

# What you should know about FERPA

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## What is FERPA and for what purpose does it exist?



The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (FERPA) is a federal law. The purpose of this law is to afford all post-secondary students certain rights pertaining to their educational records.

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## What does FERPA guarantee?



- FERPA gives students the right to
  - inspect and review their own records
  - request amendments to their record
  - have some control over the disclosure or release of personally identifiable information from their records

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## Who is responsible for seeing that FERPA is upheld?



- Generally speaking, all Institute employees who have access to records are responsible for guarding the confidentiality of student records.
- Specifically, requests for access to records, requests for amendment of records, and complaints regarding any violation of FERPA are to be filed with the Office of the Registrar.

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## Disclosure or release of student information



- Institute employees are not allowed to disclose information (other than "Directory Information") without the student's written consent except under **very** limited conditions.

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## What is Directory Information?



- "Directory Information" is information not generally considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The Georgia Institute of Technology considers the following information to be "Directory Information:"
  - Name, address, e-mail address and telephone listing
  - Level (graduate or undergraduate)
  - Field of study (major)
  - Dates of attendance
  - Degrees and date awarded
- "Directory Information" cannot include student identification numbers or social security numbers.
- **Students can also prohibit the release of all Directory Information.**

## How can I know if a student has asked that no information be released?

- Students who have asked that no information be released have the word “CONFIDENTIAL” displayed at the top of every form in BANNER.
- “CONFIDENTIAL” also displays next to the student’s name on the web forms that you will use when assigning grades, looking for address information, etc.

## Parents are not exempt from FERPA restrictions

- Parents do not have the right to access records of students over the age of 18 at the post-secondary level except in these three cases:
- They have the written consent of the student
- In response to a subpoena (the student must be notified that records were released)
- They can prove that they claimed the student as a dependent on their most recent Federal Income Tax form

## What should you do if you are not sure if you can release information?

- When in doubt, saying nothing is your best option
- It is far better to NOT release information than to release information incorrectly



## Which requests should you forward to the Registrar’s Office?

- All requests for
  - transcripts
  - certification requests – verification of enrollment for lenders, health insurance, good student car insurance discount forms, etc.
  - the academic record of any student

## Conclusions

- No one can possibly know every detail of FERPA and how it is to be applied.
- When in doubt, DON’T release information!
- Failure to comply with FERPA can cause legal difficulty for Georgia Tech and for you personally.
- QUESTIONS? E-mail [comments@registrar.gatech.edu](mailto:comments@registrar.gatech.edu)