

UC IRVINE PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The UC Irvine Public Records Office has improved the process for coordinating the university's response to requests for records made under the California Public Records Act and the Information Practices Act.

Over the years, the UC Irvine Public Records Office (PRO) has maintained the same number of staff members and excellent service despite a doubling of items requested under the California Public Records Act (CPRA) and Information Practices Act (IPA). To make this possible and sustainable, the PRO has streamlined processes and created tools, templates and standard operating procedures to ensure that all records requests are handled in a consistent, comprehensive and timely manner.

The PRO is a comprehensive customer-oriented unit that services both UC affiliates and members of the public. The UC Irvine PRO's general responsibilities include:

- Receiving and logging requests for records
- Notifying offices on campus and at the medical center that a request was received
- Collecting documents from offices on campus and the medical center
- Reviewing collected documents for responsiveness and exempt information
- Communicating issues and anticipated release dates to internal business partners and stakeholders
- Releasing documents to requesters

The PRO process is guided by legal and policy-driven requirements and deadlines, making the need for efficiency and accuracy crucial.

The PRO manages two goals of a public research university: to mitigate risk to the university and provide government transparency in service to Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis' observation that sunshine is the best disinfectant.

MILESTONES

- Creation of a customized PRO management tool to maintain a comprehensive database of requests, requesters, document versions, production dates, internal business partners, communication templates, automatic case number assignments and more
- Auto-population of internal communication list based on categories of business partners
- Creation of an internal set of standard operating procedures compiling advice from campus counsel and UC general counsel, case studies, and common issues and trends
- Shared color-coded group calendar to observe deadlines and ensure coverage during office absences
- Weekly office case management meetings to discuss request progress and possible solutions for unique issues or other matters that may arise
- Biannual CPRA and IPA training for all UC Irvine staff and faculty members, emphasizing legal obligations and responsibilities, while reinforcing strong internal relationships with business partners

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

In 2011, the PRO received and processed 920 request items. That number has doubled over the years to 1,804 items received and processed in 2016. Despite the significant increase in requests, the PRO has maintained the same number of staff members and level of service due to the implementation of its rigorous built-in processes.

Annual items requested by year:	Pages requested/reviewed by year:
2011 – 920	2011 – 49,398
2012 – 941	2012 – 78,305
2013 – 920	2013 – 67,839
2014 – 1,387	2014 – 43,474
2015 – 2,003	2015 – 91,399
2016 – 1,804	2016 – 185,146

QUALITY AND DELIVERY

The goal of the Public Records Office is to produce responsive records in a timely fashion without errors. A single error can cause significant legal and reputational harm to the university as there is no “taking back” a record that was mistakenly released or released without proper redactions. The milestones identified ensure that each case is handled in a comprehensive manner, reducing risks for mistakes.

Within UC Irvine and across the UC system, the PRO endeavors to be the best-in-class example of a lean and efficient unit.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Consistency is key. Each and every request that comes through the PRO receives a rigorous and comprehensive review. Analysis is consistently applied to each document requested, regardless of content, requester or PRO coordinator.
- 2 It is important that internal business partners and requesters know what to expect when they interact with the PRO. This ensures efficiency on both sides of the request and reduces the margin for error.

TEAM MEMBERS

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