

## MEMORANDUM

To: President Michael Gottfredson  
From: Lisa Thornton, Public Records Officer  
CC: Dave Hubin

Re: **Annual Report of Office of Public Records, 2012-2013**

The administration established the University of Oregon, Office of Public Records on July 1, 2010. I assumed my responsibilities as Public Records Officer on October 1, 2012.

### Public Record Production

I was hired as the Public Records Officer in October of 2012, after serving as the Acting Public Records Administrator for roughly a year. In March 2013, the Program Associate position was filled, representing the first time the office had been fully staffed with permanent employees, since October 2011.

Despite staffing issues, the office has continued to provide records in a timely, efficient manner. In Fiscal Year 2013, the office processed 292 requests for public records, up from the 288 processed in Fiscal Year 2012. Even though the workload of the office has increased, the amount of time required to respond to a public records request has remained comparable to the prior fiscal year. (Exhibit 1)

To provide a meaningful estimate of response times, the office uses a four category rating system for 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 increased. (Exhibit 3)

There has been much discussion regarding fees associated with public records. From July 2011 to May 2012, the office made a practice of waiving the first \$200 in fees for non-commercial entities. After May 2012, this practice was modified to waive fees associated with requests from non-commercial entities that can be fulfilled within an hour, with a maximum of two waivers per requester, per calendar month. These practices have resulted in 72% of all requests being fulfilled at no charge requesters. (Exhibit 4)

## Other Progress

The office continues to seek out best practices, and to further our relationship with campus partners. The Public Records Administrative Advisory Group (PRAAG) was formed in February of 2013 to assist with both of these goals. The PRAAG is made up of members from a variety of campus departments, and includes student representation. Each member brings the experience of their departments, and can assist the office in finding a balance between serving the needs of the University, as well as the needs of requesters.

The office continues to update the PRR Log<sup>1</sup>, and has received mixed responses. The office believes that the log allows for complete transparency, in that it documents what information requesters seek, as well as, documenting where the office is during each step of the public records request fulfillment process. The office does acknowledge that the log can be a hindrance to media members seeking a “scoop”, as it allows competing media to see what the other has requested. Additionally, it is likely that the log has increased the number of requests the office receives, as requesters will often “mirror” requests made by others. The office believes this a small price to pay for transparency.

## Challenges

The challenges that the office has faced are similar to those documented by the previous Public Records Officer in her annual report. The decentralized nature of the university continues to hinder the record-gathering process. Some success has been found in working with departments to determine how best the office can assist with document gathering, either through clearer delineations of the request parameters, or through simple instruction on what the public records process is.

## 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://publicrecords.uoregon.edu/requests>