FERPA: What faculty and staff need to know

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.

Your access to student information, including directory information, is based on your faculty or staff role within the university. You may not release lists or files with student information to any third party outside your college or department.

Student educational records (other than directory information) are considered confidential and may not be released without written consent of the student. Student information stored in electronic format must be secure and available only to those entitled to access that information.

If you’re in doubt about a request for student information, contact the Office of Registration and Records at 701-231-7981.

Directory/Public Information and NDSU Directory Information
“Directory information is . . . information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.” (FERPA Regulations, 34CFR, Par 99.3.)

Directory Information is considered public and can be released without the student’s written permission. However, the student may opt to keep this information confidential.

- Name (all names on record)
- Address (all addresses on record)
- E-mail address (all electronic addresses on record)
- Phone number (all phone numbers on record)
- Height, weight and photos of athletic team members
- Major field of study (all declared majors)
- Minor field of study (all declared minors)
- Class level
- Dates of attendance
- Enrollment status
- Names of previous institutions attended
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Honors/awards received
- Degree earned (all degrees earned)
- Date degree earned (dates of all degrees earned)
- Photographic, video or electronic images of students taken and maintained by the institution (excluding Student ID photos)

Information not included in the list above is defined as confidential student information and may not be released. Student schedules, university ID numbers, and ID pictures are confidential information and therefore may not be released.

Directory Information can never include:
- Social security number
- Student identification number
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Gender

Student education records include information directly related to the student and maintained by North Dakota State University such as the following:
- Personal information (name, etc)
- Enrollment records
- Student’s exam or paper
- Grades
- Class schedules
- Disciplinary files
- Financial aid information
- Student employment records

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 from an advising session
| Can student directory or public information always be released? | **NO!** Before releasing any information about a student, check for a suppression in Campus Connection (blue window shade icon). If the student has requested that directory information be withheld, no information can be released. If the student does not have a restriction on the release of directory information, directory/public information may 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 with a suppression, but must not release this information to anyone. |
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| I like to post course updates on various forms of social media – is this permitted? | It depends. Be sure to not post any course related information about grades, course enrollment, or the class schedule. In addition, asking students to “check in” on social media can raise safety and privacy concerns. Avoid taking or sharing any photos of students in any course activities, unless signed permission is obtained from each student. FERPA doesn’t have specific social media provisions, but there are considerations to be cautious of. Additional helpful information can be found in the [Navigating Privacy Laws in Higher Education Social Media](#) article. |
| How can a student withhold release of directory information? | Students can request to suppress directory/public information by contacting the Office of Registration and Records. A blue window shade icon will appear on all Campus Connection screens for students who elect to withhold information. |
| What are parental rights under FERPA? | FERPA allows parental access to student’s educational records if the student requests that academic and/or financial information be released to the parent(s) or if the parent claims the student as a dependent for Federal income tax purposes. A red star icon is indicated in Campus Connection if a student has authorized third party discussion. Verify names and security question and answer. |
| What must I do if I receive a subpoena concerning student educational records? | A copy of any incoming subpoena should be sent immediately to the Office of Registration and Records for review. It can be faxed to 701-231-8959. The original subpoena should be retained in the office that received it unless the Registrar requests it be sent to them. You should also send the Registrar a short description of how and when the subpoena was received. The Office of Registration and Records and NDUS General Counsel will determine whether and how to comply with the subpoena, and will also determine whether student notification of compliance with the subpoena is required. |
| For more information . . . | Contact the Office of Registration and Records, 701-231-7981, or ndsu.edu/registrar. |

**DO NOT!**
- Use the Student ID number of a student in public posting of grades or any other information.
- Link the name of a student with that student’s ID number in any public manner.
- 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.
- Circulate a printed class list with student name and Student ID number, photo, or grades as an attendance roster.
- Discuss the progress of any student with anyone other than the student (including parents) without the consent of the student.
- Provide anyone with lists or files of students enrolled in your classes for any commercial purpose.
- Provide anyone with student schedules or assist anyone other than university employees in finding a student on campus.
- Access the records of any student for personal reasons.
- Store confidential student information on any computer unless that information is required and secure from intrusion.