



THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON DC

**Responsible University Official:**  
Registrar  
**Responsible Office:** Office of the Registrar  
**Origination Date:** 1974

## PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS

### Policy Statement

The University and its faculty and staff will protect the privacy of students’ education records as required by federal law and regulations. Eligible parents and students of record in attendance at the University will receive annual notice of their rights under FERPA by appropriate methods, which may include publication in the [Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and electronic publication on the University website.

### Reason for Policy/Purpose

The following statement of policy and procedures has been adopted in compliance with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, as amended.

### Who Needs to Know This Policy

Faculty, staff and students

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## **Policy**

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### **I. Right to Inspect and Review Student Education Records**

Any student, once enrolled at The George Washington University as a student of record, shall have the right to inspect and review the student's Education Records, as defined in FERPA, within 45 days of the day the University receives a request for access. Students should submit to the University Registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official, written requests that identify the record(s) they wish to inspect. The University official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the University official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed. Parents of a "dependent" student, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code, who completes a written declaration of financial dependency form, which is available from the Office of the Registrar, may be similarly granted access to their student's educational records.

FERPA excludes certain records from inspection and these records will not be made available. The following records are specifically excluded from inspection and are not considered educational records as defined by FERPA:

1. Financial records of parents.
2. Confidential letters and statement of recommendation entered in the education record after January 1, 1975, to which the student has waived right of access.
3. Personal notes of institutional, supervisory and educational personnel.
4. Campus law enforcement records, except reports of investigations and incidents that have been forwarded for action or information to other University officials.
5. Employee files, if the student is employed by the University.
6. Medical, psychological-counseling and psychiatric records, or case notes maintained by appropriate professional personnel. (Such records may however, be reviewed personally with an appropriate professional of the student's choice.)
7. Admissions record on file in other component units (of the University) in which the student has not yet been enrolled.

### **II. Right to Request Amendment of Records**

Any student shall have the right to request the amendment of the student's education records that are believed to be inaccurate or misleading. A proper request to correct a student education record must:

1. Be written to the University official responsible for the record;
2. Clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed; and
3. Specify why the record is inaccurate or misleading.

Any written request which does not include the required information will not be considered and the requestor will be notified in writing that their request was not made properly. Upon receipt of a proper request for amendment, the University will make a prompt determination within a reasonable time, but not more than thirty days, as to whether the proposed correction is accepted or rejected. The student will be notified in writing that the amendment has occurred or that the request is denied. A letter denying

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the request will state the reasons for the decision and notify the student of the right to request a hearing.

### **III. Right to Consent to Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information from Student Records**

Any student has the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the University has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor or collection agent); a person serving on the Board of Trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the University discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

The University may release the following directory information upon request: name, local address (including email), telephone numbers, likenesses used in University publications including photographs, name and address of emergency contact, dates of attendance, school or division of enrollment, enrollment status, field of study, class (ie, freshman, sophomore), degrees earned, honors received, participation in University recognized organizations and activities (including intercollegiate athletics) and height, weight and age of members of athletic teams. Note that this list may change from time to time.

Any student who does not wish directory information released must file written notice to this effect in the Office of the Registrar.

Absent a court order to the contrary, the University is generally required to make a reasonable effort to notify the student in the event of a subpoena of his or her record or a judicial order requiring the release of such data. (Please see section V. below regarding exceptions to the FERPA disclosure requirements as required under the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001.)

### **IV. Right to File a Complaint**

Each student has the right to file a complaint with the Department of Education concerning alleged failure by the University to comply with the requirements of FERPA. Complaints should be filed in writing to the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

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### V. USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 and FERPA

The USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 amended FERPA to allow for an additional circumstance under which an institution may disclose student records to law enforcement officials without violating FERPA. Specifically, an institution does not violate FERPA if it discloses education records without the student's consent or knowledge to the U.S. Attorney General or his designee *in response to an ex parte (court) order* related to a terrorism investigation or crime. The institution does not need to make a record of the disclosure. Further, a college or university is not liable to any person for good faith disclosure of education records in response to such an order. GW intends to comply with such provisions, and employees who receive such orders should forward them immediately to the Office of the Senior Vice President and General Counsel for analysis and response, in accordance with the [Procedures Governing Summonses, Subpoenas, Lawsuits, Notices and Letters from Lawyers](#).

The USA PATRIOT Act also mandated the establishment, implementation, and expansion of the federal government's electronic student visa-monitoring program. As of January 30, 2003, higher education institutions were required to begin reporting data on non-immigrant students and visitors in the F, J, and M visa classifications via an electronic internet-based reporting system called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Most of the data to be reported by higher education institutions in SEVIS is data which institutions were already required to maintain under prior immigration regulations. Compliance with SEVIS does not violate FERPA and does not require foreign student or scholar consent. GW intends to comply with the SEVIS reporting requirements.

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### Forms

[Student Consent for Release of Information](#)  
[Certification of Financial Dependency](#)  
[Office of Registrar Confidentiality Request](#)

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### Website Addresses for This Policy

[GW University Policies](#)

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### Contacts

Contact	Telephone	Email
Office of the Registrar	(202) 994-4900	<a href="mailto:regweb@gwu.edu">regweb@gwu.edu</a>

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### Related Information

[Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

## PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS

[Health Information Privacy Policy](#)  
[Procedures Governing Summonses, Subpoenas, Lawsuits, Notices and Letters from  
Lawyers](#)  
[The George Washington University Privacy Policy Statement](#)

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### **Appendices**

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**Appendix A Confidentiality of Student Academic Records-Annual Statement**

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### **Who Approved This Policy**

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Robert A. Chernak, Senior Vice President for Student & Academic Support Services  
Louis H. Katz, Executive Vice President and Treasurer  
Donald R. Lehman, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Beth Nolan, Senior Vice President and General Counsel  
John F. Williams, Provost and Vice President for Health Affairs

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### **History/Revision Dates**

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**Origination Date:** 1974  
**Last Amended Date:** June 25, 2009  
**Next Review Date:** July 1, 2010

# PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS

## Appendix A

### Confidentiality of Student Academic Records-Annual Statement

#### GUIDELINES FOR RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION

##### Conditions for Student Access are:

- Presentation by the student of a picture Identification Card, or
- Receipt of a signed and dated request from the student.

##### Students must NOT be allowed access to:

- Education records that contain information on more than one student (the student may review only the specific information about himself or herself).  
Faculty: be especially aware that posting of grades, exam results by name, social security number, and/or complete student id is not permitted. A variation of the student ID number is allowed, for example, your own unique identifier that you assign to students for class purposes.
- Financial records of the student's parents.
- Letters of recommendation or reference received after January 1, 1975 for which the right of inspection has been waived.

#### DIRECTORY INFORMATION

The following is considered DIRECTORY INFORMATION and is available to the public UNLESS the student has formally requested that this information be held private/confidential.

Student's name, local address (including e-mail), telephone numbers, likenesses used in University publications including photographs, name and address of emergency contact, dates of attendance, school or division of enrollment, enrollment status, field of study, credit hours earned, degrees earned, honors received, participation in University recognized organizations and activities (including intercollegiate athletics), and height, weight and age of members of athletic teams.

#### TO REQUEST NON-DISCLOSURE OF DIRECTORY INFORMATION

This designated directory information is subject to release by the University at any time unless the University (Office of the Registrar) received prior written objection from the student. Currently enrolled students may withhold such disclosure of directory information by filing a request form with the Registrar's Office. Once a student request confidentiality it will remain on the record.

#### RELEASE OF EDUCATION RECORDS

The University is authorized to provide access to student records to campus officials and employees who have legitimate educational interest in such access, without the student's written consent. These persons are those who have responsibilities in connection with campus academic, administrative or service functions and who have reason for using student records connected with their campus or other related academic/administrative responsibilities as opposed to a personal or private interest. Such determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.

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University officials will release educational information upon receipt of a signed, dated, written consent of the student which must specify the records that may be disclosed and identify the party to whom the disclosure may be made.

Parents of a dependent student, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, Section 152, and who supply supporting documentation, may be granted access to a student's educational record under some circumstances.

Other circumstances that allow access to a student's educational record:

In connection with Financial Aid; to organizations who are conducting studies on behalf of educational agencies; to Federal or State educational authorities; to accrediting organizations; in compliance with a lawfully issued subpoena; in connection with a health or safety emergency.

Non-University individuals (including parents except as described above) may not have access to educational records other than Directory Information unless authorization from the student is obtained or a lawfully issued subpoena/court order is issued to the University.

Examples of data items NOT released: grades; grade point average; the specific number of hours/credits enrolled, passed or failed; Social Security Number; name of parents or next of kin. PLEASE NOTE: POSTING OF GRADES BY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER IS A VIOLATION OF FERPA!

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

Certain consequences are possible, if an individual is found in non-compliance with these rules and regulations, as defined by FERPA:

- Unsatisfactory performance appraisal for the employee, consistent with the personnel policies of the University;
- Accountability of the employee in a court of law (confidentiality and privacy requirements are regulated by Federal law);
- Possible loss to the University of available funds under Federal programs administered by the Secretary of Education.

Complaints of FERPA violation(s) may be filed by students with the Family Policy & Compliance Office, Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202-4605.

Additional detailed information may be found in the 2002-2003 GW Planner and Handbook, as compiled by Student and Academic Support Services Communication and Technology on behalf of the Division of Student and Academic Support Services.

The above are interpretative guidelines only. For clarification and further detail or any specific question you may have, please write to the University Registrar, Office of the Registrar, Rice Hall, 2121 Eye St. NW, Suite 101, Washington, D.C. 20052.