



# ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

*Office of the University Registrar*

## **WHAT IS FERPA?**

FERPA, the *Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974*, is a federal law that sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. It allows students to view and request correction to their education records. FERPA also limits what information can be disclosed about a student's record.

## **WHAT ARE EDUCATION RECORDS?**

Under FERPA, education records are any records, files, documents, or other material which contains information directly related to a student and is maintained by the institution, or a person acting on behalf of the institution. The following items are not considered education records – medical records, law enforcement records, employment records (unless employment is conditional upon individual being a student, i.e. Teaching/Graduate Assistants), alumni records and sole possession documents. An example of a sole possession document would be a private note maintained by a staff member who is the maker of the note and kept in his/her sole possession and not accessible to others. It is designed to aid the memory of the maker. If the note is shared with another person, it is probably no longer considered sole possession. Once shared, the note could be considered part of the student education record. Sole possession documents do not include items such as grades, grade books or student evaluations.

## **WHAT IS DIRECTORY INFORMATION AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY?**

Directory information at Illinois State University includes the following: student's name, address (local & home), telephone listing (local & home), electronic email address, date and place of birth, major field of study, dates of attendance, grade level, enrollment status (e.g. undergraduate or graduate, full-time or part-time), participation in officially recognized activities or sports, weight or height of members of athletic teams, target graduation date, degrees, honors and awards received, and the most recent educational agency or institution attended. Unless a student has placed a request on file to withhold directory information with the Office of the University Registrar then, at its discretion, Illinois State University may provide directory information in accordance with the provisions of FERPA.

## **WHAT IS NON-DIRECTORY INFORMATION AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY?**

All information that does not fall under directory information that is directly related to a particular student is considered non-directory information; including but not limited to: University Identification Number, Social Security Number, grades, GPA (semester and cumulative), class schedule, number of hours enrolled and/or earned and class rank.

## **WHAT SHOULD I SAY ABOUT A STUDENT THAT HAS RESTRICTED THEIR INFORMATION TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION?**

If a student has restricted the directory information on their record and a faculty or staff member is asked about the student by an outside entity, they should respond as they normally would if the individual in question never attended the University,

*I have no information on that individual*

The directory restriction message *Student Rqst'd Data Restriction or Data Restriction* will appear at the top of individual mainframe screens if a student has restricted his/her information. These individuals will be noted on My.IllinoisState faculty class lists and grade rosters as well. If you are unsure as to a student's restriction status, please contact the Office of the University Registrar at (309) 438-2188 to verify if the student's information is restricted.

## **WHEN CAN FACULTY OR STAFF SPEAK TO PARENTS ABOUT A STUDENT RECORD?**

Faculty and staff should not speak to parents without first checking with the Office of the University Registrar to verify that the student has signed a FERPA Waiver. Explain that federal law (FERPA) requires the institution to hold education records as confidential unless the student signs this release form or unless other specific tax requirements are met. If a signed release is on file, Registrar staff will indicate what parts of the student record may be discussed and with whom this information may be shared with. Before discussing a student's progress or record, it is a courtesy to inform the student.

## **CAN FACULTY AND STAFF SHARE PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE STUDENT?**

It is important to first check with the Office of the University Registrar to check if the student's record is restricted. As long as the student's record is not restricted, observations regarding the student can be shared so long as they do not contain non-directory information. For example, you cannot report that Reggie Redbird has received an A in your class. However, you can offer the personal observation that Reggie Redbird is a hard worker.

### **DO I NEED A WRITTEN RELEASE FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?**

If personally identifiable information (such as a grade, GPA, class rank) is included in the letter, then a written release is required. A release form for letters of recommendation can be found on the Office of the University Registrar website at [registrar.illinoisstate.edu/ferpa](http://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/ferpa). Letters of recommendation that only contain personal observations or knowledge, or directory information about the student, do not require a written release from the student as long as he/she has not restricted his/her directory information.

### **CAN I POST GRADES OR RETURN ASSIGNMENTS IN A PUBLIC PLACE?**

Posting of non-directory information, including but not limited to grades, in a public place without the written consent of the student is a violation of the law. Grades should not be posted in hallways and graded assignments should not be left in hallways. Acceptable methods of notifying students about grades can be found at:

<http://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/StudentPrivacyandPostingGrades.pdf>

### **CAN I CIRCULATE A CLASS LIST FOR ATTENDANCE?**

A list should not be used if it contains non-directory information such as the student's UID number.

### **WHAT IF THERE IS A HEALTH OR SAFETY EMERGENCY THAT REQUIRES A RELEASE?**

You may release non-directory information in a health/safety emergency. Please document what the emergency was and to whom the information was released. After the emergency provide the information to the University Registrar. If the emergency is on campus and you need assistance contact the University Police at (309) 438-8631.

### **WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT FERPA?**

You can find out more information regarding FERPA by visiting the following websites:

Office of the University Registrar:

<http://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/ferpa>

US Department of Education:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>