Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Information for Faculty and Staff

Why is FERPA Important?
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is the federal law that protects the privacy of students’ education records. All institutions receiving federal aid administered by the Secretary of Education must adhere to FERPA regulations.

What student rights are protected?
The primary student rights protected under FERPA are:
- the right to review and inspect their education records (within 45 days of receipt of a written request)
- the right to have their education records amended or corrected
- the right to control disclosure of certain portions of their education records
- the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education regarding alleged failures to comply with FERPA.

What are considered education records?
Education records are all records maintained by UTSA about individual students. These records can be in any medium (handwritten, e-mail, print, microfilm, or other formats) maintained by the University.

Public Records...
In accordance with FERPA, UTSA has designated the following categories of information about individual students as public or directory information. This information will be routinely released to any inquirer, unless the student has specifically requested that all or part of the following list be withheld:
- Name, address, and telephone number
- E-mail address
- Place of birth
- Major field of study
- Enrollment status
- Dates of attendance (in person or by correspondence, Internet, or other electronic and telecommunications technologies)
- Most recent previous educational agency or institution attended
- Classification
- Degrees, certificates and awards received
- Date of graduation
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Physical factors (height and weight) of athletes
- Photographs.

Prior Written Consent
The University must obtain prior written consent from students before disclosing any personally identifiable information from their education records.

The prior written consent must:
- Specify the records to be released
- State the purpose of the disclosure
- Identify the party(ies) to whom disclosure may be made
- Be signed and dated by the student.
Ferpa Tips

Grades

- Grades may not be released to any third parties or parents without prior written consent from the student.
- Grades may not be posted by a full or partial Social Security Number, Banner ID, name or other means that may inadvertently identify the student.
- DO NOT send grades via e-mail as there is no guarantee of confidentiality with electronic transmission.
- Use official grade delivery methods; ASAP and WebCT.

Records

- DO NOT leave student information out on your desk or open on your computer.
- DO NOT circulate a printed class roster with names and Banner IDs.
- DO NOT discuss student concerns with anyone but the student.
- DO NOT release any student record information to a third party or parent without checking with the Office of the Registrar or your Dean’s office.

Letters of Recommendation

Statements made from personal observation or knowledge do not require a written release from the student. However, if personally identifiable information obtained from a student’s education record is included in a letter of recommendation (e.g., grades, GPA, etc.), you are required to obtain a signed release from the student.

Possible Penalties for Violation

The Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education reviews and investigates complaints of violations of FERPA. Violations may result in sanctions as severe as the withholding of federal funding, including grants and financial aid.

For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Education Web site at www.ed.gov/ferpa/.