

FERPA 101

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974) is a federal law that protects students by giving them five rights:

1. the right to inspect and review education records,
2. the right to seek the amendment of education records,
3. the right to consent to the disclosure of education records,
4. the right to obtain a copy of the school's student records policy, and
5. the right to file a complaint with the FERPA Office in Washington, D.C.



How does FERPA affect advisers?

You likely have quite a lot of confidential information in your work area, such as graded papers and student information displayed on your computer screen. Therefore, the regulations of FERPA are relevant in most of your daily activities. Because we have more access to restricted information than ever through myWWU and online advisee documents, the consequences of how you handle, or mishandle, student information are significant. What student information can you disclose and to whom, under FERPA?

Directory Information

Directory information can be released without written consent of the student. At WWU, directory information is defined as a student's:

- ◆ name
- ◆ date of birth
- ◆ telephone number
- ◆ class standing
- ◆ previous schools attended
- ◆ major field of study

You may release non-directory information to officials or faculty of the University who have a legitimate educational interest in the information (in other words, they *need* to know to fulfill official duties), to parents of students *who have signed information release forms*, and to appropriate parties in connection with an emergency when the immediate health or safety of the student is threatened.

The policies of Walla Walla University as they pertain to student records and FERPA are available on the [Academic Records web site](#). These policies include general institutional guidelines, specific guidelines for faculty and staff, and procedures for the disclosure of educational records.

Parents and FERPA

At the post-secondary level, **parents have no inherent rights to inspect their students' educational records**—the right to inspect is limited solely to students. At WWU, information from students' records may be released to parents ONLY with the written consent of students.

Some Common Questions and Highlights

Q: May I include non-directory information in letters of recommendation for students?

A: **ONLY** if the student provides written permission for the individual writing the letter of recommendation to release such information.

Q: Can student grades be posted by student ID number or name?

A: NO! To do so would require the written permission of each student before an instructor could post the grades. Even with the permission of all students involved, this is not recommended.

- ◆ In general, for the safety of students, do not release any address information to off-campus inquiries.
- ◆ Check students' directory restrictions *before* you answer any questions.
- ◆ Students may release any information by providing a signed release.
- ◆ Information viewed on your computer screen must be treated with the same confidentiality as paper records. Be sure to clear your computer screen or log off whenever it will be unattended.
- ◆ If there is any question in your mind regarding requests for information, it is always better to err on the conservative side and call the office that maintains that portion of the education record to ask for guidance.

“I have two rules for life. The first is never tell everything you know.”

Unknown
