

Fitchburg State University's FERPA Policy

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), better known as the Buckley Amendment, requires that institutions of higher education strictly protect the privacy rights of all students who are or have been in attendance. In practice, this means that information contained in the student's educational record can be shared only with school officials who have a legitimate educational interest and a legitimate need to know such information to fulfill their professional responsibilities. For these purposes, "legitimate educational interest" shall mean an educationally related purpose that has a directly identifiable educational relationship to the student involved.

1. School Officials

For purposes of FERPA, school officials are those members of an institution who act in the student's educational interest within the limitations of their "need to know." The following people are defined as having a legitimate need for access to any educational record for students under their jurisdiction: the President and the Vice President/Provost, the Dean of the Enrollment Services, the Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education, the Dean of Students, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, The Registrar and the Director of Academic Advising and all Academic Deans. Where appropriate, these school officials may, at their discretion, choose to share such information with university faculty or staff on a need-to-know basis.

2. Directory Information

Directory information is general information contained in the educational record of a student that generally would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Public directory information as defined by FERPA includes: student's name, addresses (campus, home, e-mail), telephone listings, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, dates of attendance, class year, enrollment status (e.g., undergraduate or graduate; full-time or part-time), participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, degrees, honors and awards received, and most recent educational institution attended. School officials may, at their discretion, release directory information to third parties unless the student specifically directs that it be withheld.

3. Registrar's Office

The Registrar's Office is the keeper of all educational records and treats the student's educational record with the utmost confidentiality. The Registrar is responsible for all the educational records and will share non-directory information about individual students with other school officials only on a need-to-know basis.

4. Faculty

All official records created by Fitchburg State faculty in fulfilling their professional obligations (e.g., grades and comments on graded papers) are protected by FERPA. Informal records maintained by Fitchburg State faculty (e.g., notes about meetings with students) that are kept under the sole possession of the faculty member, that have not been created with the assistance of anyone else, and that are accessible only to a temporary substitute do not fall under FERPA's umbrella. Nevertheless, such informal records should be shared with third parties only on a need-to-know basis.

Faculty who serve as academic advisors will have access to their advisees' academic records. They will also be notified of any change in an advisee's academic status. All faculty will have access to a student's class schedule for the purpose of overriding a registration restriction.

5. Academic Advising Center

The Director of Academic Advising may share a student's educational record with members of the staff of the Academic Advising Center when it is deemed appropriate for them to have such information in the execution of their duties.

6. Student Affairs Staff

The Dean of Students may share a student's educational record with members of the Student Affairs staff when it is deemed appropriate for them to have such information in the execution of their duties.

7. Admissions

FERPA does not apply to the records of applicants for admission who are denied acceptance to Fitchburg State, nor does it apply to applicants who are accepted but choose not to attend Fitchburg State. Admitted students are covered by FERPA once they have enrolled. A student is considered enrolled on the first day of classes.

8. Athletics

The Dean of Students will share information about the academic status of student athletes with the Director of Athletics for the purposes of ensuring NCAA compliance.

The Dean of Students may share judicial information with the Director of Athletics in support of the Athletic Code of Conduct. S/he may also share information of a serious nature about a student when it is relevant to that student's status as an athlete.

9. Other Persons

Faculty serving on university committees where legitimate "need to know" exists may have access to educational records. Faculty members of registered honor societies may have access to student educational records for the sole purpose of determining eligibility for membership on the basis that they are acting in an official university capacity that is integral to the educational function of the university. In both cases, the legitimate educational interests of students and the university have been served.

10. Official Agents

Fitchburg State University may share certain personally identifiable information with official agents. An official agent of the university is a person or organization performing a business function or service on behalf of the institution (a function or service that the institution normally would perform itself). All official agents of Fitchburg State University have signed an agency agreement which stipulates that they will adhere to FERPA guidelines.

11. University Agents

Parents may obtain non-directory information (e.g. grades, academic standing, etc.) at the discretion of the institution and after it is determined that the student is legally dependent on either parent.

Note to students: If you wish to have your student information shared with a single area of the university (student account, financial aid, registrar/grades), rather than a blanket disclosure, you must contact the individual office(s).