FERPA Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can parents access a student’s record?
A. When a student reaches the age of 18 or transfers to a post-secondary institution, (regardless of age) FERPA rights transfer from the parent to the student.
- Parents may obtain directory information at the discretion of the institution (refer these calls to the Registrar’s Office)
- Parents may obtain non-directory information (grades, GPA, etc.) only after it has been determined that their child is legally their dependent (IRS rules). This is determined by the Bursar, Registrar, and Financial Aid Director
- Parents may obtain non-directory information if their child (student) has signed a waiver allowing parental access to their education record in the Registrar’s Office

Q. Can students access their own files?
A. A student may request, in writing, the opportunity to review the content of the student’s educational file. These requests should be forwarded to the Registrar’s Office and the Institution has up 45 days to provide access.

Q. What is excluded from student review?
A. 
- Records kept in the sole possession of faculty, staff, and other personnel, used only as a personal memory aid, and not accessible to any other person except a temporary substitute for the maker of the record.
- Records created and maintained by law enforcement units solely for law enforcement purposes that are not maintained by persons other than law enforcement officials.
- Records created and maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other professional or paraprofessional acting in that capacity in connection with the provision of treatment to a student.
- Employment records of a student
- Financial records of a student’s parents, or any information contained therein
- Confidential letters and statements of recommendation placed in the file before January 1, 1975.
- Records for which the student previously waived his or her right of access.
- Records that contain only information about a person after that person is no longer a student, such as alumni records.

Q. What about letters of recommendation?
A. Statements made by a person making a recommendation that are made from that person’s personal observation or knowledge do not require a written release from the student who is the subject of the recommendation. However, if personally identifiable information obtained from a student’s education record is included in a letter of
recommendation (grades, GPA, etc.), the writer is required to obtain a signed release from the student which:

- specifies the records that may be disclosed,
- states the purpose of the disclosure, and
- identifies the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure can be made.

Since the letter of recommendation would be part of the student’s education record, the student has the right to read it – unless he/she has waived that right of access.

Q. Is public posting of grades a violation of FERPA?
A. The public posting of grades, either by the student’s name, institutional student identification number, or social security number is a violation of FERPA. Using an assigned random number that only the student and instructor know would be an appropriate way to post grades. Even then, the order of posting should not be alphabetic. Public posting of grades is discouraged by the Registrar’s office.

Q. How should phone calls requesting information be handled?
A. Do not give out grades or other protected information over the phone. When returning a phone call and leaving a message on a machine, leave only your name and number and ask them to return your call. Don’t assume the student is the only one who will hear your message. Don’t assume you are talking to the student even though they identify themselves as such.

Q. What about emails?
A. Never type protected information in an email (grades, schedule information, GPA, etc)
   If a student emails you and DOES include protected information, blank it out before replying back
   Don’t assume that the student is the only one with access to that email address
   Never email information about any particular student to more than one student’s email address
   If in doubt, do not email it

Q. What else do I need to know about FERPA and data release not mentioned above?
A. Access or release may be granted only with the written authorization of the student that must:
   - Be signed and dated by the student
   - Specify the records to be released
   - State the purpose of the disclosure
   - Identify to whom the disclosure may be made