



What is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as Amended (**FERPA**) require institutions accepting federal monies to protect the privacy of student information. In addition, FERPA affords students the right to review their education records, to request correction of inaccurate records, and to limit information disclosure from those records. An institution's failure to comply with FERPA may result in the Department of Education withdrawal of federal funds.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (sometimes referred to as the Buckley Amendment) was designed to protect the privacy of educational records and to establish the rights of students to inspect and review their educational records. It also provided control over the release of educational record information.

The FERPA Guide for Parents

When a student turns 18 years old or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, all rights afforded to you as a parent under *FERPA* transfer to the student ("eligible student"). However, *FERPA* provides ways in which a school may—but is not required to—share information from an eligible student's education records with parents, without the student's consent.

For example:

- Schools may disclose education records to parents if a health or safety emergency involves their son or daughter.
- Schools may inform parents if the student, if he or she is under age 21, has violated any law or policy concerning the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance.
- Schools may disclose education records to parents if the student has submitted a signed General FERPA Waiver Release form authorizing the school to do so.

Generally FERPA rules mean that student academic information such as grades or academic standing will be given to the student and not to the parents. College students are considered responsible adults who may determine who will receive information about them. College representatives are prohibited from discussing information about the student's academic record with parents. Most colleges have a waiver form which students can sign allowing records to be released to parents or college representatives, such as faculty members, to discuss records with parents. Your student may, or may not, wish to sign this release.

College parents often feel frustrated by FERPA regulations. They feel that they need, and should have, access to student information. As college parents, we need to remember that college students are working toward increased independence and responsibility. Allowing them to determine who receives their academic information is a part of that growing independence. Some students handle this responsibility wisely and some may struggle with it. As with many aspects of the college experience, increased communication between college parents and college students will make the experience go smoothly for everyone.