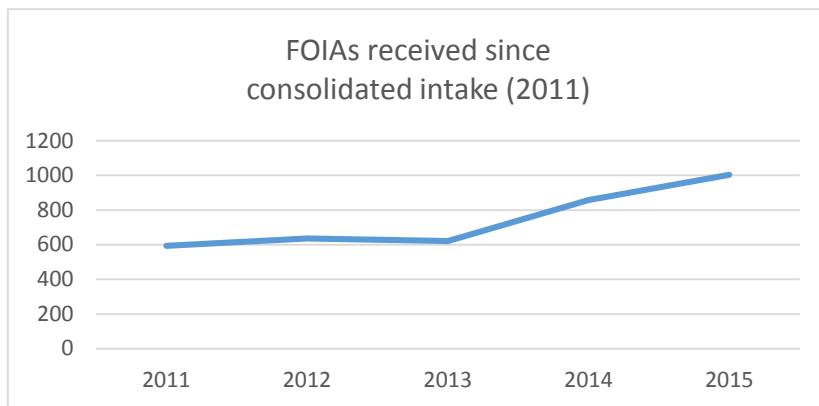
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it was not feasible to coordinate and conduct such a training while fulfilling our statutory obligations. We hope to offer this training session in 2016 if staffing allows or the volume of FOIA requests steadies.

- As part of her continuing education requirements, Assistant Director Kathy McCarthy attended two web seminars presented by the Chicago Bar Association focusing on FOIA processing. FOIA coordinators Melanie Kuehn, Jill Weathers, and Jaclyn Banister attended a seminar presented by the Illinois Attorney General's Office about the FOIA. As is our customary practice, Executive Director Tom Hardy, Senior Associate Director Ginny Hudak-David, Assistant 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

FOIAs Received since Consolidation

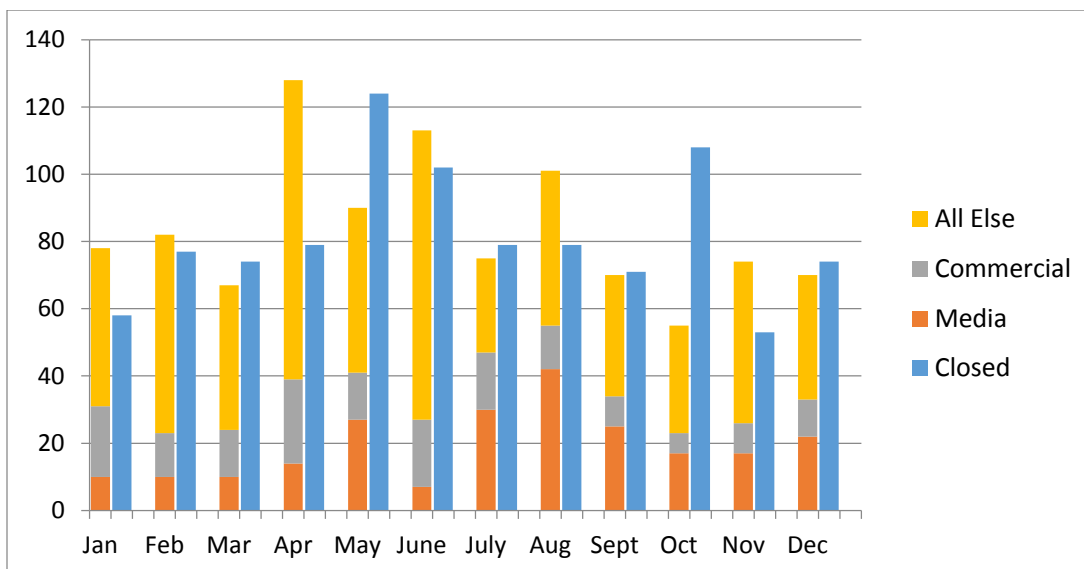


Received in Calendar 2015

Month	Received	Closed	Pages Provided
January	78	58	26,453
February	82	77	165,403
March	67	74	5,007
April	128	79	7,447
May	90	124	6,893
June	113	102	7,761
July	75	79	39,366
August	101	79	7,794
September	70	71	8,541
October	55	108	12,666
November	74	53	15,329
December	70	74	6,006
Total	1,003	978	308,666
Average	77	75	25,722

- * 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 2015 remain open as of the time this report was created.

Open and Closed in Calendar 2015



Type of Request Received

Month	Media	Commercial	Other
January	10	21	47
February	10	13	59
March	10	14	43
April	14	25	89
May	27	14	49
June	7	20	86
July	30	17	28
August	42	13	46
September	25	9	36
October	17	6	32
November	17	9	48
December	22	11	37
Total	231	172	600
Average	18	13	46

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Requests for Review received: 46

- 23 were filed as part of a campaign organized by an animal rights group
- 10 were filed by, or at the direction of, one requester
- 5 were filed by another requestor

The PAC responded in the University's favor in nine of the requests for review and partially in our favor to one. 31 requests for review are still under review. Five of the requests for review were resolved prior to an opinion being issued.

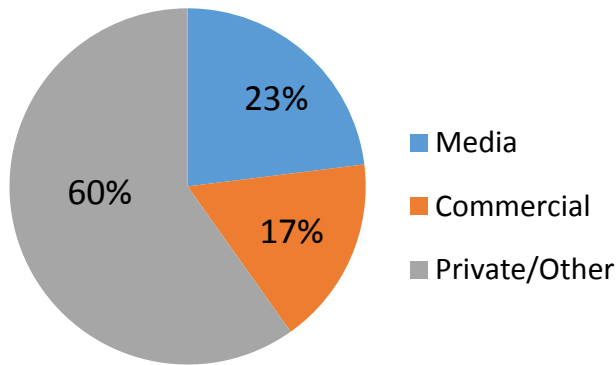
Campus of Interest Statistics

Campus	Number of Requests	Percentage of Requests	Pages Reviewed
Urbana	654	65.20%	74,002
Chicago	191	19.04%	46,400
Springfield	32	3.19%	5,294
UA	97	9.67%	175,400
Multiple Campuses	29	2.89%	7,557

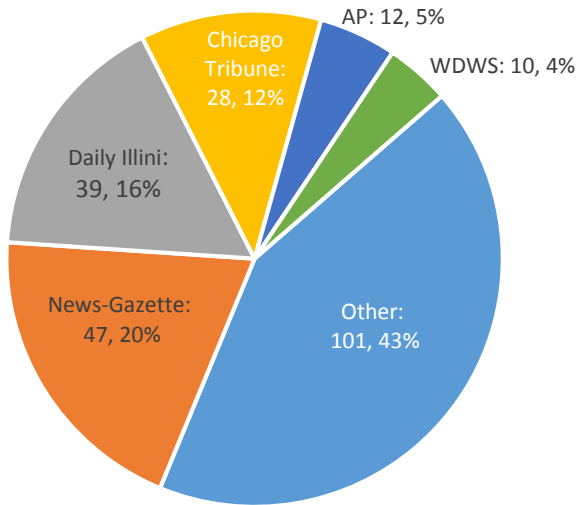
Requests by Campus

	Total	Urbana	Chicago	Springfield	UA	Multi
Number Media	231	174	13	3	30	11
Number Commercial	172	82	54	11	19	6
Number Private/Other	600	398	124	18	48	12
Percent Media	23%	75%	6%	1%	13%	5%
Percent Commercial	17%	48%	31%	7%	11%	3%
Percent Private/Other	60%	66%	21%	3%	8%	2.00%

Percentage of Requests by Requester Type



Requests by Media Outlet



60 total outlets.
Other includes outlets filing fewer than 10 requests.

FOIA Page Analytics 2015

Jan 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2015



Pageviews

29,790

% of Total: 1.18% (2,519,803)

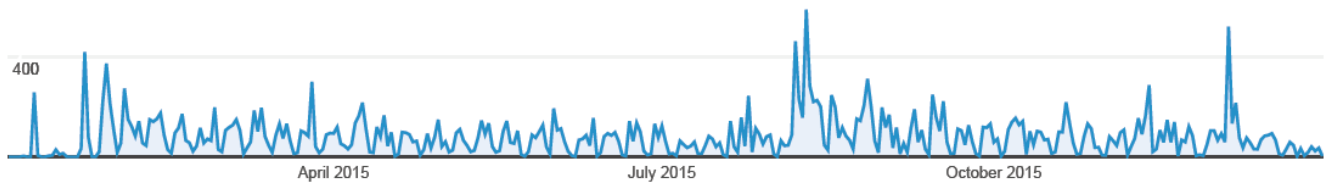


Pageviews

● Pageviews

800

400



Pageviews by Page Title

Page Title	Pageviews
FOIA Log - University of Illinois	13,344
Illinois Freedom of Information Act - University of Illinois	8,452
Available Records - University of Illinois	2,490
Filing a Request - University of Illinois	1,626
2014 FOIA requests - University of Illinois	1,211
General Records - University of Illinois	941
Frequently Asked Questions - University of Illinois	921
Response Timeline - University of Illinois	820
Charges - University of Illinois	520
Learning More - University of Illinois	273

In January of 2015, the FOIA website was moved as part of the changes to the uillinois suite of pages. The reduced January page views reflect this change, as total views could not be accurately logged.