



FERPA: What faculty and staff need to know

It's the Law!

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), also known as the Buckley Amendment, was passed by Congress in 1974.

It grants four specific rights to a post-secondary student:

- to see the information that the institution is keeping on the student;
- to seek amendment to those records and, in certain cases, append a statement to the record;
- to consent to disclosure of his or her records;
- to file a complaint with the FERPA Office in Washington.

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605

FERPA applies to all educational agencies or institutions that receive funds under any program administered by the Secretary of Education. (Most financial aid is administered by the Secretary of Education.)

It's Your Responsibility

As a faculty or staff member, you have a legal responsibility under FERPA to protect the confidentiality of student educational records in your possession.

- You have access to student information only for legitimate use in the completion of your responsibilities as a University employee. Need-to-know is the basic principle.
- Student information stored in electronic format must be secure and available only to those entitled to access that information.
- With the exception of non-suppressed directory information, student educational records are considered private and may not be released without the written consent of the student.
- Your access to student information is based on your role as a University faculty or staff member. You may not release lists or files with student information to any third party outside your college or departmental unit.

Student Information Types

Student educational records include information provided by a student for use in the educational process, such as the following:

- personal information (name, etc.)
- enrollment records
- student's exams or papers
- grades
- schedules

Directory/Public Information

"Directory information is . . . information contained in an educational record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed." (FERPA Regulations, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Part 99.3).

Directory Information can NEVER include:

- Social security number
- Student ID number
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Gender
- GPA
- Religion

Storage media for an educational record may vary and can include one or more of the following:

- document in the registrar's office
- electronic document or e-mail
- computer printout in your office
- class list on your desktop
- computer display screen
- notes taken during an advising session
- database

Directory/Public

Information is considered public and can be released without the student's written permission.

However, the student may opt to keep this information confidential.

Directory information at California Northstate University

- Name, address, phone
- University assigned e-mail
- Dates of enrollment
- Enrollment status
- College
- Class (i.e., Class of 2016)
- Academic awards and honors
- Degrees received

Can student directory or public information always be released? No! Before releasing any information about a student, contact the Office of the Registrar to ensure the student does not have a FERPA Block on their account. If the student has requested that directory information be withheld, no information can be released. Note that FERPA does not require that directory information be released. University faculty and staff who have a need-to-know may obtain directory information for a student who has a FERPA Block, but must not release this information.

How can a student withhold release of directory information? Students may request a FERPA Block on their accounts by notifying the Office of the Registrar. Students may obtain the proper form from the Registrar, the Office of the Registrar Web site, or outside of the Office of the Registrar where student forms are located.

What are parental rights under FERPA? FERPA allows parental access to a student's educational records if the student requests in writing that private information be released to the parent(s). FERPA does not allow parental access to post secondary student educational records without the student's permission.

Where should I store my student data? Although you may be the one grading a student's performance, student data (e.g., grades, attendance, test scores) is owned by the University. It should not be stored on personal computing equipment, on the hard drives of shared computers, or on portable devices such as "flash-or thumb drives," or on laptop computers. Portable devices are easily lost or stolen; if they contain student data when they are lost or stolen, all students may need to be notified.

How can I locate my secure data storage for storing student data? You should talk with information technology support staff.

How can student data be protected? Store all student data on a central, California Northstate University server (not on a Web server); password protect files; encrypt data on your computer; use anti-virus software; don't open attachments or click on links in e-mails; trust where you are going when you are following a Web link; distribute graded materials in a secure manner; verify attachments and recipients before sending information via e-mail.

How are HIPAA and FERPA related? Medical documentation in the student education record is private information and is covered by FERPA. HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) regulations do not apply.

For more information Contact the Office of the Registrar

DO NOT!

- Use the Social Security Number or any portion of it, or the student ID number, in a public posting of grades or any other information;
- Leave graded tests, papers, or other student materials for students to pick up in a stack that requires sorting through the papers of all students;
- Discuss the progress of any student with anyone other than the student (including parents) without the signed, dated, and written consent of the student;
- Provide anyone with lists or files of students enrolled in your classes;
- Provide anyone with student schedules or assist anyone in finding a student on campus;
- Access the records of any student for personal reasons;
- Access the records of any student for any reason other than to perform your job duties.