

PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDE TO FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act)



FERPA: A Parent's Guide

Delta State University is concerned about the privacy of your student's records. When your student was in elementary and high school, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gave you and your student rights to access and control your student's educational records. Now that your student is in college, these same laws transfer ownership of the records directly to your son or daughter.

According to FERPA, college students, regardless of their age, are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. While parents understandably have an interest in a student's academic progress, they are not automatically granted access to a student's records without written consent of the student. Parents are encouraged to consult with the student if academic information is needed.

What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (also known as the Buckley Amendment), affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. Specifically, it affords students the right to:

1. inspect and review their education records;
2. request the amendment of inaccurate or misleading records;
3. consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their education record; and
4. file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures of the institution to comply with this law.

Delta State University strives to fully comply with this law by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from these records. FERPA authorizes the release of "Directory Information" without the student's prior written consent under certain conditions set forth in the Act.

What is "Directory Information?"

Under the Mississippi Public Records Act, the Office of the Registrar is required to release directory information as requested.

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.

Following guidelines provided by the FERPA Compliance Office, DSU defines the following as Directory Information: *Name; Affirmation of whether currently enrolled; School, college, department, major; Dates of enrollment; Full or part-time status; Degrees received; Honors received; Local address and phone number; Permanent address and phone number; Email address; Participation in officially recognized activities and sports; Weight and height of members of athletic teams*

Releasing Information: If your student would like to sign a waiver to release their academic information to a parent/guardian, please direct them to complete and download the release form by going to the (Registrar Webpage-Policies-Academic Information Release). Once the form is complete, please have your student to return it to the Registrar's office so that it can be attached to their internal documentation for the university. The form can be found [here](#).

Other Disclosures: Be aware that FERPA also allows schools to disclose records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 C.F.R. § 99.31)-educational interest, transfer institutions on students behalf, audits, financial aid, accrediting organizations, subpoena, and health/safety emergencies.

Questions About Access to Student Records

We have provided the following answers to frequently asked questions to clarify elements of FERPA.

How can I get a copy of my student's grades?

- The quickest, easiest way for you to receive information about your student's grades, financial statement, or other student information is for him/her to provide it to you. Students can look information up online, print it off, and give or e-mail a copy to their parents. Student records are available on their DSU Online Services account. Your student may also request that a copy of their official transcript be sent to you directly from the Office of the Registrar.

If my student is a legal dependent, why can't I get a copy of his records?

- FERPA requires that access to a college student's records must be granted by approval of the student. You can, however, receive information about your student if you submit proof that he/she is a dependent. Contact the Office of the Registrar for information regarding this process. Students can sign a release form to grant you access to financial information. This form can be found [here](#).

I want to visit with my student's academic adviser about his/her academic performance. Can this be done via e-mail or over the phone?

- As a matter of policy, Delta State University does not release private information over the phone or by e-mail. This includes information from the student's academic adviser. Advisers would require written permission from the student in order to discuss information with parents and a consent form must be filed in the Registrar's Office.

What information is covered under FERPA and what is not?

- FERPA regulations protect a student's "education records," which include grades, finances, and discipline records. Physical and mental health records are covered by other University policies, federal law, and professional ethics. In general, professionals working in these areas will not release student information except in emergency situations. Your son or daughter can choose to release information from these records to a third party, but this is done on a case-by-case basis. They can talk to the practitioner or the records office in the Student Health and Counseling Center for medical and counseling records; to the VP of Student Affairs for discipline records; or to Residence Life for housing information.

Will I be contacted if my student is sick or hurt? What if my student is in academic trouble, or facing disciplinary action?

- In most cases, the University will not contact you or provide medical, academic, or disciplinary information without your student's permission. In the case of an extreme emergency, where the health of your son or daughter is in serious jeopardy, or if there is a concern that he/she poses a threat to him or herself or to someone else, the University will contact you. As a general guideline, if your student is able to communicate about the situation, it is up to him/her to decide whether and how to discuss the issues.

Isn't there a FERPA provision that colleges and universities can contact parents if a student violates alcohol or drug policies?

- FERPA regulations allow, but do not require, higher education institutions to provide notice to parents when a student violates federal, state or local laws related to alcohol or drugs.

Where can I find out more about FERPA?

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for overseeing FERPA. See the Department's Web site for additional information:

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

University Contacts:

- * Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs: 662-846-4010
- * Vice President of Student Affairs: 662-846-4150
- * University Registrar: 662-846-4040
- * Student Business Services: 662-846-4698
- * Student Financial Aid: 662-846-4670
- * Counseling and Testing: 662-846-4690

