

FERPA 101

Office of the
Registrar

What Faculty and Staff Need to Know

1st Floor, Signers' Hall
(907) 474-6300
uaf-registrar@alaska.edu

FERPA is a Federal Law

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** applies to all educational agencies or institutions, including the University of Alaska (UA), which receive any funds under any program administered by the U.S. Secretary of Education. FERPA governs what may be released, but it does not require any information be released. It also grants specific rights to students and it protects the privacy of their educational records.

It's Our Responsibility

As faculty or staff members, you have a legal responsibility under FERPA to protect the confidentiality of student education records in your possession. You have access to student information only for legitimate use in the completion of the duties of your position; this is called Need to Know.

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, such as image, UAID, etc., 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.

Important to know: Such records are potentially discoverable with a legal subpoena, but they are not subject to review under FERPA.

Students' rights under FERPA

- To inspect and review their educational records that UAF maintains.
- To seek a correction of records and/or append a statement to them.
- Have some control over the disclosure of information from their education records.
- To file a complaint with the **U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office**.

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

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. Please refer any requests to release information to the Office of the Registrar.

When a student attends a postsecondary institution, regardless of age, all rights under FERPA transfer from the parent/legal guardian to the student. 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).



Q: May I disclose education records to ANY employee without student consent?

A: No, you may not disclose education records to any employee without student consent.

An institution can only disclose personally identifiable information from students' education records without consent to school officials within the same institution who have a legitimate educational interests or "need to know".

A legitimate educational interest means the school official needs to review the education record to fulfill the duties of their position.

Communicating via Email

Faculty and staff are required to use their @alaska.edu account when communicating to or about students; personal email use is prohibited. This ensures the security and integrity of university communications and student information.

Employees may email the student's account marked "preferred" in our systems. Students are informed it is their responsibility to check, and/or set up forwarding from their @alaska.edu account.

Questions regarding FERPA?

Need to report a potential FERPA violation?

Contact the University Registrar, Holly McDonald at hamcdonald@alaska.edu or 907-474-6300.

Annual Training Requirement

- Employees should renew their FERPA training annually to ensure they remain up to date with any changes or best practices.
- Employees can complete their training through at myua.alaska.edu.
- Staying current with FERPA training reinforces our commitment to safeguarding student information.

Important to Remember

1. **University ID Numbers:** Never use a student's UA ID number in public postings of grades or any other information.
2. **Separate Names & UA ID Numbers:** Do not link the name of a student with their UA ID number in any public manner.
3. **Graded Materials:** Do not leave graded materials in a stack for students to sort through, as this can expose other students' information.
4. **Group Grading:** In group grading situations, do not hand back graded information to the group as a whole.
5. **Student Progress:** Only share a student's progress with the student themselves or those who have a "need to know" unless you have their written consent.
6. **Enrollment Lists:** Do not provide enrollment lists or files of students to third party requests, such as honor societies. Refer requests to the Office of the Registrar.
7. **Assisting Campus Visitors:** Do not provide course schedules or assist anyone other than university employees in locating a student on campus. Refer requests to the Office of the Registrar.
8. **Accessing Student Records:** Never access student records for personal reasons.
9. **Storing Confidential Information:** Only store confidential information on secure computers if necessary and ensure it is protected from intrusion.
10. **Letters of Recommendation:** Do not include a student's grades, GPA, classes, etc., in a letter of recommendation without the student's written consent.

These practices help ensure the integrity and privacy of student information, fostering a safe and respectful academic environment.