

FERPA FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVANCEMENT

QUICK GUIDE



The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their educational records. More information on FERPA can be found on the web at ferpa.mercyhurst.edu.

◆ BASICS ◆

The College is not permitted to release any information from a student's educational record without their written permission. An educational record is a record maintained by the College that contains personally identifiable information directly related to a student. Educational records include transcripts, conduct records, probation/suspension status and many other types of documents.

One exception to the general rule is for directory information. The College is permitted to share directory information about a student, unless the student has specifically asked us to not share this information. This is why we are permitted to publish student names, emails and campus numbers in the online directory. The Registrar's Office keeps a current list of those students who do not want even their directory information shared.

Below are some tips and frequently asked questions that should assist your office in complying with this federal statute.

◆ DO NOT ◆

- Link a student's name and social security number or student id number in any public manner
- Provide anyone with lists of enrolled students for any commercial purposes
- Provide anyone with student schedules or assist anyone other than College employees in finding a student on campus
- Assume it is okay to share student progress, grades, information, or status with a parent
- Share information from a student's educational record with anyone at the College unless that person has a legitimate educational interest in the information, as defined in the Mercyhurst College FERPA Policy
- Publish or share any student information until you check with the Registrar's Office to make sure the student has not opted out of having this type of directory information shared

◆ FAQ's ◆

◆Q. What do I do if a media outlet calls requesting information about a specific student?

◆A. You must determine if the information being requested is directory or non-directory. If you determine it is a request for directory information, you should call the Registrar's Office (ext. 2250) and ask if the student has opted out of having directory information shared. If they have opted out, you can not share **any** information about the student without their written permission. If they have not opted out, you can share directory information only.

If they are requesting non-directory information (transcripts, grades, conduct records, etc.), you cannot release this information without written permission from the student. The written permission from the student must specifically address what the student is agreeing to release and to whom.

Note: Nothing in FERPA "requires" you to give information to the media. Rather, you may share directory information when students have not opted out and you may share non-directory information with a student's written permission.

◆Q. What is directory information?

◆A. Mercyhurst College has defined directory information to include name, address, e-mail address, telephone number, dates of attendance, class standing, enrollment status (undergraduate, graduate; full or part-time), major or minor fields of study, degrees conferred (including dates), honors received, participation in officially recognized sports and activities, height and weight of athletic team members, photographs, date and place of birth, and most recent educational agency or institution attended.

◆Q. Can I share information in an emergency situation?

◆A. FERPA permits sharing information without the student's consent in emergency situations when the institution determines that the information is "necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals". If an emergency arises with a student, please call Police & Safety (ext. 2541).

◆Q. Can I share information about a student with other school employees/officials?

◆A. If the other school employee/official has a legitimate educational interest in the information, you can share it. The Mercyhurst College FERPA Policy defines who has a legitimate educational interest.

◆Q. Can I share information about a student who has graduated?

◆A. A student's educational records are protected by FERPA for their entire life. However, only the information relating to their time here at Mercyhurst is protected under FERPA. Once a student graduates and becomes an alum, we are free to publish their post-graduation accomplishments.