

What Faculty Advisors Need to Know About FERPA

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law intended to protect the privacy of student records. All schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education must comply with this law.

Under the law, parents retain certain rights until a child turns 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom rights have been transferred are termed “eligible students.”

Eligible students have the right to:

- Inspect and review their educational records maintained by the college. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons of distance, it is impossible for eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Request that a college correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the college refuses to amend the record, the student has the right to a formal hearing.

Generally, the college must have written permission from the eligible student to release any information from the student’s education record, with the exception that information may be released to certain persons under certain conditions.

In addition, schools may disclose, without consent, specific directory information, including the student’s name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, students must be given the opportunity to opt out of directory information.

As an advisor, your best course of action is to:

1. Refer anyone requesting student information (directory or otherwise) to the Dean of Students
2. Refrain from sharing any information about your advisees, except internally on a need to know basis
3. Secure all advising files, treating them as confidential documents

Find FERPA information at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>