




University Senate CHARGE

Date:	April 21, 2010
To:	Edward Walters Chair, Campus Affairs
From:	Elise Miller-Hooks Chair, University Senate 
Subject:	Proposal to Increase Access to Public Records
Senate Document #:	09-10-47
Deadline:	December 1, 2010

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) requests that the Campus Affairs Committee review the attached proposal entitled, "Proposal to Increase Access to Public Records" and make recommendations on whether the current policy (VI-5.00(A) UMCP GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE INSPECTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS) should be changed.

The SEC would like the Campus Affairs Committee to review the relevant policy and comment on whether the process for submission of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests should be changed. Specifically, the committee should note whether the policy should be amended to accommodate FOIA requests via email or online form submissions. In the course of your review, we ask that you compare our current process for such requests to those at our peer institutions. In addition, we request that the committee consult with the University's Legal Office before making any recommendations.

We ask that you submit your report and recommendations to the Senate Office no later than December 1, 2010. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, extension 5-5804.



**University Senate
PROPOSAL FORM**

Name:	Jonathan Sachs
Date:	April 6, 2010
Title of Proposal:	Proposal to Increase Access to Public Records
Phone Number:	301-244-8320
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Campus Address:	Commons 1407C
Unit/Department/College:	BSOS
Constituency (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate):	Undergraduate
Description of issue/concern/policy in question:	<p>Currently, University policy prescribes that individuals must submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request via US mail. The standards for submission for many entities is changing to allow for requests to be sent via e-mail or online form, which is more convenient and efficient for the person filing the request. I believe that University policy should be amended to accommodate FOIA requests via e-mail.</p>
Description of action/changes you would like to see implemented and why:	<p>Section V, "Filing the Request" of the University's FOIA policy (http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/vi500a.html) needs to be changed to allow for e-mail requests or requests via online form to be accepted. Online submissions have many advantages including cost, speed, and convenience for the requestor.</p> <p>After speaking to the President's Chief of Staff, Sally Koblinsky, it is clear that a system must be developed to accept requests online that will finalize the request, and verifies the requestor's identity. It is my goal to reform the policy, while not bringing unreasonable burden on the University's Chief Council.</p>

Suggestions for how your proposal could be put into practice:	Many government agencies including the NTSB (http://www.nts.gov/pubmail/pubmail.asp) and the FCC (http://www.fcc.gov/foia/) have online forms that can accommodate FOIA requests, as examples. The University could implement a similar system to these agencies or simply allow e-mail requests to be accepted.
Additional Information:	None.

Please send your completed form and any supporting documents to senate-admin@umd.edu or University of Maryland Senate Office, 1100 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, MD 20742-7541. Thank you!