



GRAMBLING
STATE UNIVERSITY

Policy #20102

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

Effective Date: May 1, 2013

Revised Date: May 5, 2025

Responsible Office: University Compliance

Division: Operations and Administration

I. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

As an agency of the state of Louisiana, Grambling State University (GSU or University) is subject to specific laws governing the duplication and distribution of records and documents. Public Records may contain some information that cannot be released or is confidential which will be redacted prior to release.

- A. The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and guidelines for processing public records requests in accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute 44:1 et seq. (Louisiana Public Records Law). This policy also ensures compliance with applicable federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to protect sensitive or confidential information from unauthorized disclosure.
- B. The policy outlines the responsibilities of university personnel in responding to public records requests, including allowable fees for document retrieval, review, redaction, duplication, and release, particularly in cases involving large volumes of records or records that require substantial staff time to process.
- C. This policy outlines the public records request process of university records for GSU in accordance with the State of Louisiana Public Records Law (Public Records Law) found in LA R.S. 44:1 et seq. which contains the general principles and guidelines for public records.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Public Records Law ensures that public documents are preserved and open to the public for viewing. It works alongside Louisiana's Open Meetings Law and is mandated by Article XII, Section 3 of the Louisiana Constitution, which states that no person should be denied the right to observe public body deliberations and examine public documents, except as established by law. This law is designed to provide unrestricted access to documents and to uphold the public's inherent right to stay informed about the content of public records and how government affairs are conducted. It also balances the public's right with the custodian's responsibility to protect and preserve public records to prevent loss, damage, or acts that could compromise the integrity of these records.

III. APPLICABILITY

- A. This policy applies to all Grambling State University employees.
- B. This policy applies to all requests for public records received by the University, including documents maintained in any format (print, electronic, audiovisual, etc.) by its offices, departments, or employees acting within the scope of their duties.
- C. GSU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctorate degrees. GSU also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of GSU may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Custodian**: Louisiana Public Records Law, Title LA R.S. 44:1 A.(3) defines "custodian" as the public official or head of any public body having custody or control of a public record, or a representative specifically authorized by him to respond to requests to inspect any such public records. The GSU President (or his designee), specifically University Compliance, serves as the GSU's custodian.
- B. **Public Record**: LA R.S. 44:1 A.(2)(a)(b)(c), defines "public records" as:
 - a) "All books, records, writings, accounts, letters and letter books, maps, drawings, photographs, cards, tapes, recordings, memoranda, and papers, and all copies, duplicates, photographs, including microfilm, or other reproductions thereof, or any other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, including electronically stored information or information contained in databases or electronic data processing equipment, having been used, being in use, or prepared, possessed, or retained for use in the conduct, transaction, or performance of any business, transaction, work, duty, or function which was conducted, transacted, or performed by or under the authority of the constitution or laws of this state, or by or under the authority of any ordinance, regulation, mandate, or order of any public body or concerning the receipt or payment of any money received or paid by or under the authority of the constitution or the laws of this state," except as otherwise provided in the Public Records Law or the Constitution of Louisiana.
 - b) Notwithstanding Subparagraph (a) above, any documentary material of a security feature of a public body's electronic data processing system, information technology system, telecommunications network, or electronic security system, including hardware or software security, password, or security procedure, process, configuration, software, and code is not a "public record".
 - c) Notwithstanding Subparagraph (a) above, any blueprint or floor plan of the interior of a public school building or facility is not a "public record".

V. GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTS OF UNIVERSITY RECORDS

GSU recognizes the right of any person to inspect, copy, or reproduce public records, subject to the exceptions outlined in state and federal law. GSU is not required to create records, compile information, or answer questions. Requests must seek existing records or documents. All public records request(s) must be immediately delivered or forwarded to University Compliance as the President's designated department to review and respond.

- A. All requests for public records or documents must be made in writing and include specifics on what is being requested to ensure accurate and efficient processing. GSU will immediately make available any records that are available or that are not in active use.
- B. Request for access to public records must be made by a person at least 18 years old in writing directly to the GSU President c/o / Attention: Public Records – University Compliance either in person, by mail or email.

1. Mail:

GSU President c/o Public Records – University Compliance
Grambling State University
403 Main Street | Mailbox 4216
Grambling, Louisiana 71245

2. In Person:

GSU President c/o Public Records – University Compliance
Grambling State University
Long Jones Hall RM 242
Appointments may be scheduled for coordination

3. Email:

publicrecords@gram.edu

4. GSU Office Hours – Normal Operations

- a. Monday through Thursday: 7:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
- b. Friday: 7:30 AM – 11:30 AM
- c. Requests must be made during university hours of operation.
- d. Requests made during non-university hours of operation are considered received on the date that normal university hours of operation resume.

5. Request(s) must include:

- requestor's name;
- contact information;
- description of the public records being sought;
- date or time frame of those records.

- C. GSU will respond to requests within three days – except Saturday, Sunday and legal public holidays. GSU’s holiday schedule is available online at gram.edu. GSU’s response may state that either:
 - a.) The documents are readily available;
 - b.) There are no documents responsive to requests;
 - c.) The time required to produce documents if time is required for retrieval, review or redaction;
 - d.) The estimate of costs/charges that may be incurred.
- D. A requestor may come to GSU to examine a specific record in person at an agreed upon time and date in coordination with University Compliance. University Compliance may require that the examination of public documents occur during regular office and working hours, but may authorize examination at other times, with any additional costs for staffing paid out of funds provided in advance by the person examining the public records outside of regular office and working hours.
- E. GSU is under no obligation to create reports or compile records that do not already exist.
- F. If a record is requested and GSU questions whether the requested record is public or readily available, University Compliance must, within three (3) days of receiving the request (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays), notify the person making the request in writing about the decision and the reasons for it. The written notification should mention the legal basis under which University Compliance has determined that the record, or any part of it, is exempt from inspection, copying, or reproduction.
- G. University Compliance will require the requestor to sign a register, but will not review, examine, or scrutinize any copy, photograph, or memoranda in the possession of any person requesting public records.
- H. GSU charges fees for the administration of public records according to the uniform fee schedule adopted by the Louisiana Commissioner of Administration.
- I. University Compliance facilitates public records as designated by the University President.
 - 1. University Compliance must be told prior to the release of document(s) to a requestor. University Compliance must review documents prior to release. If necessary, University Compliance will notify the appropriate department to distribute the record(s) to the requestor. Any departments receiving a direct public request for GSU records must immediately hand-deliver or send the request electronically to University Compliance for review and assignment. Note: Please use publicrecords@gram.edu for all electronic submissions.
 - 2. When University Compliance receives a public records request, University Compliance will review the request and assign it as necessary to the appropriate department. Any department that receives a public records request assignment from University Compliance must respond **within 48 hours**, to University Compliance WITH the records that pertain to the request OR with a clear statement of “no documents responsive to this request”. It's crucial to understand that this 48-hour window is not just a

guideline, but a commitment to our responsibility. Note: If no documents are readily available, the department is under no obligation to create reports or compile records that do not exist. **Do not create nonexistent records.**

3. If any department receives a public records requests related to university programs and activities it should be directed to University Compliance. If a department receives a request about potentially controversial university policies or procedures, it should also be referred to University Compliance for coordination of a response. However, if a request pertains to INFORMATION and not documents within the scope of a specific department, the department may respond directly after discussing with the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing. In such cases, the department should notify University Compliance of request(s) for DOCUMENTS that may also include request for information prior to distributing documents to the requestor.
- J. If a request involves a large volume of records, requires extensive duplication, or demands significant staff time for retrieval or review, GSU may require additional time and will assess reasonable fees as allowed by law.
- K. A cost estimate will be provided in advance. Processing may be contingent upon receipt of payment or prepayment, depending on the size and complexity of the request.

VI. COSTS

1. Fees for Copies, Employees and Processing

- A. To recover reasonable costs associated with the production and delivery of electronically stored public records, the University may apply the following fee structure, consistent with Louisiana Revised Statutes §44:1 et seq.:
- B. The following charges may apply:
 - a) \$0.25 per printed page (black & white, letter-size)
 - b) Actual cost for oversized, color, or specialty formats
 - c) Reasonable hourly rate for staff time involved in retrieval, review, redaction, and duplication, when applicable
 - d) Actual cost for electronic media (e.g., flash drives, USB drives, CD's)
 - e) Duplication charges may be waived if the requestor opts for electronic delivery of documents
- C. The collected fees generally cover:
 1. **Staff Time and Labor** – Compensation for administrative personnel, legal counsel, IT staff, and compliance officers involved in locating, reviewing, redacting, and preparing records.
 2. **Materials and Supplies** – Costs for paper, ink, and physical storage media (e.g., USB drives, CDs) used in producing copies of records.

3. **Equipment Usage** – Maintenance and operation of copy machines, printers, and electronic records systems utilized during the records production process.
4. **Delivery and Mailing Services** – Expenses related to postage, courier services, or packaging supplies for delivering physical records to requestors.
5. **Legal and Compliance Review** – Ensuring that records are reviewed and redacted in accordance with applicable laws such as FERPA, HIPAA, Title IX, and protections like attorney-client privilege or work-product.

2. Hourly Rates for Charges

- A. If the request involves a substantial amount of staff time, the following reasonable hourly rates may apply, based on the personnel involved.

These charges reflect the actual time required to fulfill the request and are subject to adjustment based on the complexity, volume, and sensitivity of the records.

Staff Role	Activity	Rate (Hourly)
Administrative	Retrieval and coordination	\$20.00
Information Technology	Email/system search and data extraction	\$35.00
Compliance	Review for Institutional Procedures etc.	\$40.00
Legal/Policy Review	Legal Risks or Sensitive Content (Exemptions)	\$60.00

Note: A cost estimate will be provided to the requestor in advance. Processing may be suspended until payment is received.

- B. These charges are in accordance with the Louisiana Public Records Law and the Uniform Fee Schedule adopted by the Louisiana Commissioner of Administration as published in the Louisiana Administrative Code. These practices align with the principle that fees should reflect the actual cost of providing access to public records, as outlined in Louisiana Revised Statute 44:32(C).
- C. Charges reflect the reasonable cost of locating, reviewing, redacting, and preparing records for release, including time spent to ensure compliance with FERPA, HIPAA, Title IX, and/or other applicable protections such as attorney-client privilege and attorney work product.

3. Staff Time Charges

While specific allocations may vary by institution, the collected fees generally cover:

1. Staff Time and Labor

- Compensation for administrative personnel, legal counsel, IT staff, and compliance officers involved in locating, reviewing, redacting, and preparing records.

2. Materials and Supplies

- i. Costs for paper, ink, and physical storage media (e.g., USB drives, CDs) used in producing copies of records.

3. Equipment Usage

- i. Maintenance and operation of copy machines, printers, and electronic records systems utilized during the records production process.

4. Delivery and Mailing Services

- i. Expenses related to postage, courier services, or packaging supplies for delivering physical records to requestors.

5. Legal and Compliance Review

- i. Ensuring that records are reviewed and redacted in accordance with applicable laws such as FERPA, HIPAA, Title IX, and protections like attorney-client privilege or work-product.

4. Flat Fee for Electronic Delivery

- a) A flat administrative fee of \$20.00 may be charged for the delivery of responsive records via electronic means (e.g., email or secure file transfer), which includes administrative processing, file preparation, and formatting.
- b) This administrative fee may be waived at the discretion of GSU for small or simple requests.

5. Customized Reports from Electronically Stored Records

When a request requires the creation of customized reports, queries, or extraction of data not routinely maintained in the requested format, the University may assess a fee based on the actual hourly rate of the Information Technology staff or programmer performing the task. This includes:

- a) Writing or executing custom scripts or queries
- b) Compiling data across multiple databases or platforms
- c) Specialized formatting or file conversion
- d) These fees will be calculated using the employee's hourly wage and fringe benefits, and the requestor will be notified of the estimated cost before processing begins.

6. Production Outside of Normal Business Hours

If a request necessitates record production or staff activity outside of normal University business hours, the University may charge:

- a) The employee's regular hourly rate for time worked, and
- b) Applicable overtime pay if required under University policy and labor law.
- c) Such charges will only be applied if after-hours processing is necessary due to the volume, urgency, or complexity of the request and will be communicated to the requestor in advance.

7. Payment Instructions:

- A. If charges are applicable, the University will issue a written estimate in advance.
- B. Processing of the request may be deferred until payment is received. Payment instructions, including acceptable methods (e.g., check, money order, or

university-approved electronic payment portal), will be provided with the estimate.

- C. Grambling State University may require prepayment of estimated fees before processing requests.
- D. All payments should be made payable to:

Grambling State University
Attention: Public Records – University Compliance
P. O. Box 4216
Long-Jones Hall
Grambling, LA 71245

Please include the reference number or subject of the request on the payment to ensure proper tracking.

Upon receipt of payment, the responsive records will be released.

VII. EXEMPTIONS TO THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Requests may be denied in full or in part if records are exempt. La. R.S. 44:1-44:41 cites numerous records that are not covered by the Public Records Act. Exemptions include, for example:

- 1. Certain information about state personnel that is protected by the right of privacy guaranteed by the Article I, Section 5 of the Louisiana Constitution;
- 2. Certain documents related to pending criminal investigations;
- 3. Certain documents pertaining to security procedures;
- 4. Certain records related to individual students are protected by state and federal privacy laws;
 - a. Records containing information protected under FERPA, Title IX, or other confidentiality laws will be reviewed and redacted as necessary before release.
 - b. Student education records will not be released without written consent from the student or a lawful exception.
- 5. Certain documents related to ongoing litigation, investigations or disciplinary proceedings;
- 6. Written explanations will be provided for all denials.

VIII. RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

- A. Documents shall be maintained in accordance with the University's Retention Policy #20100.
- B. If the law does not prescribe a particular period of time for the record to be retained, the public records must be preserved and maintained for a period of at least three years from the date on which the public record was made, **except when an agency as defined in R.S. 44:402, has an approved retention schedule pursuant to R.S. 44:36(B).**

IX. PROCEDURES

- A. In order to ensure confidential and restricted data is not released, all request for public records shall be reviewed by the department's data custodian and if appropriate, University Compliance before releasing documents to respond to public records request if for a legal reason. University Compliance has three business days within receipt to either:
1. Make the public records available for viewing,
 2. Provide a written response regarding any delay in making the public records available, such as retrieval from off-storage or from an electronic database or system, or
 3. Provide a written response regarding legal reason the records are not public.
- B. Grambling faculty and staff should not directly respond to any public records request. All requests regarding university programs and activities in general should be referred to University Compliance Office. Should a department receive a request about potentially controversial university policies or procedures, that request should be referred to the University Compliance Office, which will coordinate an appropriate response. If a department receives a request regarding information specific to the scope of that department the individual may respond. In such cases, however, the individual receiving the request should still notify the University Compliance Office of the request and response made.
- C. Grambling faculty and staff shall acknowledge by confirm receipt of all requests sent from the public records email. All documents that pertain to the request must be provided to University Compliance if readily available and not in use immediately. A response to University Compliance shall be within 48 hours. If no documents are readily available the department is under no obligation to create reports or compile records that do not exist and therefore, will need to respond to the public records' email address with "no documents responsive to this request".

X. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Grambling faculty and staff are responsible for adhering to Public Records Request procedures. Violations of these procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment as well as legal consequences.

XI. REVISION/REVISED HISTORY

- Revision: **January 22, 2022**
- Revision: May 5, 2025 (Formerly Policy #31001 – Separated into Policy #20102 – Public Records Request & Policy #20103 – Subpoena for University Records)