

Proper training for scientists will allow FOIA to coexist with science communication

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

. . . Researchers have, for the most part, lacked training and the infrastructure to manage a FOIA request. My informal polls kept a steady 9 out of 10 who have had no such training. I know that in my time doing research at three academic institutions, I never once received any; indeed, I knew about FOIA only because of my experience in journalism and as a government public information officer (PIO).

Just as our agency did for its PIOs, universities need to step up, orienting every incoming lab worker, researcher, postdoc, staff member, and primary investigator about FOIA and best practices for archiving in anticipation of a request. An established support mechanism also will help to avoid, at a minimum, a pointless muppet flail and at worst, even more wasted hours and taxpayer dollars.

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Such orientations should include best practices about disclosing conflicts of interest and for industry interactions, such as using appropriate professional language when engaging with industry colleagues. Care in these interactions is the desired effect of knowing one's conflicts of interest and having an awareness of perception. It also honors the fact that working at a public university carries with it the duties of being in the public's pay.

All of these steps — planning, using professional language, disclosing — create a safety net that allows scientists who want to speak out publicly to make that leap. Because everything is declared, they have nothing to hide, they can speak freely, and no 'gotcha' moments and "shocking" accusations of conspiracy await them.

Read full, original post: [Is The Freedom Of Information Act Stifling Intellectual Freedom?](#)