

What is it, and why should you care?

FERPA is a federal law that governs the privacy of student educational records, access to those records, and disclosure of information from them.

As a student, the following primary rights are protected under FERPA:

- Your right to review and inspect your educational records
- Your right to seek to have your educational records amended or corrected
- Your right to control disclosure of certain portions of your educational records
- Your right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office

What & where are educational records?

- An educational record is any record in any medium maintained by the University of Wisconsin–Madison, which is directly related to a student.
- Information exists in both paper and electronic format, in the Office of the Registrar and in other locations/offices around campus.

What are not educational records?*

- Personal notes of the University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty and staff
- Medical and counseling records used solely for treatment
- University Police records
- Financial records of a parent or spouse
- Confidential letters and/or statements of recommendation for admission, employment or honorary recognition, for which you have waived the right to inspect and review
- Observable behavior

*Various guidelines affect the disclosure from and access to records on campus. Please check with the holder of records for additional information.

Reviewing and inspecting your records

Educational records are not stored in a central location on campus. Requests to review your records must be made in writing and presented to the appropriate office. That office will have up to 45 days to honor your request. For most students these offices will include the Office of the Registrar, school or college dean, major department, Student Financial Aid, Dean of Students or University Housing.

Respect the rights of others

The University of Wisconsin–Madison expects that you will respect the rights of faculty and other students as you participate in the educational process. Follow the guidelines below to ensure the privacy of other students:

- When e-mailing groups of students, always use blind copies.
- Do not post personal information about other students on Web sites or share personal information via e-mail.

DISCLOSURE OF DIRECTORY INFORMATION

Directory Information (public records)

The University of Wisconsin–Madison, in accordance with FERPA, has designated the following categories of information about individual students as public, or directory, information. This information will be routinely released to any inquirer unless you specifically request that all or part of the following list be withheld:

- Name
- Addresses
- Telephone numbers
- E-mail addresses
- Date of birth
- Major field(s) of study and number of academic credits earned toward degree
- Attendance status (including current year, credit load, and full- or part-time status)
- Dates of attendance (matriculation and withdrawal dates)
- Degrees and awards received (type of degree and date granted)
- Most recent previous educational agency or institution attended
- Participation in officially recognized activities
- Participation in athletics and height and weight of athletes

Non-Directory Information (private records)

Some examples of private information (considered protected by UW–Madison) include, but are not limited to:

- Social Security Number
- Campus identification number
- Place of birth
- Ethnicity
- Residency status
- Current class schedule and courses completed
- Grades and related information
- Advisor's name
- Disciplinary actions
- Balance on food account
- Biometric Record

Please remember that you share an equal responsibility with the university for protection of your privacy. Be sure to read the section entitled "Protect Your Own Records" in this brochure to learn more about ways to protect your privacy.

- If you participate in a course that uses a course management system (Learn@UW, Moodle, etc.) you may have access to personal information and academic work produced by other students and faculty members. Examples include class lists, discussion board postings, drafts of papers and other work produced in the course. Federal law and UW–Madison policy require that you must not reveal any information about classmates, course work content, or its authors to anyone outside the course.

RELEASING YOUR RECORDS

Who can request access to your records?

Under FERPA, prior written consent must be obtained before a student's educational record may be disclosed to a third party, with some exceptions. Groups or individuals who are exempt and do not require written permission include the following:

- University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty and staff with a legitimate educational need-to-know
- Entities performing duties on behalf of the University
- Representatives of agencies or organizations from which you have received financial aid, including banks or other lending agencies from which you have guaranteed student loans
- Other schools to which you are transferring, or have transferred
- Individuals or groups specifically exempted from the prior consent requirement
- Federal and state officials, organizations conducting studies on behalf of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and accrediting organizations

Instances in which prior written consent is not required for release of your record:

- Requests when there is an articulable and significant threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals
- Requests in accordance with a lawful subpoena or court order
- Requests for release of directory information, if not restricted by you

Withholding your public records (directory information) and disclosing private information:

Students can elect to withhold the release of any or all directory information. Students can also authorize the release of their private information to others, including scholarship agencies, potential employers, etc.

If you wish to withhold your public information, or release private information to a third party, please follow the links at http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa/student_ferpa.php.

You can also place a *third party hold* on your record if you want to **receive less junk mail**. Go to the Personal Information section of the Student Center on My-UW.

Protect your own records

You play an important role in the confidentiality of your educational records. Please take the following steps to ensure safety and security:

- Know what information you have elected to withhold and/or disclose, and review it regularly. Visit http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa/student_ferpa.php for information.
- Be aware that withholding directory information can affect you in unexpected ways (we may be unable to provide degree information to prospective employers, for example; or, your name might not appear in the commencement brochure, etc.).
- Be careful about sharing private information via wireless technology (cell phones and wireless internet).
- Take caution in the use of Web sites, electronic communication and social technology software (Facebook, MySpace, blogs, etc.). Do not reveal information that compromises your privacy or the privacy of others.
- Educate yourself about safe computing and protecting your privacy; visit www.cio.wisc.edu/security/ for details.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Will my parents have access to my information?

Answer: No. Parents (and/or guardians) do not have access to student academic information without your written consent. We encourage parents to talk with their student about grades, classes, balances on food accounts, and other private information. You should never share your NetID and password with your parents or others.

Question: Will you be contacting my parents if I get in trouble?

Answer: Your parents (and/or guardians) would likely be contacted if you are transported to the detox unit of a hospital due to use of alcohol. They may also be contacted in other situations involving an articulable and significant threat to your health and safety or that of others, or if your disciplinary status is such that further violations may result in suspension.

Question: Will the university contact me by e-mail or phone to request my personal information?

Answer: No. The university will never ask you to reveal your NetID and password, or other private information (restricted data), through e-mail, phone, text or other means. If you are ever unsure whether an e-mail message is legitimate, do not respond to it! Instead, contact the DoIT Help Desk at 608-264-HELP (4357) and ask for advice. Visit this Web site for more information: www.cio.wisc.edu/security/scams.aspx

Question: What should I do if I notice a fellow student behaving in an unusual manner, who seems troubled, or is acting in a disruptive way?

Answer: Speak with your instructor or contact the Dean of Students Office about behavior that concerns you. For immediate threats, call 911.

Helpful Web sites and contact information

Office of the Registrar

<http://registrar.wisc.edu>
Phone: 608-262-3811
E-mail: reginfo@em.wisc.edu

Office of Campus Information Security

www.cio.wisc.edu/security/

Offices of the Dean of Students

www.wisc.edu/students
Phone: 608-263-5700
E-mail: dean@odos.wisc.edu

University Health Services

www.uhs.wisc.edu
Phone: 608-265-5600

University Police Department

www.uwpd.wisc.edu
Phone (non-emergency): 608-264-2677
Phone (emergency): call 911

FERPA requires that students be advised of their rights concerning their educational records and the categories of information that the University of Wisconsin-Madison has designated as public or directory information.

It is the policy of University of Wisconsin-Madison to comply fully and fairly with FERPA. Basic university policy concerning compliance with FERPA is contained in a document adopted in April 1999 and entitled University of Wisconsin-Madison Policy on Student Records.

Questions or concerns? Please contact us

Office of the Registrar
Phone: 608-262-3811
E-mail: reginfo@em.wisc.edu
<http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa>

For information about student data privacy visit <http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa>

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is an equal opportunity and affirmative action educator and employer. We promote excellence through diversity in all programs.

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Protecting Your Student Data

FERPA

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act



THE UNIVERSITY
of
WISCONSIN
MADISON