

## **Washtenaw Community College Procedures and Guidelines for Freedom of Information Act Requests**

It is Washtenaw Community College's ("WCC") aim, consistent with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), that all persons, except those incarcerated in state or local correctional facilities, are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those who represent them as public officials and employees. The people shall be informed so that they fully participate in the democratic process.

WCC's practice with respect to FOIA requests is to comply with State law and respond to each FOIA request in a consistent and fair manner.

WCC also acknowledges that it has a legal obligation to disclose all nonexempt public records in its possession pursuant to a FOIA request. Sometimes, however, WCC must invoke FOIA's exemptions in denying a request, to ensure the effective operation of government and to protect the privacy of individuals under the law. Therefore, WCC will protect the public's interest in disclosure, while withholding or redacting portions of certain records as required under the law.

WCC has established written procedures and guidelines to implement the FOIA, which are found below.

### **How to submit a FOIA request to WCC:**

A person wishing to inspect or receive a copy of a public record shall make a written request to the FOIA Coordinator of WCC. Requests must sufficiently describe the requested record so as to enable the Coordinator to identify and locate the public record. An email address or physical address must be provided for the response to be sent to.

Written requests should be emailed to [askhr@wccnet.edu](mailto:askhr@wccnet.edu), mailed/dropped off in person at 4800 E. Huron River, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-4800 Attn: Human Resources Department or made using WCC's FOIA request form at <http://www.wccnet.edu/human-resources/labor-relations/>. Requests may be submitted to any office at WCC and that office is responsible for promptly forwarding the request to the FOIA Coordinator, however, persons are encouraged to submit their requests directly to the FOIA Coordinator to avoid inadvertent delays.

Requests should state that they are submitted pursuant to the Michigan Freedom of Information Act.

The Act does not obligate WCC to create a new public record or make a compilation or summary of information which does not already exist.

A public record for purposes of FOIA is defined as *"a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created. Public record does not include computer software."* The Act is a document disclosure statute. Therefore, a FOIA Coordinator need not answer questions contained in requests, or inquiries about the content of the records.

## How WCC processes requests

WCC must respond to a FOIA request within five (5) business days of the FOIA Coordinator receiving the request.

A response will do one or more of the following:

- Grant the request in full;
- Grant the request in part. Partially granting a request would occur when a portion of the requested records do not exist, are not in the possession of WCC, and/or are exempt from disclosure;
- Deny the request. Denying a request would occur when all of the requested records do not exist, are not in the possession of WCC, and/or are exempt from disclosure;
- Issue a notice extending the response time for no greater than ten (10) business days;
- A cost estimate;
- A notice that the record(s) sought has (have) not been sufficiently described to enable WCC to locate the record(s).

If any part of the request is denied, WCC's response will:

- include a description of what has been withheld or partially withheld;
- state the FOIA exemptions under which any information and/or documents are withheld, if applicable, and;
- provide options for appealing a denial
- advise the requester of his/her rights to receive attorney's fees and/or damages.

The FOIA provides a number of exemptions ranging from matters of privacy, medical records to most student records. ([MCL15.243](#)) The decision whether material should be withheld is made by the FOIA Office after consultation with other appropriate offices, if necessary. The FOIA Office has the authority to deny a FOIA request in part or in full.

## Deposit requirements

A good-faith deposit is required when the processing of a request will result in fees greater than \$50.00. The required deposit will equal up to 50% of the estimated cost of fulfilling the request as calculated at the time of the initial response. WCC will further process the request once the good-faith deposit is received.

Failure to pay the good-faith deposit will be deemed as a withdrawal of the request.

If, during the processing of the request, WCC determines that the actual costs will be higher than the original estimate, a revised cost itemization will be provided to the requesting party indicating the higher fee.

All cost estimates will include a non-binding, best efforts estimated time frame of when the final response will be provided.

## Calculation of fees

Fees are calculated by adding together the following costs:

- The labor costs for searching for, locating, and examining responsive records
- The labor costs for review, separation, and deletion of exempt information from non-exempt information
- The cost of non-paper physical media, if used
- The cost per copy of paper copies, not to exceed \$.10/page for standard 8 ½ x 11 inch paper
- The labor costs directly associated with duplication or publication, which may include copying to non-paper media
- The cost of mailing

WCC reserves the right to require payment in full of all fees included in the fee itemization calculation provided to the requester before delivering the final, responsive documents.

Fee reductions or waivers are required in certain instances involving proven indigence or non-profit organizations. When applicable, WCC will apply these reductions or waivers in accordance with the statute.

## Procedures for appeals

If WCC denies a request in whole or in part, the requester may:

- Submit an appeal to the President, in writing. The appeal must specifically use the word “appeal” and identify the reason(s) the requester seeks reversal of the denial.

Mail: Washtenaw Community College  
ATTN: President  
4800 E. Huron River Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-4800

The President must respond to the appeal within ten (10) business days by doing one of the following:

- Reverse the FOIA Office’s decision, in part or in full;
  - Uphold the FOIA Office’s decision;
  - Issue a notice of extension for not more than ten (10) additional business days.
- Commence a civil action in a Michigan court within one hundred eighty (180) days after WCC’s final determination to deny the request.

If a requester believes that WCC has required payment of a fee that exceeds the amount permitted under these Procedures and Guidelines, he or she may commence an action in a Michigan court for a fee reduction within forty-five (45) days after receiving the notice of the required fee. In this situation, WCC is not obligated to complete the processing of the written request for the public record at issue until the court resolves the fee dispute.