



# Office of Student Records *News*

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## The Basics of FERPA

The Office of Student Records provides guidance and support with regard to FERPA (Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act). Now that the University of Maine System requires annual FERPA training for employees, awareness of FERPA is higher, however, violations continue to occur due to negligence, unawareness, or perhaps misunderstanding. OSR strives to educate the campus community on best practices when it comes to FERPA. To that end, this issue is dedicated to some of the FERPA basics.

**What is FERPA?** The spirit of FERPA is that university students who are currently enrolled and alumni must be permitted to inspect their own education records. These records may be disclosed only after the student has given written consent with some exceptions.



School officials have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records and shall not disclose personally identifiable information or allow review of records without written permission. Even though directory information may be released without consent, the law does not require it.

**Understanding the terminology is an important part of FERPA.** Below are some notable definitions.

- **School Official** - anyone employed by the university in administrative, supervisory, academic or research or support staff position including law enforcement and health staff. Any contractor, consultant, volunteer, or other person who the University has outsourced services.
- **Education Record** - Any record containing personally identifiable information maintained by an institution that is directly related to a student or students.
- **Sole Possession Notes** - Reminders that one school official writes and keeps in their possession and shared only with a temporary substitute. In other words, notes taken in conjunction with any other person are **not** sole possession notes.

**What is Directory Information?** FERPA allows universities to classify part of the education record as directory information. Importantly, directory information does not require a student's written consent in order to publicly share it unless the student has taken formal action to restrict its release.

**What is your role as an employee?** Part of what you do every day is records management. You are our strongest and weakest link in securing data. It is all of our jobs to protect data and be sure we are using, storing and disposing of it properly.

### What can you do to ensure privacy?

- Secure file cabinets, backpacks or briefcases, devices and screens. If protected school records are available on a device in your possession, be sure to password protect that device and those accounts. This would include phones, tablets, computers, and any other device where those records are attainable.
- Do not leave screens on or papers out that may allow others in the area to view grades or personal protected information.
- Do not share passwords to devices or accounts where FERPA protected information might be available.
- Consider using randomly assigned numbers or codes to display student grades.
- Keep any personal notes relating to individual students separate from education records. These records count as sole possession records and do not require disclosure to a requesting student depending on the content. Keep only those individual student records necessary for fulfillment of your responsibilities.
- Do not share student information including grades or GPA with other faculty or staff unless responsibilities warrant a need to know.
- Student grade information should not be laid out in a room or in view of others.
- If a device or papers are lost that might have protected information, contact the UMS Information Security Office.



### Keep in Mind:

- We have a legal responsibility to protect student confidentiality.
- Only access what you need to know to do your job.
- Contact **UMS Information Security** if a breach of privacy has occurred.
- When in doubt, check with OSR.



Many more important details and resources about FERPA are available on the [OSR Website](#)

## February

- February 1 - Deadline for May 2020 graduation application.
- February 3 - Send updated list of fall missing grades to colleges.  
- Summer University 2020 enrollment begins.
- February 6 - Graduation list to be made final for December 2019 graduates.
- February 13 - Advisor and concentration listings distributed for updating.
- February 17 - President's Day- No Classes
- February 18 - Notification of missing grades to students and list to colleges.
- February 20 - Classes dropped on or before this date will not appear on transcript.  
- Deadline for assigning advisors.
- February 28 - Spring 2020 Immunization holds placed and email sent for students non-compliant with immunization law.  
- Enrollment appointments & PINs for Fall 2020 assigned.  
- Reserved seats information due in OSR.

## March

- March 5 - List of students with enrollment holds sent to colleges.
- March 9 - Fall 2020 Schedule of classes available in MaineStreet and Wish List validation begins.
- March 13 - May 2020 degree candidate lists and transcripts provided to colleges.
- March 16 - Spring recess begins.
- March 23 - Classes resume.  
- Fall 2020 enrollment begins.

## April

- April 8 - Notifications will be sent to students with Fall incomplete grades; lists sent to colleges (will lapse May 15).  
- Last day to withdraw from a class and receive W grade. Withdrawn classes after this date will receive failing grade.
- April 28 - Spring semester Final Grade rosters available.
- April 29 - Open enrollment for Fall 2020 begins.



Readers are encouraged to submit information or ask questions by contacting Linda Reid at 581-1318 or send email to [linda@maine.edu](mailto:linda@maine.edu)

### *For the Record*

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