Elon (N.C.) University journalism students took advantage of a campus lecture by former Washington Post Executive Editor Ben Bradlee to tape an interview for their Sunshine Week program. The Bradlee interview, which included questions from 5th grade students at nearby Elon Elementary School, capped the program, which also featured a discussion with Alamance News Publisher Tom Boney, who fought against closed local meetings, and an overview of open government laws in North Carolina. The program was available online, and DVDs were mailed to elementary school teachers throughout the county.

J-Ideas at Ball State University in Muncie created a series of podcasts for Sunshine Week that were made available on the national Web site. In one podcast, students from Muncie Central High School, who have a history of fighting for records, discussed the importance of access to information. Another featured an interview with Indianapolis Star Editor Dennis Ryerson about open government and FOI issues.
Wyoming Valley West Senior High School students in Plymouth, Pa., celebrated Sunshine Week with class discussions and a T-shirt designed by two students. Journalism teacher Leslie Nicholas said when he asked his journalism students how they wanted to celebrate Sunshine Week, the T-shirt sounded like a lot of fun. Students created new logos for the shirts, worn by about 85 students during the Tuesday of Sunshine Week. They further showed their support for free press by donning Student Press Law Center “First Amendment Freedom Fighter” temporary tattoos.

The Eastern Progress, campus newspaper of Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, published a staff written editorial and a cartoon from the national Sunshine Week Toolkit. Pointing out to students that Sunshine Week isn’t “some kind of code for Spring Break,” the Perspective column noted that, “the annual event is a lot more important than remembering to bring tanning lotion and limiting the amount of alcoholic beverages you consume on the beach.” The editorial explained the state Sunshine Law and why lawmakers and the university administration must operate with a presumption of openess: “Keeping public records public may not seem like that big of a deal, but it’s a lot like free speech – you don’t realize how valuable it is until it’s taken away.”
The Student Press Law Center helped student journalists mark Sunshine Week with a series of articles for high school and college students, explaining what kind of information is available and how to get it. The coverage kicked off a month before Sunshine Week with an article explaining why open government is important to students. SPLC’s Web site includes tools to help student journalists understand their right of access to records, meetings, places and an open records letter generator.

Black College Wire offered Sunshine Week articles for student newspapers, including one by Hampton University senior Daarel Burnette II. When the former Hampton Script editor went to the campus police department to get information, he expected administrative derision and lack of cooperation. “So,” he wrote, “it was nothing less than a shock when the police department secretary handed me a glossy booklet listing all the campus crime reported since 2002 in an organized chart.” Burnette called it “vital that Hampton University and every other institution of higher learning provide these statistics to their residents.”