

## ***A MESSAGE FROM THE REGISTRAR***

The Office of the Registrar is the official guardian of student data for Texas A&M University-Commerce. The mission of the Office of the Registrar is to maintain accurate records of academic progress for each student, to protect privacy and security of academic and personal information, to provide high quality service, and to uphold University policies and procedures in a professional and friendly atmosphere.

Maintaining the confidentiality of educational records is the responsibility of all faculty, staff and student employees at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Knowledge of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is important to ensure that student education information is protected in compliance with FERPA guidelines. It is important that each person with access to student record information of any type understand his/her legal responsibilities under FERPA and in accordance with University policy.

### **What is FERPA?**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The intent of the legislation is to protect the rights of students and to ensure the privacy and accuracy of education records.

The primary rights of students under FERPA are:

- (1) The right to inspect and review education records.
- (2) The right to seek to amend education records.
- (3) The right to have some control over the disclosure of information from education records.

FERPA applies to all institutions that receive funds under the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Who is Protected under FERPA?**

Current and previously enrolled students are protected under FERPA. FERPA guidelines do not apply to deceased students or students who apply for admission but do not attend.

### **What are Educational Records?**

With certain exceptions, an education records is any record (1) directly related to a student and (2) maintained by the university. A student has the right to inspect and review records maintained by the school. Education records include information recorded in any way, including, but not limited to, handwriting, print, computer media, video/audio tape, etc. that are in the possession of any school official. This includes transcripts or other records obtained from a school at which the student was previously enrolled.

### **What is Directory Information?**

Directory information may be disclosed under FERPA subject to University policy and requests for non-disclosure. Directory information includes: name, address (all, including email), telephone number, date/place of birth, enrollment status, class standing, dates of attendance, date of graduation, degrees/honors/awards received, major, most recent institution attended, sports participation, and weight/height of student athletes. Enrolled students may ask Texas A&M University-Commerce to withhold disclosure of the above information by completing a Request to Withhold Directory Information Form, available in the Office of the Registrar. Requests for non-disclosure of directory information do not prevent the information from being used by school officials that have a need to know.

### **Guidelines for Faculty and Staff**

- Directory information on individual students may be made available publicly by the appropriate educational record custodian.
- Staff using the Banner system should always determine the students' confidentiality preference settings by using the SPAPERS form.
- Information from a students' educational record may be shared among University officials or any person or company with whom the University has contracted who has legitimate educational interests.
- Access to students' educational records by school officials is restricted to that portion of the record necessary for the discharge of assigned duties.
- The release of non-directory information to parties outside of the University is restricted to the appropriate educational record custodian and only if the custodian has a signed and dated authorization to release statement from the student.
- The University does not provide mailing lists to any third party for either commercial use or for solicitation of any product or service.

### General Faculty/Staff Do's and Don'ts

Good practice by faculty and staff members requires that they maintain, use, and report student data in compliance with the requirements of FERPA and the University's Policy. The following statements provide practical guidelines to follow:

1. **Do** refer requests for student record information to the proper educational record custodian.
2. **Do** keep only those individual student records necessary for the fulfillment of your teaching or advising responsibilities.
3. **Do** keep any personal records relating to individual students separate from their educational records. Private notes of a professor/staff member concerning a student that are intended for professor's/staff members' own use are not part of the students' educational record.
4. **Do** insure privacy when asking for student CWID. When on the telephone, be aware that the student may not be in a private environment.
5. **Do** ask for only the last four digits of the CWID on exams and other documents, if needed, to identify different students with the same name.
6. **Do** properly dispose of all papers and documents that contain the CWID.
7. **Do not** include the CWID in the subject line of an email message; however, the CWID may be shown in the body of the email message and in any attached documents. **In no case** should the students' full Social Security Number be provided.
8. **Do not** include the CWID on documents mailed by surface mail where the CWID is visible on the outer document or in a window envelope.
9. **Do not** display student scores or grades publicly in association with the student name, CWID, social security number, or other personal identifier. Scores or grades may be posted using a code known only to you and the student.
10. **Do not** put papers or lab reports containing student names and grades in publicly accessible places. Students may not have access to the scores or grades of others in the class.
11. **Do not** request information from the educational record custodian without a legitimate educational interest and the appropriate authority to do so.
12. **Do not** share student educational record information with other faculty or staff members of the University unless their official responsibilities provide for a legitimate educational interest.
13. **Do not** ask for the CWID on any document that will be viewed by anyone other than a University employee with an educational need to know.  
Examples:
  - On exams, homework assignments and attendance rosters - if other students may view these documents.
  - On questionnaires, surveys and other documents soliciting additional personal information.
  - On checks payable to the University or to the student.
  - On non-academic documents or an appointment sign-in sheet.

You may not release personal information such as ID number, grades, or GPA via phone, fax, or email as it is impossible to verify identity through those means.



# FERPA FACULTY/STAFF GUIDELINES

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(903) 886-5068 - Phone

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[www.tamu-commerce.edu/registrar/ferpa.asp](http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/registrar/ferpa.asp)