

## FERPA Quick Guide for Faculty

**Q: What's FERPA?**

**A:** FERPA, the *Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974* allows students to view and request correction to their educational records. FERPA also limits what can be disclosed about a student's record.

**Q: What do I do if I get an off-campus call (often from a parent) asking for information about a student's educational record (grades, attendance, performance in class, etc.)?**

**A:** Explain that federal law (FERPA) requires the institution to hold educational records confidential unless the student signs a release form or other specific tax requirements are met. In either case, before releasing any information, you must verify that proper documentation is on file at the Office of the University Registrar. To do so, contact the Student Services and Referral Center, Moulton Hall 107, 438-2188. This office directly handles the releases and verifies that specific tax requirements are met. If you're up to it, suggest nicely that it is generally best for parents to have a frank discussion with the (adult) student whenever possible rather than working indirectly with faculty (you).

**Q: How do I know if the student has signed a release?**

**A:** Contact the Office of the University Registrar at 438-2188 to confirm whether or not a release has been signed. Before discussing a student's progress or record, it is a courtesy to inform the student that such a request has been made.

**Q: Is there any information I can share without a release?**

**A:** You can share personal observations if they are not about the student record. For example you can offer the personal observation that Reggie Redbird is a hard worker, but you cannot say that he is getting A's in your class.

Students may restrict even "directory information" like phone numbers and email address, so it is best to refer such inquiries to the Registrar's Office.

You can share academic information with other ISU employees with "a legitimate educational interest" in the information being shared. Please contact the Office of the University Registrar 438-2188 if you are unsure whether or not a "legitimate educational interest" exists.

**Q: What if there's a health or safety emergency that requires release?**

**A:** If at all possible, contact the University Police at 438-8631, who can contact a member of the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), but you may release information directly in a health or safety emergency.

**Q: Do I need a written release for a letter of recommendation?**

**A:** If academic information such as a grade is included in the letter, then a written release is required. A release form for letters of recommendation can be found on the Office of the University Registrar website <http://www.registrar.ilstu.edu/forms.shtml>. Letters of recommendation that only contain personal observation or knowledge about a student do not require a written release from the student.

**Q: Can I post grades in a public place?**

**A:** Posting of non-directory information in a public place without the written consent of the student is a violation of the law. Grades should not be posted in hallways and graded assignments should not be left in hallways. Acceptable methods of notifying students about grades can be found at [http://www.provost.ilstu.edu/downloads/posting\\_grades.pdf](http://www.provost.ilstu.edu/downloads/posting_grades.pdf).

**Q: This is fascinating! Where can I find more?**

**A:** A more in-depth Q and A can be found at <http://www.registrar.ilstu.edu/ferpa/>.