Openness/Transparency: Expectations, Experiences and Extrapolations

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The Title

- Expectations – what do we mean by transparency/openness
- Experiences – lessons learned many years ago
- Extrapolations – transferring those lessons to today's environment

Disclaimer

- The thoughts express here are based on my experience over 36 year at the University of Illinois – Chicago and are not related to my current role as a consultant for NABR

Some Definitions

- **Transparency**
  - free from pretense or deceit **:** frank
  - easily detected or seen through **:** obvious
  - readily understood
  - characterized by visibility or accessibility of information especially concerning business practices
- **Openness**
  - completely free from concealment
  - exposed or vulnerable to attack or question

TMD

- Transparency/Openness
  - characterized by accessibility to readily understood information
- Establish a Performance standard for the stated goal
  - Work backwards from the performance standard to a working definition

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Personal Experience

- First involvement predated the modern AR movement
- Each major network and super station WGN had science reporters as did the major newspapers
- University of Illinois medical center had a very savvy public relations operation
- Use of dogs from the pound was the hot button issue
- First target of AR movement but elected to remain open to the press and the elected officials
  - included local animal advocacy groups including groups that are now considered AR groups
- "Sage Advice from A Seasoned Interviewee"
  - lesson learned and steps to take when coming out to the public

Lessons Learned

- Institutional Buy In
  - normal chain of command at the campus level, plus the public relations people, legal counsel, security and government affairs
  - statewide public institution
    - the system leadership should be on board and kept in the loop
      - funding decisions at the state level can be influenced by many things and it only takes a handful of elected officials to have an impact

Lessons Learned

From primates to sloth...they are a part of 350 scientific studies

BRL: a place where they *care* for animals

ILAR - 10/28/2019

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Lessons Learned

- Creating an Institution's Environment
  - create a collaborative learning environment
    - lack of knowledge is the reason less than optimal things happen and offering assistance and support is eagerly accepted and graciously received
  - create awareness among your institutional peers
    - the people doing the research must be willing to take part in the institutional PR program and tell their story
      - those involved in the animal care program should be partners in the effort but should not be sole crusaders

Lessons Learned

- Keep Those in Charge Informed
  - Administrators, IACUC and the public relations staff need to be kept aware of any issues or potential issues within the ACUP program
    - the issues may eventually become public knowledge and everything your institutions has said and will say becomes suspect

Lessons Learned

- Support Quality Animal Research Programs
  - The key here is the protocol review, implementation and monitoring process
  - These processes offer an excellent opportunity to create a collaborative education environment which will lead to an improvement of the total program

Lessons Learned

- Manage Quality Animal Resource Programs
  - institutions cannot go public on a selective basis
  - be willing to open the doors to the animal facilities and where areas cannot be open the reasons explained – biosecurity, creating a nonexperimental variable
  - quality programs do not occur overnight and must be constantly reviewed and updated
  - this starts with sound programs of animal husbandry which meet the recommendations of the Guide on daily basis
  - quality programs simplify going public

Lessons Learned

- Sound programs of animal husbandry
  - team effort
  - all members of the team must feel they are valued
  - those in charge must lead by example
  - rank does not have privilege
  - reward success
  - provide support when things do not go according to plan
  - an environment of open an honest communication

Lessons Learned

- Sound programs of animal husbandry
  - think of the animal care facility as a family operation
  - know the members of the family
  - families support each other

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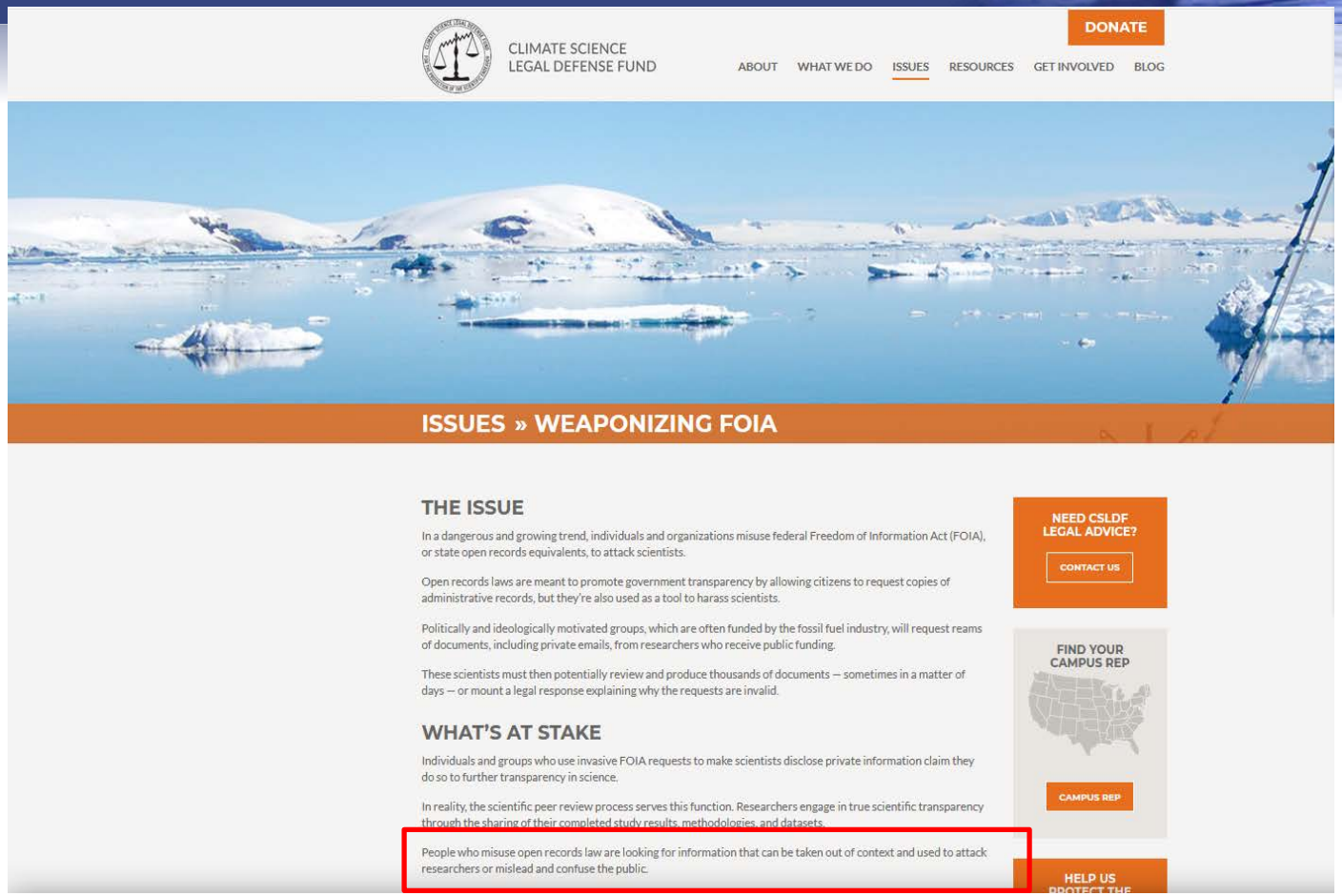
Today's Environment

- Is more challenging
  - 24 hour news cycle
  - social media
  - teams of communication specialist
  - access to information
- There is a cost involved
  - for the institutions to manage the program
  - for individuals to participate in the program

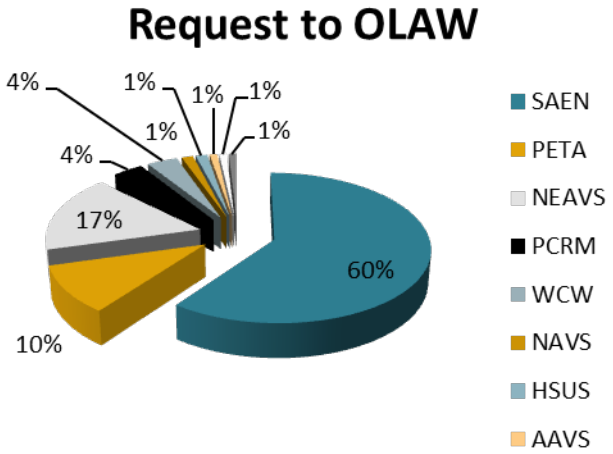
Today's Environment

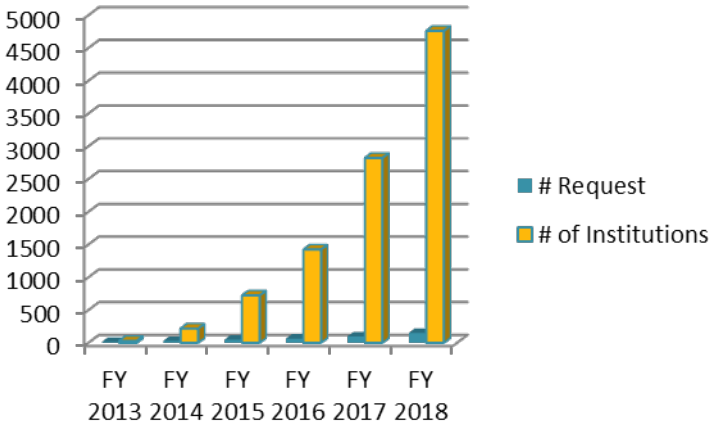


People who misuse open records law are looking for information that can be taken out of context and used to attack researchers or mislead and confuse the public.

FOIA

- FY 2018
  - NIH
    - 1,412 FOIA requests 211 or 16% from AR groups
    - 149 or 67% were for information from OLAW – 54%
    - 4761 institutions; 4,699 by SAEN – 69%





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FOIA

- FY 2019
  - USDA – through July 2019
    - 927 (792)requests
    - 485 (261) from AR organizations
      - 357 from one organization – 3 requests in FY 2018
  - NIH – through May 2019
    - 911 requests
    - 145 from AR organizations
      - 90 from SAEN – 3508 institutions

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FOIA

- State Open Records Acts
  - We hereby request all communications (including attachments, photographs, and video) from these listservs, Slacks, and other communications platforms that relate to your institution's IACUC and animal program. The time frame for this request is September 1, 2018 to the present.

FOIA

- State Open Records Acts
  - IACUC meeting minutes
  - three most recent semiannual reports plus checklists
  - any non-regular, separate inspections conducted by the IACUC, veterinary, animal care, and/or compliance staff
  - all reported concerns received
    - Notifications sent to IO for supported claims of concern
  - all notifications of adverse events, unexpected or unanticipated outcomes, and other incidents
  - all necropsies for non-anticipated animal deaths
  - correspondence with USDA & OLAW

Summary

- Performance based working definition
- Clearly understand the challenges in today's environment
- Learn from previous experiences
  - Institutional effort – involves all those involved in the ACUP
  - Proactive Progress Animal Care and Use Program
    - Ongoing self-assessment
    - Clear goal and objectives