



I. Policy Title

Open Records Policy

II. Policy Purpose and Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide protocol and procedure in accordance with state and federal policies and regulations regarding open record requests. The purpose is not only to encourage public access to certain information, but to maintain the public's confidence in government by promoting transparency and openness. The Open Records Act O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et al. allows the public to evaluate the functioning of its institutions through the public access to public records.

In the event there is any conflict between the policy and procedures here and the Open Records Act, the language of the Open Records Act controls.

III. Policy Application and Effective Date

- a. This policy applies to all members of the FVSU community as well as the public.
- b. This policy is effective September 17, 2025

IV. Policy

The Georgia Open Records Act is a state statute that applies to all departments and individuals within Fort Valley State University. The Act requires that public records be open and available for inspection by a requesting party within a reasonable amount of time after the receipt of the request, unless the records are those exempted by law from disclosure (e.g., student educational records).

The Act also requires an initial response within three (3) business days to all Open Records Act requests received by a university official (faculty, staff or administrator). Failure to do so may result in penalties for the university official under the provisions of the law. There are some exceptions to the Open Records Act, including medical records and student academic records.

Fort Valley State University has designated an Open Records Officer for the University to whom all Open Records Act requests should be made. Please send all Open Records requests to:

Karin D. Vinson
General Counsel and Director of Government
Affairs Open Records Officer
Office of Legal and Government

Affairs Fort Valley State University
1005 University Drive
Fort Valley, GA 31030

Email: Karin.vinson@fvsu.edu
[Online Open Records Request
Form](#)

Phone: (478) 825-4350
Mail: Fort Valley State University
1005 University Drive
Fort Valley, GA 31030
In person: Huntington Hall, Room 106

V.Process/Procedures

- A.** As authorized by the Act, the Open Records Officer is the designated open records requests office for Fort Valley State University.
 - a. This designation requires that all open records requests are routed to the Open Records Officer for processing.
 - b. As required by the Act, upon such designation the University shall:
 - i. Notify any individual or organization, upon request, of the designation of the Open Records Request Officer as the designated open records office;
 - ii. Notify the local newspaper of such designation; and
 - iii. Notify the general public by placing such designation on the University's website.
- B.** An individual or organization not acting in an official capacity with the University shall submit a request to inspect or copy records to the Open Records Officer by utilizing the "[Open Records Request Submission Link](#)" located on the [Legal Affairs' website](#).
 - a. Please note: Requests may be submitted via verbally, in writing, e-mail, or facsimile transmission.
 - b. Requests to inspect or copy electronic messages, whether in the form of e-mail, text message, or other format, should contain information about the messages that is reasonably calculated to allow the recipient of the request to locate the messages sought, including, if known, the name, title, or office of the specific person or persons whose electronic messages are sought and, to the extent possible, the specific data bases to be searched for such messages.
 - c. Requests by civil litigants for records that are sought as part of or for use in any ongoing civil or administrative litigation against an agency shall be made in writing and copied to counsel of record for that agency contemporaneously with their submission to that agency.
 - d. If a University employee other than the Open Records Officer receives a request for records, that employee shall direct the citizen to contact the Open Records Officer or gather all necessary information themselves and complete the "Open Records Request Submission Link" located on the Legal Affairs' website. If a university employee receives the request by mail (electronic or otherwise), the request shall be immediately forwarded to the Open Records Officer on the same

day the request is received. All documents, attachments, etc. accompanying the request shall be sent along with the request to the Open Records Officer.

C. The Open Records Officer has three (3) business days to respond to all requests.

- a.** In the event of a search and retrieval delay or if for some other extraordinary reason the request cannot be filled within the prescribed timeframe, the Open Records Officer shall notify the requester within three (3) business days of submission of the request.
 - i.** Such notification shall include confirmation of receipt of the request, date of receipt, and an approximation of time as to when the requested information will be forwarded to the requester.
- b.** In those instances where some, but not all, records are available within three (3) business days, the Open Records Officer shall make available within that period those records that can be located and produced.
- c.** As the Open Records Officer is the designated request office, the three (3) business day period does not begin to run until such time that the Open Records Officer receives a request.

D. When the Open Records Officer receives a request, it shall immediately contact the maintaining office.

- a.** The maintaining office will estimate the time it may take to search, retrieve, redact, and re-file the records, and inform the Open Records Officer of the estimated necessary to fulfill the request.
 - i.** As authorized by the Act, based upon the estimated time expenditure the Open Records Officer shall determine if the maintaining office will proceed with the request or defer the search and retrieval until funds are received from the requester. Costs will be calculated based on the information listed in section V(G) of this policy.
 - 1.** The Open Records Officer will inform the requester of the costs of the retrieval. If the requester decides to withdraw the request, the Open Records Officer will notify the maintaining office to cease working on the request.
 - 2.** Upon recommendation of the Open Records Officer, the maintaining office may defer search and retrieval of the records until the requester agrees to pay the estimated costs unless the requester has stated in his or her request a willingness to pay an amount that exceeds the search and retrieval costs.
 - 3.** Until such time that the requester withdraws the request, the maintaining office must continue collecting and redacting the records in a timely fashion. If the costs are in excess of \$25.00 for responding to a request, the Open Records Officer shall notify the requester within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed three (3) business days and inform the requester of the estimated costs. In any instance in which the estimated costs for production of the records exceeds \$500.00, the University may insist on prepayment of the costs prior to beginning search, retrieval, review, or production of the records

- b. Upon completion of preparation of the requested documents the maintaining office shall prepare a brief statement of time expended preparing requested information policy and notify the Open Records Officer.
- E. Upon receipt of the requested material and maintaining office's statement of time, the Open Records Officer shall review the material to ensure compliance with the Act, and other applicable laws. All information will be redacted, as necessary.
 - a. As authorized by the Act, Fort Valley State University may decide to withhold all or part of a requested record, in that case it shall notify the requester of the specific legal authority exempting the requested record or records from disclosure by Code section, subsection, and paragraph within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed three (3) business days or in the event the search and retrieval of records is delayed.
- F. Upon completion of the review of all material, the Open Records Officer shall prepare an invoice of costs.
- G. Costs authorized by the Act include:
 - a. The search, retrieval, or redaction of records that shall not exceed the prorated hourly salary of the lowest paid full-time employee who, in the reasonable discretion of the custodian of the records, has the necessary skill and training to perform the request.
 - i. No charge shall be made for the first quarter hour.
 - b. The Open Records Officer is not required to contact the requester with an estimate before fulfilling a request unless the costs exceed \$25.00.
 - c. Ten cents (\$.10) per page for any copies in addition to the costs of search, retrieval, redaction and re-filing. This fee may be waived for requests that result in fewer than 20 copies.
 - d. Where fees for certified copies or other copies or records are specifically authorized or otherwise prescribed by law, such specific fee shall apply when certified copies or other records to which a specific fee may apply are sought.
 - e. If the available information is in electronic format, Fort Valley State University may charge the public the actual cost of the media on which the records or data are produced.
- H. Reimbursement of costs.
 - a. Funds received from a requester of an open records request will be deposited with the Business Office.
 - i. If one (1) maintaining office is responsible for the search and retrieval of requested information, the funds received from the requester will be deposited in that office's general account.
 - ii. If two (2) or more maintain offices are involved in the search and retrieval of requested information, the funds received from a requester will be deposited in the offices' general accounts proportionate to the amount of time expended by each office.
 - b. If an individual or organization fails to pay for the search, retrieval, redaction, or copying of requested records, Fort Valley State University may require prepayment for all future requests until the costs for the prior request has be

paid or the dispute regarding payment resolved.

- I. As authorized by the Act, FVSU is not required to prepare reports, summaries, or compilations not in existence at the time of the request.

VI. Forms

Open Records Request [Form](#).

VIII. Related Resources

[Open Records Act of Georgia](#)

IX. Responsible Party

Party	Office, Phone, and Email
Open Records Request Officer	Office of Legal and Government Affairs Phone: (478) 825-4350 Email: Karin.vinson@fvsu.edu