Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
(FERPA)
Welcome to FERPA!

Take a look around your work area. What information do you have which may need to be handled in a secure way? For example:

- a university telephone directory?
- student registration forms?
- graded papers?
- advising packets?
- student information displayed on your computer screen?
We now have more access to restricted information than ever before with the University’s new CASCADE integrated database. The consequences of how we handle, or mishandle, student information are significant. What student information can you disclose, and to whom, under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?

This tutorial will help you answer these questions.
What are Educational Records?

Let’s start with some definitions.

The University’s definition is broad, “any record maintained by the University which is directly related to a student”. This means that almost any student-related piece of paper is part of the student’s educational record. Information displayed on a computer screen is also considered part of the student’s educational record. Here are some common examples:

- Any form of communication that includes personal information about a student
- Transcripts or any communication that includes grades (midterm or final)
- Class lists
- Degree Progress Reports
- Academic Sanction Records
- Advising Information
There Are Some Exceptions ........

- Personal records kept by university employees which are in the sole possession of the maker and are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute.
- Employment records unless the employment records are contingent on the fact that the employee is a student.
- Records maintained by Security Services solely for law enforcement purposes.
- Records maintained by Counseling, Health and Wellness Services. (Health records may be reviewed by a physician or other appropriate professional of the student's choosing).
- Pastoral counseling records maintained by the University Chaplain.
- Alumni records.
What is FERPA?

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is a federal law that protects students. This law gives students five rights.

- the right to inspect and review education records.
- the right to seek the amendment of education records
- the right to consent to the disclosure of education records
- the right to obtain a copy of the school’s FERPA policy
- the right to file a complaint with the FERPA Office in Washington, D.C.
Right to Inspect, Review, and Seek to Amend Education Records

Students must have access to review their education records at any time. If students believe that any information in their records is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of their privacy rights, they may request in writing that the office which contains those records amend them.
Right to Have Some Control Over the Disclosure of Information from Educational Records

How does a student restrict information the University releases? Let’s take a look at a few examples for the answer.....

A day in the life of Pebbles Flintstone!

Note: The University has adopted a more conservative stance in regards to addresses. We usually do not release student address information to off-campus inquires, even if there is no restriction in place.
A Day in the Life of Pebbles Flintstone!

Pebbles Flintstone, a current sophomore, approaches your desk. She tearfully reports that her parents, Fred and Wilma, have decided to divorce. It all came about when Pebble’s father ran away with Wilma’s best friend Betty. Poor Barney!

In the court settlement, Wilma received full custody of Pebbles. Pebbles is so disappointed with Fred that she wants no contact with him. She is concerned that her father will somehow discover she has changed her major from Stone Age History to Wheel Making.

How can Pebbles prevent this information from being released?
Directory Information

A student may choose to restrict any or all of the following categories by filling out a *Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information* form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category I</td>
<td>Name and current enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category II</td>
<td>Local and permanent addresses and telephone number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category III</td>
<td>Date and place of birth, dates of attendance, class standing, previous institution(s) attended, major field of study, awards, honors (including Dean’s List), degree(s) conferred (including dates), full-time or part-time status, and photograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category IV</td>
<td>Past and present participation in officially recognized sports and activities, physical factors (height, weight of athletes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category V</td>
<td>E-mail addresses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above is a sample of how directory restrictions will appear in your Cascade file. Each roman numeral corresponds to the five different *directory restriction* categories. If a “Y” appears after any roman numeral, it indicates the student has restricted the corresponding category.
Pebble’s Protection

Occasionally, students may need special protection. The University of Puget Sound provides all students the opportunity to restrict directory information.

Pebble’s major is considered directory information. Pebbles decided to go the Office of the Registrar to fill out a Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information form. Pebbles restricted Category III.  

[Click]
Let’s consider another example........

Welcome Back Professor Kotter!

CONTINUE
Welcome Back Professor Kotter!

Professor Kotter picks up the phone to hear a familiar but unique laugh that could only be his former student, Arnold Horshack. After reminiscing a bit about the old high school gang, Arnold requests a recommendation for his prospective employer, Vinnie Barbarino. It seems Vinnie Barbarino now owns a chain of disco dance studios and Arnold has his sights set on rekindling the disco craze and reusing all those great polyester suits. Professor Kotter, hoping to avoid catching the disco fever, hastily agrees to send a recommendation right away.

What information does Professor Kotter have the ability to gather? What information does Professor Kotter have the authorization to release?
Who Can Receive Education Information?

You can disclose information from a student’s education record only with the student’s written consent. Some exceptions which do not require the student’s written consent are listed below.

School Officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the records are:
- A person elected to the Board of Trustees;
- A person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position;
- A person employed by or under contract to the University to perform a special task, such as legal counsel or an auditor.

If there is any question in your mind regarding any request for education record information, it is always better to err on the conservative side. Or, call the office that maintains that portion of the education record and ask for guidance.
Professor Kotter is considered a University official and has the ability to check on Arnold’s grades, dates of attendance, degree received or any other information he feels will aid him in writing Arnold’s recommendation letter. Professor Kotter may have access to Arnold's academic record through Cascade or the Office of the Registrar may release this information if Professor Kotter states how he intends to use this information.
Dear Vinnie Barbarino

Armed with Arnold’s academic record, Professor Kotter is ready to write his recommendation. Professor Kotter can give a great character reference from his own personal experiences with Arnold. However, he cannot release this information from the student’s education record to anyone off-campus without Arnold’s written release.
Now you try it!

Here are a few situations for you to consider. Take a moment to think about how you would solve each situation and then click this puzzle for the answer.

To begin, step through the door...
A “Forceful” Story

It had been years since Luke Skywalker had used the force and he knew he was weak. The Dark Side was gaining momentum again on the other side of the galaxy and Luke needed to be prepared. He decided to register for Yoda’s refresher course, “Strengthening the Force in You and Your Galaxy.”

Luke became concerned as the course progressed. He was certain his grades were poor. At midterm, Yoda announced to the class that he would be posting course grades so each student could see how they were doing.

Can Yoda post grades? By name? By a number?
Luke’s Lesson

When Yoda decided to post grades using the UPSID number, he put Luke in grave danger. Didn’t he realize this number could be traced by the dark side? Even R2D2 and C3pO had that number in their database. What if R2D2 and C3pO were captured? The Dark Side would quickly realize that Luke’s force held no power.

FERPA does not allow us, as educational records custodians, to display any ID number that can be used to identify a student. Name, social security number, and UPSID number are all used to identify a particular student. Grades may not be posted by a UPS ID, social security number or name. Grades may be posted only with an identifying number created specifically for posting that event.

Let’s try another...
Let’s Get Smart

You look up from your work in the Registrar’s Office to be greeted by a man in a dark trench coat, standing beside him a lovely brunette woman. “Hello, I’m Maxwell, Maxwell Smart,” he says. “This is my back-up, Agent 99.”

Suddenly, you hear a phone ringing. After talking to his shoe, Maxwell starts to explain that they were sent by the “Chief” to investigate a student who has applied to be a secret agent. Maxwell needs information contained in the student’s education record. Just when you are ready to say never, Agent 99 presents you with a signed release from the student.

What will you do? What information can you release? Why is Agent Smart talking to his shoe?
It’s Not Undercover

FERPA notes that students have the right to have some control over the disclosure of information from educational records. A student may provide a signed release at anytime.

When Agent 99 presented the student’s signed release, she gave you the tool to honor that right. The steps to take are:

- verify the agent’s photo identification
- verify what information the release authorizes
- keep copy of release
- document information you release

Oh yes, what about the shoe? Well, some things just can’t be explained. (However, our secret agents have certainly progressed from hidden telephones in shoes!)

One more...
Wishing you Champagne Dreams...

You recognize him immediately. Robin Leach, star of “Life Styles of the Rich and Famous,” is at your desk. You give him your most professional greeting and ask how you can help.

Robin explains that he is on the way to Elizabeth’s next wedding in fabulous Fiji. His flight had a layover in Seattle and he thought he might come to say “Hi” to a niece he hasn’t seen forever. He would like you to direct him to her room.

When Robin gives you her name, you look up the directory restriction chart.

What does the student’s directory restriction chart tell you? What information can you release to Mr. Leach?
... and Caviar Wishes

The directory restriction box indicates that Robin’s niece has asked for special restrictions. Category I corresponds to name and current enrollment.

As a result, you are unable to even confirm that his niece attends the University of Puget Sound. No address, telephone number, or current enrollment can be released. As a keeper of education records you must follow the student’s directive.

The best response is, “I am sorry, I don’t have information on any such student.”
A Few Highlights

* In general, do not release any address information to off-campus inquiries.
* Check a student’s directory restrictions before you answer any questions.
* Students may release any information by providing a signed release.
* Remember you can find the University FERPA policy on the web.
* Information viewed on a computer screen should be treated with the same confidentiality as paper records.
* Be sure to clear your computer screen when it will be unattended.
Know Educational Rights (FERPA)
Education Records Policy

www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-offices/academic-advising-registrar/know-educational-rights
You have now completed the FERPA lesson!

As you can see educational records are all around us. Each of us needs to do our part to keep this information secure, and protect students’ rights.

Watch the WEB Page for FERPA updates. Should you have questions, contact the Registrar staff.

Thank you for giving us your attention, and bearing with us while we present a very serious subject in a humorous fashion.