



## BACKGROUND

The Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a core expression of the University of Illinois System’s public mission and governance responsibilities. As a public institution, the System is committed to transparency and accountability to taxpayers while responsibly stewarding sensitive information. Effective FOIA compliance supports ethical governance, public trust, and risk management by reducing legal, financial, and reputational exposure through timely, well-reasoned, and legally grounded disclosures.

### About This Report

The Annual FOIA Report provides a systemwide overview of FOIA activity over the past year, including:

- Request volumes and response trends
- Areas of increasing complexity or sensitivity
- Indicators of operational and risk exposure

Together, these insights are intended to support insight and oversight by highlighting how the System is meeting its transparency obligations, where pressures are increasing, and where continued attention or investment may be necessary to sustain effective compliance.

## 2025 OVERVIEW

FOIA activity continues to reflect the visibility and complexity of the University of Illinois System as a statewide public enterprise. In 2025, both the volume and complexity of requests increased, placing sustained demands on systemwide coordination and resources.

### FOIA Activity at a Glance (2025)

- Total FOIA requests received: 2,208 (YOY increase: +8.4%)
- Total pages reviewed: ~588,000 (YOY increase +311,000)

This represents 172 additional requests and a significant expansion in document review volume year over year.



## 2025 OVERVIEW CONT'D

### Monthly Volume Trends

- Requests averaged more than 100 per month throughout the year
- Nine months exceeded 160 requests
- Three peak months—March, September, and October—each exceeded 200 requests

Except for January, April, August, and September, most months saw increases over 2024 activity

### Increasing Complexity of Requests

- In addition to higher volume, FOIA requests are becoming more complex and time-intensive to process due to:
  - Continued growth in requests for officer-worn body camera footage, which significantly increases record volume
  - An increasing number of recurrent requesters
  - Multi-part requests that function as several inquiries within a single submission
  - Requests spanning multiple universities, requiring enhanced coordination across personnel and units throughout the System

These complexity factors substantially increase review time, coordination needs, and operational effort per request.

## FOIA OFFICE

The FOIA Office, housed within the Office of External Relations and Communications (ERC), centrally administers Freedom of Information Act requests for all three universities and the System Offices to ensure consistent and compliant responses across the University of Illinois System. The centralized FOIA operation is overseen by Associate Director of FOIA Administration Andrew Marlan, with Vice President Adrienne Nazon serving as Chief Records Officer and signatory on all FOIA responses. FOIA staff continue to expand training options to support timely and effective compliance System-wide.



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

OFFICE OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS  
Freedom of Information Act 2025 Year-End Review

## BY THE NUMBERS

### FOIA Requests Received in Calendar Year 2025

Month	Received	Closed*	Pages Reviewed
January	142	78	3,839
February	173	131	12,523
March	214	132	57,438
April	194	165	26,146
May	198	140	7,619
June	143	131	128,174
July	173	135	8,079
August	136	129	67,078
September	207	150	127,057
October	273	179	20,903
November	168	133	24,556
December	187	127	104,407
Total	2,208	1,630	587,819
Average	183.92	135.83	48,984.92

\*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 requester did not respond; or (3) the request was withdrawn.



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## Campus of Interest Statistics

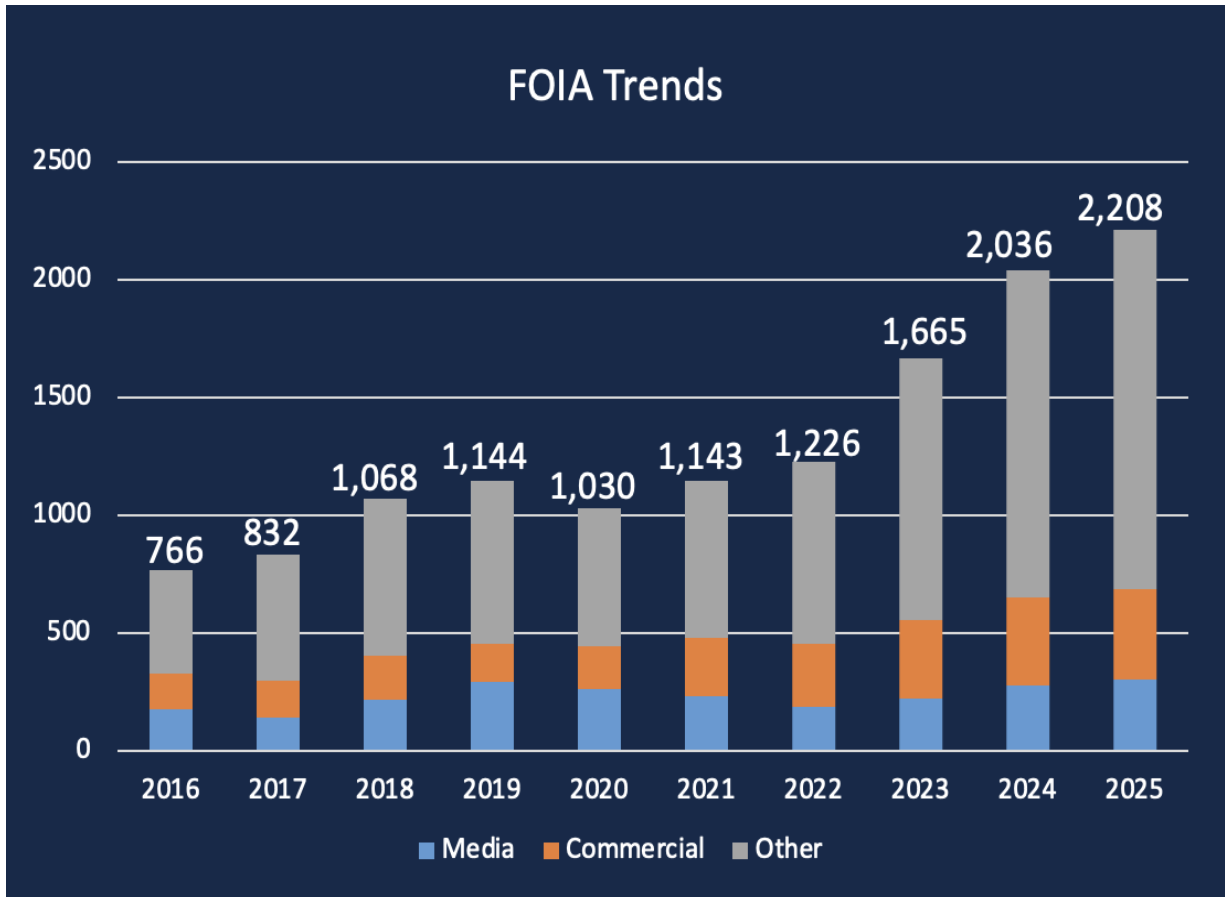
Campus	2024 Requests	2025 Requests	2025 Percentage of Requests
Urbana-Champaign	1,270	1,376	62.32%
Chicago	471	461	20.88%
Springfield	90	81	3.66%
System	127	132	5.98%
Multiple universities	78	158	7.16%

## Requests by Campus

	Total	UIUC	UIC	UIS	System	Multi
Number of Media	300	181	59	15	14	31
Number of Commercial	386	164	94	16	73	39
Number of Private/Other	1,522	1,031	308	50	45	88
Total	2,208	1,376	461	81	132	158
Percent of Media requests by campus		60.33%	19.67%	5.00%	4.67%	10.33%
Percent of Commercial requests by campus		42.49%	24.35%	4.15%	18.91%	10.10%
Percent of Private/Other requests by campus		67.73%	20.24%	3.29%	2.96%	5.78%

Overall Media requests	13.59%
Overall Commercial requests	17.48%
Overall of Private/Other requests	68.93%

## FOIA TRENDS 2016-2025





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## SAMPLE OF TYPES OF DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION SOUGHT:

- Vendor agreements
- Purchasing orders
- NCAA expense reports
- Grade distributions
- Police reports and video
- Bid information
- Athletic contracts
- Emails
- Admissions data
- Disciplinary records
- Water well records
- Salary information
- Student directory information
- Title IX information
- Uncashed checks
- Investment information

## SAMPLE ONGOING THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH REQUESTS:

- NCAA financial reports
- Athletics coach and game contracts
- Arrest reports and police videos
- Traffic crash surveillance videos
- Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL) lab reports and communications
- Investigations into complaints
- Email communications about trending topics

## SAMPLE OF NEW THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH 2025 REQUESTS:

- Email communications and other records about federal issues, including grants, gender-affirming care, international students, student visas, divestment, and diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Automatic license plate reader (ALPR) contracts and locations
- Surveillance videos for employee workers' compensation cases

## TYPES OF REQUESTERS:

- News media
- Current and former students
- Current and former employees
- Current and prospective vendors
- Data research companies
- Law firms
- Other universities
- Insurance companies
- Not-for-profits
- Anonymous requesters
- Recurrent requesters
- YouTube channel requesters
- AI requesters/requesters who rely on AI to write their request



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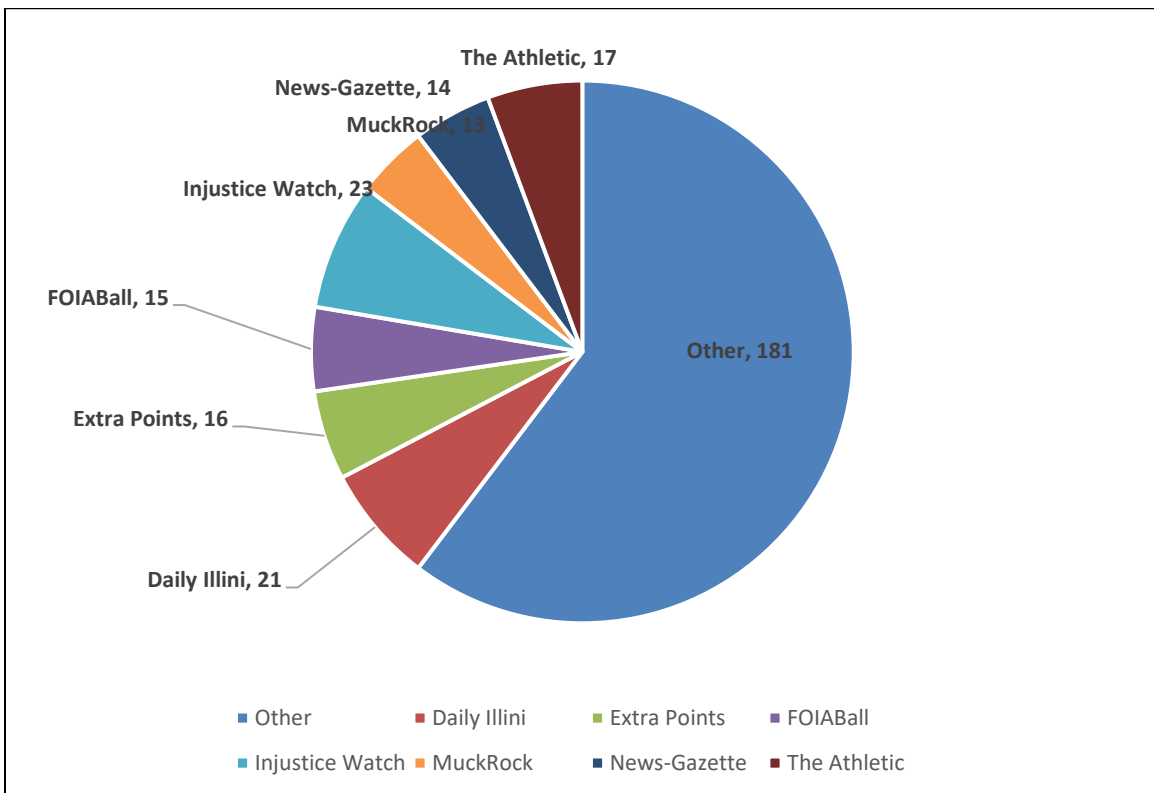
## 2025 MEDIA REQUESTERS:

- 247Sports
- ABC 7 Chicago
- Al Jazeera English
- Arnolt Center for Investigative Journalism
- Baltimore Sun
- Better Government Association
- Block Club Chicago
- Bloomberg News
- Bracketeer.org
- BRI Solutions
- Burk Report
- Business Insider
- Capitol News Illinois
- CBS Chicago
- Chambana Sun
- Chicago City Wire
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Chicago Tribune
- CollegeAD
- CU-CitizenAccess
- Daily Caller News Foundation
- Daily Illini
- Daily Nebraskan
- Defending Education
- Detroit Free Press
- Extra Points
- Financial Times
- FOIABall
- FOX Illinois
- Freelance/unknown
- Front Office Sports
- Heraldo de Aragón
- Hoosiers on Sports Illustrated
- Illini Inquirer
- Illini Media
- Illinois Times
- Indiana Daily Student
- Indianapolis Star
- Injustice Watch
- Investigate Midwest
- Investigative Project on Race and Equity
- Invisible Institute
- John Andrews News Media
- Journal & Courier
- Lucy Parsons Labs
- Mahomet Leaks
- More than Rich Podcast
- MuckRock News
- National Writers' Union
- News-Gazette
- NILnomics
- Prairie State Wire
- ProPublica
- Raw Story
- Sangamon Sun
- SB Nation / Vox Media
- Society of Professional Journalists
- Sportico
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- Syracuse Post-Standard
- The Alton Telegraph

## 2025 MEDIA REQUESTERS CONT'D:

- The Associated Press
- The Athletic
- The Chronicle of Higher Education
- The College Fix
- The Diamondback
- The Guardian
- UI7 Newsroom
- Unraveled Press
- USA Today
- Verda Studios
- Wall Street Journal
- Washington Free Beacon
- Washington Post
- WBEZ
- WCIA
- WIRED
- WNIJ NPR

### Requests by Media Outlet





## 2025 PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR ENGAGEMENTS

Any requester may submit a Request for Review of the System's response with the Office of the Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) or file a lawsuit to secure information that was denied. A Request for Review is not an indicator of any impropriety or improper handling of a request or responsive documents but simply asks the PAC to review the public body's response to ensure good-faith application of FOIA. When these appeals occur, the University is allowed to provide a supporting argument and/or evidence for its response and defend its handling of a request.

Of the 2,208 requests submitted to the University in 2025, University responses were appealed to the PAC 18 times. This represents less than 1 percent (0.815%) of U of I System responses in 2025, down from 50 appeals filed for requests submitted in 2024. Notably, in 2024, 21 of the 50 Requests for Review were filed by the same requester.

Of those 18 appeals:

- Eight (8) are still pending.
  - One (1) received a determination of No Further Inquiry Warranted.
  - One (1) received a determination of Unfounded (meaning the requester's complaint was unfounded based on the original request and response documents).
  - Five (5) received a determination of No Violation.
  - Two (2) were withdrawn, resolved, or otherwise determined to be moot.
  - There was one (1) determination in 2026 for a request made in 2025
- Outside of those 18 appeals:
    - There was one (1) determination in 2025 for a request made in 2023



## 2025 SAMPLE OF EXEMPTIONS APPLIED:

- Section 7(1)(a) – Information prohibited by disclosure from a federal or State statute, such as the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Personnel Records Review Act (PRRA), and the Law Enforcement Officer-Worn Body Camera Act (BWC Act).
- Section 7(1)(b) – Private information. This includes individually identifiable information, such as home addresses, personal telephone numbers, and social security numbers.
- Section 7(1)(c) – Personal information. This includes highly personal information such as dates of birth, third-party names, and race.
- Section 7(1)(d)(iv) – Witness information. This includes the identities of people who provide information to the university police departments.
- Section 7(1)(f) – Deliberative communication. This includes drafts and pre-decisional deliberations containing opinions, notes, and recommendations in furtherance of a final action.
- Section 7(1)(g) – Trade secrets. This includes confidential or proprietary information given to the University, usually as part of a bid proposal.
- Section 7(1)(j)(iii) – Student misconduct cases.
- Section 7(1)(j)(iv) – Course materials or research materials used by faculty members.
- Section 7(1)(m) – Attorney/client information. This includes legal advice by the Office of the University Counsel to University staff.
- Section 7(1)(n) – Disciplinary reports. This includes records relating to the adjudication of employee misconduct determined unfounded or when discipline was not imposed.