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**STUDENTS' CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION ORGANIZER SUES UC REGENTS OVER CONCEALMENT OF SURVEILLANCE DATA SHARING WITH CUSTOMS AND BORDER PATROL**

**[RIVERSIDE, CA]** Students' Civil Liberties Union (SCLU) announced that Daniel Negrete-Gonzalez, an organizer with SCLU and the Ellis Collective, has filed a major transparency lawsuit against the Regents of the University of California. The lawsuit accuses the University of California, Riverside of withholding public oversight and crucial data-sharing audit logs of their operation of Vigilant License Plate Reader systems, after initial documents revealed the UCR Police Department had illegally granted surveillance data access to hundreds of agencies across the country.

The petition for a writ of mandate and complaint for declaratory relief was filed in the Riverside County Superior Court to enforce full compliance with a February 2026 California Public Records Act (CPRA) request. Within that request, the University turned over a vendor-generated "Data Sharing Report" unveiling UCRPD had granted ALPR data access to 121 out-of-state and federal law enforcement agencies, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division. ALPR systems use high-speed cameras to automatically capture and store license plate information, car characteristics, and the precise GPS location of passing vehicles that can be tracked across any specific system of cameras.

In addition to the data-sharing report, the University produced 500 pages of internal logs detailing UCRPD searches. Chief Campus Counsel Lorena Peñaloza issued a refusal to reveal the external logs that would display how agencies like CBP were using the data, now claiming UCR is solely an "end-user" of the platform that does not have access to audit logs. In the petition, Negrete-Gonzalez challenges the contradiction in this stance, noting that this selective defense is not only entirely unexplained but violates UCRPD's own rules. The department's policy explicitly define the agency as 'system operators' rather than end users and require them to maintain detailed access records. This requirement stems from California law (Civil Code section 1798.90.52), which mandates that ALPR operators keep audit logs—the exact subsection, pertaining solely to operators, that UCRPD's own policy explicitly cites. This lawsuit seeks a court order compelling the Regents of the University of California to conduct an immediate and thorough search for all responsive external audit logs and provide the same as well.

### **Why This Matters:**

California's SB 34 (Hill, 2015) governs how law enforcement may operate ALPR systems: barring agencies from sharing ALPR data with out-of-state and federal agencies, requiring regular audits of usage to ensure compliance, and establishing statutory damages of at least \$2,500 per violation.

This conduct isn't isolated to UCR, it's a pattern across the University of California system. Earlier this month, records revealed that UC Merced had shared ALPR data with 196 prohibited agencies, including Border Patrol. At both UCR and Merced, dozens of the out-of-state agencies granted access were 287(g) partners — local agencies that have signed agreements deputizing their officers to carry out federal immigration enforcement on ICE's behalf, meaning agencies in addition to CBP could use the data for deportation operations. In a March letter documenting violations of both the CPRA and SB 34, Peñaloza addressed only the records portion and declined to respond to the demand that UCR halt its unlawful sharing. A corrected sharing list emerged only after public backlash over UC Merced's nearly identical conduct.

The most common path to the data is indirect access through proxy accounts inside partner police agencies. UC Merced has not ended the wide-scale in-state sharing that enables this, and records obtained from other agencies show UC Berkeley extending access to nearly the entire state. UC Irvine and UC Berkeley both continue to share with the El Cajon Police Department — an agency that has refused to stop using ALPR for immigration enforcement and is currently being sued by the California Attorney General over that practice.

UCSD's responsive documents showed zero agencies with access to its ALPR data, yet in a federal grant application to expand that system — submitted through the Urban Areas Security Initiative under the Department of Homeland Security, while UCSD was also participating in Operation Stonegarden, a joint task force with Border Patrol — the campus stated it had previously shared ALPR data with federal agencies.

Policies across campuses require a written request for every individual search of shared data, which is completely in contradiction to the existence of these sharing agreements. At the only campus that has produced external audit logs, records show tens of thousands of searches by outside agencies every month. UC Irvine shared with only about half as many agencies as Riverside and Merced — making the Riverside and Merced logs, which would show how agencies like CBP actually used the data, the most important records still hidden from the public.

### **About:**

The Students' Civil Liberties Union (SCLU) is a youth-led organization committed to empowering the rights of students and communities through grassroots action. SCLU has led campaigns across UC campuses to defend undocumented students, expand civil liberties, and protect communities from institutional repression.

**Documents:** [elliscollective.org/documents](https://elliscollective.org/documents)