

EDITORIALS

Culture of secrecy needs to change

The state's Freedom of Information Act appeal process worked as it was supposed to in a ruling over documents related to the University of Illinois' search for a new president. But the process can be improved.

Most public officials pay lip service to the idea of open and transparent government in Illinois. The reality often is far different. Although there are legitimate reasons to withhold some records from public scrutiny, there are no requirements to do so under the state's Freedom of Information Act.

In fact, the law creates a presumption that all records are public and confirms that if a public body asserts an exemption from disclosure, it has the burden of proving that the record is exempt by clear and convincing evidence.

The ruling by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office last week that the University of Illinois improperly denied records to The News-Gazette from its presidential search in 2010 is noteworthy in several respects besides the obvious victory for the public's right to know how the university spends the public's money.

In a case that dates back to April 2010, the attorney general's office said in a binding opinion that the UI must immediately release the disputed documents or ask for a court administrative review within 35 days under the state's Freedom of Information Act.

The attorney general's public access counselor had advised the university in a nonbinding ruling to release the travel records and related documents from the search in a Nov. 17 opinion. The university did not comply, and The News-Gazette filed another FOIA request in January asking for those records, as well as others.

Too often, officials at the UI — and other public bodies — have the notion that records are proprietary information to be released only grudgingly to the public rather than in the spirit of access that is intended.

In this case, the letter from Madigan and Michael J. Luke, counsel to the attorney general, said the university "has not met its burden of demonstrating that the records" are exempt from the FOIA.

A spokesman said the university has not

decided whether to appeal further.

Although the UI claims it is committed to transparency, the record shows a different story. An analysis by the Chicago Tribune this week showed that the attorney general's office has handled more than 70 cases involving the UI since the new law took effect in January 2010, and in 27 cases, the office found the UI could not withhold documents or redact information as it had tried to do.

"The University of Illinois steadfastly refuses to comply fully and completely with (Freedom of Information Act) laws and to supply the public with documents it knows are public," Ann Spillane, the attorney general's chief of staff, told the Tribune.

The News-Gazette's experience shows one of the problems the attorney general's office is having trying to exercise the law — it routinely takes months to get an opinion in an appeal of a denial for information. The attorney general's office attributes this to a crushing caseload and has hired more public access counselors this year. The process must be streamlined to ease the frustration requesters often experience.

Also worth noting is that the binding opinion issued in this case is one of only a handful issued by the attorney general's office since it was given the authority by the FOIA rewrite. There have been many cases where the attorney general's office has issued nonbinding opinions that public bodies ignored, cases that did not result in a binding opinion.

This is a tool with real teeth that can be effective in changing the attitudes of government officials toward release of records, but to be effective, the attorney general's office must use it.

Despite the problems, public access advocates consider the new FOIA law a great improvement over the previously toothless measure. The opposition from the Illinois Municipal League and other organizations bears witness, as do the dozens of bills introduced in the Legislature to roll back provisions of the law.

The framework for open and transparent government is in place in Illinois. What needs to change is the culture of secrecy in government. Until government officials embrace the notion that records belong to the people they work for, Illinois — and its flagship university — will continue to lack any true transparency.

April 4, 2011 - WUIS

An interview by WUIS's Sean Crawford with new **UIS** VP and Chancellor Susan Koch is available at the following link:

<http://www.facebook.com/notes/wuis/koch-named-uis-vp-and-chancellor/10150152432205040?ref=mf>

CITES establishes office for overhaul

Project intended to save millions, unify campus networks

BY QUINN FORD
STAFF WRITER

CITES recently took another step forward in its Unified Communications (UC) initiative, which it dubbed UC @ Illinois, by establishing an office for the program.

The initiative, which began last year, aims to bring all forms of **University** communication — email, instant messaging, telephone, voice mail, calendaring, etc. — under the same general system.

The UC Program Office will help facilitate the goal of transitioning the University's faculty, staff and graduate students to a unified communications system. Tony Rimovsky, associate director of the program and director of Enterprise Infrastructure for CITES, said setting up the office was a more efficient way to organize various schedules.

"This was an organizational shift to make sure we're getting the right people in the room at the right time," Rimovsky said. "With everything that's going on with CITES, just with regular operations, there are a lot of different pulls on people's time."

The new office is headed by Rimovsky and Greg Gulick. Gulick, director of Application Services for CITES, serves as program manager for the office.

A major theme of UC @ Illi-

By the numbers

Cost: Initial investment of \$1.6 million dollars (projected to recoup that in two years)

Savings: By FY15, estimated \$3.3 million saved in energy use, etc.

1st Phase Currently

Underway: Colleges of LAS, Engineering transitioning to Microsoft Exchange (email, calendar)

2nd Phase: Expected to begin this summer (new voice systems implementation)

Completion Date: Expected July 1, 2012

Those affected: Faculty, staff, graduate students

SOURCE: STEWARDING
EXCELLENCE REPORT

nois is presence. After the system is fully installed, the idea is faculty and staff will be able to communicate with each other virtually at all times. Users of the system can choose to show their availability, notifying colleagues if they are, for example, on the phone or in a meeting.

"The grand goal is any way you communicate with your colleagues on campus, you will use this system," said Charley Kline, CITES architect, at a meeting of the IT Pro Forum earlier this academic year. "And since it's all part of one integrated system, you can navigate fairly naturally."

The first phase of UC @ Illinois, which is currently underway, involves each individual college transitioning from its

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respective email and calendar programs to a single program. Currently, the campus uses multiple programs like Microsoft Outlook and iCal. After the transition, every college will use Microsoft Exchange.

The second phase — the implementation of the new voice services — is expected to begin sometime this summer. After that phase is complete, the University's phone services will run through the Internet, instead of traditional landlines.

One implication of this switch is computers will serve as phones for faculty and staff, meaning the days of looking up phone numbers in the University's directory could be numbered.

The switch also offers some interesting possibilities for convergence, Rimovsky said. For example, the system can transcribe voice mails, allowing users to receive them via email.

However, the most important benefit of this change could be a monetary one. UC @ Illinois is anticipated to save the University millions of dollars in the coming years.

"We're trying to save money

here," Kline said. "We couldn't get this off the ground unless we made a compelling argument that it was going to save people time and money."

According to a Stewarding Excellence IT Roadmap report, UC @ Illinois will require an investment of \$1.6 million in the 2011 fiscal year, but the University projects that investment will be recovered in two years. By the 2015 fiscal year, UC @ Illinois is expected to save the University more than \$3.3 million.

One way the program office is minimizing the costs of such a sweeping transition is by using existing infrastructure, like the University's network and its various servers. Aside from saving the University money at a time it desperately needs to cut costs, Rimovsky said UC @ Illinois has the possibility to fundamentally change the way this campus communicates.

"There's a real opportunity here to make a paradigm shift in terms of usability, so we can get this community working differently and more effectively," Rimovsky said.

The initiative is expected to be completed by July 2012 when the current contract with AT&T for campus phone service is set to expire.

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Alma Mater to be preserved after 82 years

BY RACHEL MUSNICKI
STAFF WRITER

The Alma Mater has long been a symbol of the University. However, an on-campus group fears that the future of the statue

More on-air: To hear more about the Alma Mater preservation project, tune in to **WPGU 107.1-FM** at 5 p.m.

beloved statue, which is showing obvious signs of aging. The statue, cast by University alumnus Lorado Taft in 1929, is going

could be in danger.

The Preservation Working Group is starting the long process of preserving the

on 82 years old.

"At this point, we're looking at the sculpture saying we've hit a critical point, and we need to start action," said Jennifer Hain Teper, conservation librarian and preservation group chair.

Spurlock Museum collections manager and group member Christa Deacy-Quinn said the statue is beginning to show signs of aging and damage, which is concerning. Visible streaking, rust and discoloration are all signs that the statue is in desperate need of care, she said. The group is also concerned about the distinct blue coloring, which is due to chemical changes that can occur when a bronze statue



MICHAEL BOJDA THE DAILY ILLINI

The search has begun for a specialist to evaluate the damage to the Alma Mater and restore the work done by alumnus Lorado Taft in 1929.

has not been properly cared for. "Lorado Taft did not craft it with the idea that it was going to be that color," Deacy-Quinn said.

She said she realized that may be a shock to most people. Preserving the statue would take several steps, including a deep clean and a new coating.

While the statue needs attention, the group said things aren't going to happen overnight. They hope to find a specialist to exam-

ine the statue, which will be the first step in determining a plan of action.

"We're going to look nationwide and make sure that we get the best person for the job," Teper said.

Teper said that while the exact cost of such an undertaking is unknown, it will undoubtedly be expensive. However, the University has committed to the

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ALMA MATER

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project.

"We've gotten word from the Chancellor's office that the campus is going to find funds. So we've gotten a commitment," Teper said.

Both the Office of the Chancellor and Facilities and Services are involved in the project.

The group, however, wants to stress that the condition of the Alma Mater is not an emergency.

"Let's not panic," Deacy-Quinn said. "This piece has been out like this for a number of years. It's fine for a little longer."

Deacy-Quinn and Teper said they hope to begin work on the statue over the next couple years, while realizing the enormity of the project they are undertaking.

"It's going to take a little bit of time. I'm hoping by next year we're able to start moving," Deacy-Quinn said. "This is not going to happen tomorrow, and it shouldn't."

Cullerton backs performance funding

BY CODELL RODRIGUEZ AND ROB CROW THE SOUTHERN | Posted: Wednesday, April 6, 2011 4:00 am

CARBONDALE - Illinois Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago, said he believes that performance-based funding for state universities will be good for Illinois.

Cullerton spoke about the state's future relationship with universities and other issues at a news conference Tuesday at the SIUC Stone Center. He said he appreciated that people in the region stay informed of goings on in the state.

Performance-based funding would mean that universities would receive funding based on statistics such as graduation rates and enrollment rather than receiving an annual flat sum. He said it is important to see if the money from the state is being spent adequately.

SIU President Glenn Poshard, who introduced Cullerton at the news conference, said he talked to the senator about universities being graded individually for performance-based funding rather than all institutions judged on the same level.

The state still owes the state nearly \$140 million in fiscal year 2011 appropriations. Cullerton said the state owes that money and both parties should work together to make sure universities get the funding owed to them.

Earlier in the day, Cullerton addressed several topics during a meeting with The Southern Illinoisan editorial board.

The Senate president said he hopes and expects a judicial ruling that has stalled the state's capital bill to be overturned, but before the appeal ruling is made, he would like to see the Legislature re-pass some of the tax increases that were included in the bill, so that construction won't be halted.

Cullerton said he also supports a \$1 per pack increase in the cigarette tax, which he said would bring in roughly \$370 million per year to the state and reduce Illinois' Medicaid costs by \$50 million.

"We're missing a big opportunity, in my opinion," Cullerton said of the cigarette tax.

Cullerton acknowledged the Legislature will have to find a way to cut nearly \$1.5 billion from Gov. Pat Quinn's proposed budget, and promised those cuts would be made. But the biggest success of an upcoming legislative session, he said, would be passing workers' compensation reform. Quinn proposed such reform last week, and while Cullerton said it wouldn't be an easy sell in Springfield, he urged lawmakers to vote for reform.

"There's a lot of heavy lifting here," Cullerton said, "... but it's the right thing to do."

Cullerton said he was also "1,000 percent in favor" of any clean-coal initiative in Illinois, and that Quinn was wrong to veto a bill that would have brought two clean-coal plants to Illinois, including one in Jefferson County.

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