

Tech Snacks: FERPA and Beyond

What is FERPA?

Family Education Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of education records. College students must be permitted to inspect their own education records, request amendments of the records the student believes are inaccurate, and the right to control disclosures of their records. School officials may not disclose personally identifiable information about students, nor permit inspection of their records without written permission unless such action is covered by certain exceptions.

Directory Information

One of those exceptions permitted by FERPA is the release of **directory information** to parties outside the institution. Directory information is a student's educational record not generally considered harmful or invasive of privacy if disclosed.

The University considers the following to be directory information:

- Name
- Local and Home Address
- Telephone Number
- Email Address
- Class Ranking (FR, SO, JR, SR, Grad)
- Majors, Degrees and Certificates Awarded
- Honors, Awards, Activities and Affiliations

Directory information can **NEVER** include:

- Social Security Number
- Student ID Number
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Gender
- GPA
- Religion
- Student Schedules

Note: Students may withhold directory information by notifying the Registrar in writing. A confidentiality flag will call for MSUN not to release any or all information, thus any future requests for such information from non-institutional persons or organizations will be refused.

In most instances all other student education records may not be released without written consent of the student, other than to University officials on a need-to-know basis. "Need-to-know" is a basic principle that means that your access to student information must be necessary for the completion of your responsibilities as a University employee.

FERPA for Faculty

Faculty need to be aware of issues when dealing with students' educational records. Confidential information can only be given directly to the student or someone they have authorized; this must be in writing.

Do not put homework or tests in an open area, common box or file cabinet for students to sort through to find their work.

Do have a departmental assistant or other employee keep the homework or tests in a secure location, and have the students show a picture ID when picking up their graded work.

Do not post grades listed by any part of the student's ID number or name.

Do assign students a random number shared between you and only the student. Use random order for grade sheets if posting outside your door. (Better yet, just enter your grades in the Brightspace gradebook!)

Do not release confidential information to parents about a student unless the student has given you a signed release.

FERPA Releases

A copy of the written release **MUST** be given to the Registrar's Office for the student's educational record. The release must:

- Specify the records to be released.
- State the purpose of the disclosure.
- Identify the party or parties to whom the disclosure may be made.
- Be signed and dated by the student.

The student may list an expiration date for the release.

If you are ever in doubt or have any questions, please contact the MSU-Northern Registrar at 265-4191.

Other Commonly Asked Registrar Questions

- Can I add students to a Brightspace classlist that aren't directly pulled from Banner?
- Can I change a start date or end date for a class?
- What is the policy and process for Incompletes?
- What do I do if I need to change a final grade after it has been submitted?