

# Privacy Guidelines for Student Records

## What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, also known as the Buckley Amendment, helps protect the privacy of student education records. The Act provides for the right to inspect and review education records, the right to seek to amend those records, and the right to limit disclosure of information from the records. The intent of the legislation is to protect the rights of students and to ensure the privacy and accuracy of education records. The Act applies to all institutions in receipt of federal aid administered by the Secretary of Education. Further details regarding FERPA may be accessed at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

FERPA training for Pacific University faculty and staff is under the direction of the Registrar. Contact the Registrar for further information.

## Who is protected under FERPA?

A student is defined as someone who is, or was, enrolled at Pacific University; all students, regardless of their age or dependency status, are protected under FERPA. Protection of student records continues after enrollment ends, although it does not apply to the records of deceased students. People who have applied to but not attended Pacific University are not students and, therefore, do not come under FERPA guidelines.

## What are education records?

With certain exceptions, an education record is **any** record (1) from which a student can be personally identified and (2) maintained by the college. Education records include records, in any medium (e.g., handwriting, computer media, print, e-mail, magnetic tape, film, diskette, microfilm and microfiche, video or audio tape), that are in the possession of any school official.

## What is considered Directory Information?

Directory Information is that which generally is not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Although Pacific University legally may release Directory Information, **current policy does not allow release of student information** to parties outside of the University without student written permission. Exceptions to this include, but are not limited to: Deans' Lists; Academic or Athletic honors, awards or programs; or information to students' hometown newspapers.

FERPA states that each student has the right to withhold the information. Pacific University will honor the student's request to restrict the release of Directory Information. Once restricted, that information cannot be released without the written consent of the student.

Pacific University has established the following as directory information:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- E-mail address
- Dates of attendance
- Most previous institution attended
- Major fields of study
- Full or part-time enrollment status
- Awards
- Thesis titles/topics
- Honors
- Degree(s) conferred (including dates)
- Past and present participation in officially recognized sports and activities
- Physical factors (height, weight) of athletes
- Date and place of birth
- Recorded image

### **WHAT ABOUT . . . . ?**

#### **SHARING E-MAIL ADDRESSES OR OTHER PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION AMONG STUDENTS IN THE SAME CLASS**

Instructors using electronic tools such as Moodle may wish to share students' e-mail addresses or other personally identifiable information with others in the same class. Since e-mail is considered Directory Information, this is permissible as long as (1) students have had an opportunity to request that their e-mail addresses not be disclosed, and (2) the instructor does not share the e-mail address of any student who has requested non-disclosure.

#### **PARENTAL ACCESS TO CHILDREN'S EDUCATION RECORDS**

At the postsecondary level, parents have no inherent right to inspect a student's education records; the right to inspect is limited solely to the student (records may be released to parents under certain exceptions). Any request for student information, except for that for which the student has provided a signed and dated release, should be directed to the Registrar's Office.

#### **POSTING OF GRADES**

The posting of grades by the student's name, institutional student identification number, or social security number, without the student's written permission, is a violation of FERPA. Even with names obscured, student identifier numbers are considered personally identifiable information; therefore, posting these items is a violation of FERPA. The returning of papers via an "open" distribution system, such as stacking them on an open table, also is a violation of FERPA, unless the student submits a signed

and dated waiver to the instructor for such purpose. The instructor must keep the waiver permanently.

### **SENDING GRADES VIA E-MAIL**

There is no guarantee of confidentiality in transmitting information electronically via e-mail or through the Internet. Instructors wishing to send grades to students via e-mail must get a signed and dated release from students to do so, and keep the release permanently.

### **WRITING A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

Without a student's written authorization, Pacific University employees cannot discuss the personal information of any student with others. Therefore, students requesting a letter of reference or a telephone reference from a faculty or staff member must authorize the release of information from their education records. A release can be found at [http://www.pacificu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/EmployeeReleaseofInformation\\_000.pdf](http://www.pacificu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/EmployeeReleaseofInformation_000.pdf)