

FERPA 101

For Faculty and Staff

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** was passed in 1974 and it applies to all educational agencies or institutions, including the University of Alaska (UA), that receive any funds administered by the U.S. Department of Education. It grants specific rights to students and it protects the privacy of their educational records.

Students' rights under FERPA:

- To see the records that UA maintains on them.
- To seek a correction of records and/or append a statement to them.
- To withhold the release of the portion of their record that is defined as directory information.
- To file a complaint with the **Family Policy Compliance Office**.

UA defines directory information as name; email address; hometown (city and state); dates of attendance; major field of study; degrees and certificates received; participation in officially recognized university activities; academic and co-curricular awards; and weight and height of students on athletic teams.

An educational record is any information related to a student and maintained by the institution or a party acting on behalf of the institution. If it contains the student's name or other identifying information, then it's an educational record. The only exception is "sole possession records" which an individual keeps, as a memory aid, which are not available to other faculty or staff. Such records are potentially discoverable with a legal subpoena, but they are not subject to review under FERPA.

If the student has a confidentiality or privacy flag in Banner or UAOnline, they have requested that UA **withhold directory information**. This means that no information - directory or otherwise - can be released without their written permission.

At the postsecondary level, parents have no inherent rights to their child's records. The student must provide **written consent** before anyone at UA can release any non-directory information to parents, spouses, or other family members. The student may elect to release certain kinds of information (e.g. financial) without releasing others (e.g. academic).

It is acceptable to write to the email marked as "preferred" in Banner and UAOnline. However, students are told that it is their responsibility to check (or set up a forward) from their @alaska.edu account. Some of our systems are only able to utilize the @alaska.edu accounts and students who ignore them may miss critical information. Faculty and staff may only use their @alaska.edu accounts when communicating to or about students.

UA requires that all faculty and staff with access to student records renew their FERPA training each year. Training is available within the employee services tab of UAOnline.

Questions about FERPA? Contact Registrar Holly McDonald by email at hamcdonald@alaska.edu or by phone at (907) 474-5879

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