

FERPA FAQ

1. What is an educational record?
 - a. Educational records generally include any **records** which ***contain information directly related to the student that is in the possession of the University.*** The records may be in printed form, handwritten, computerized or electronic records, magnetic tape, e-mail, film or some other medium.
2. Absent a signed student FERPA waiver, what information may I disclose about a student?
 - a. **Provided the student has not refused the disclosure of their Directory Information**, you may disclose the student's Directory Information. The University defines Directory Information as follows:
 - i. The Student's name
 - ii. The Student's address, phone number and electronic mail address
 - iii. The Student's major field of study
 - iv. Place of birth
 - v. The Student's achievements, degrees, academic awards, or honors
 - vi. The Student's weight and height, if a member of an athletic team
 - vii. The Student's previous educational institutions
 - viii. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
 - ix. Dates of attendance
 - x. The Student's photograph
3. How can I tell if a student has refused disclosure of their Directory Information?
 - a. A red "FERPA Flag" is placed in their PeopleSoft record.
4. Can I release information from a student's educational record to a parent?
 - a. It depends, if the student has signed a waiver in favor of their parent, then yes. In addition, if the student is a dependent for tax purposes under the IRS Rules, the University may release information from the student's educational record to the parent(s). The University requires evidence of dependent status (redacted copies accepted).
5. A student is requesting I release information from their educational record to another institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, do I need a signed waiver from the student?
 - a. No, FERPA permits the disclosure of educational records to officials of another postsecondary institution where the student seeks or intends to enroll as long as the disclosure is for the purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer.
6. A student has asked me to write a letter of recommendation for a scholarship or for an employer, may I do so without a signed waiver from the student?
 - a. It depends, if you are only disclosing your personal observations or Directory Information (as discussed above in Questions 2 and 3) you do not need a signed waiver. However, if the request includes disclosure of grades, or other

information contained in their educational record you need a signed waiver. A best practice would be to simply request a signed waiver from the student.

7. Does the student have a right to inspect and review the letter of recommendation? Yes, the letter of recommendation becomes part of the student's educational record. Accordingly, unless the student ***has waived their right in writing to view the letter or recommendation*** they have a right to request to inspect and review the letter of recommendation.
8. Where can I find more information regarding FERPA?
 - a. <http://www.registrar.pitt.edu/ferpa.html>
 - b. <http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-08-01.html>
 - c. <http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/procedure/09/09-08-01.html>