

MEMORANDUM

To: Interim President Scott Coltrane
From: Lisa Thornton, Public Records Officer
CC: Dave Hubin

Re: **Annual Report for the Office of Public Records, Fiscal Years 2013 - 2014**

Public Record Production

In Fiscal Year 2014, the office processed 334 requests for public records, up from 292 processed in Fiscal Year 2013. As the workload of the office has increased, the amount of time required to respond to a public records request has remained comparable to the previous fiscal year. (Exhibit 1)

To provide a meaningful estimate of response times, the office uses a four category rating system measuring request complexity. This rating system evaluates the state of the documents, the number of locations from which they must be gathered, and the complexity of the required redactions. (Exhibit 2) The majority of requests fell into the second category, meaning that the documents could be gathered from one or two campus locations, and required minimal redactions. Consistent with years past, the office found that as the complexity of the request increased, the response time also increased. (Exhibit 3)

The office has continued the practice of waiving the fees associated with requests from non-commercial entities that can be fulfilled within an hour. In fiscal year 2014, this practice has resulted in 86% of all requests being fulfilled at no charge to requesters, up from 72% in fiscal year 2013. (Exhibit 4)

Progress

The office continues to seek out best practices, and to further our relationship with campus partners. Over the last fiscal year, the office met with many departments on campus to explain the public records process, and how to provide records in response to a public records request.

The office has also worked with our peers in the Office of Communications to improve the functionality of our website.¹ The suggested changes include an improved FAQ section, a more usable and robust Online Resources section, and more categories on the Request Log. The office also continues to seek out records that are likely to have significant public interest, and proactively posts to the document library.

¹ <http://publicrecords.uoregon.edu>

Challenges

This year the office experienced several difficulties in responding to public records request in a timely manner. One difficulty was highlighted by a request for documents held by individual employees, rather than university departments. Since the records were not stored on university servers, or in places commonly shared by a department, the office could not perform its usual search for records. Instead, the office had to rely on the individuals who held the records to perform a search and provide the office with records. This resulted in a significant delay in the office's response to the request.

The office also experienced a significant increase in the number of requests it received in the last three months of the fiscal year. Between April and June, the office received nearly 40% of the total requests received for Fiscal Year 2014. This sudden increase in requests created a serious delay in response times for the office. Response times increased from an average of six days in April from the date a request was received to its final resolution, to an average of 22 days in June. The high number of requests, combined with the complexity of the requests, impacted the office's ability to respond to requests in a timely manner.

To address these issues going forward, the office suggests investing in systems that would increase the amount of records being captured by university servers. The office has also increased its efforts to educate departments and their employees on public records law, and how to respond to a request for records from the Office. The office also suggests employing temporary staff when there is a significant increase in the number of requests, to assist in the processing of requested records.

Future Endeavors

The office seeks to continue to work with campus partners to improve the public records process. The practice of posting regularly requested documents on department websites has been well received, and the office continues to seek out areas where this practice can be further implemented. The office appreciates the opportunity to further promote transparency in the greater university community.