



PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR FACULTY, TEACHING ASSISTANTS & READERS

- **Student Record Privacy:** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UC policy restrict the disclosure of information from student records. With electronic media prevalent and public scrutiny high, students expect the University to protect their privacy.
- **Confidential Student Information:** Presume that all student information is confidential, and do not disclose information without a student's consent except to University officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Consult with the Office of the Registrar to understand which information the University can properly disclose.
- **Student's Right to Access Records:** Students have a right to access most information in the records that the University maintains about them, including e-mail messages between faculty or staff that refer or relate to them. Knowing that a student might read your e-mail message later, keep your e-mail messages focused on facts and try to avoid communicating subjective judgments. Notwithstanding their general right of access, students do **not** have a right to access records that are kept in the sole possession of the person who created the record, are used only as a personal memory aid, and are not accessible by or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the person who created the record.
- **Additional Restrictions on Student Information:** Some students exercise their right under FERPA to restrict the University from disclosing any information about them, not even their name or existence at the University, because serious threats to their personal safety exist or for other reasons. The University must ensure that no information about students who exercise this right is disclosed except to University officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information.
- **Parents:** Parents of UC students do **not** have a right to obtain information from student records, including grades and faculty records about a student's performance in class. However, a student may submit a written letter of consent to disclosure of information to their parents.
- **Disclosing Information:** Students who wish to consent to disclosure of information from their student records must state **in writing** which records may be disclosed, identify the party or class of parties to whom the records may be disclosed, indicate the purpose of the disclosure, and sign and date their consent statement. Disclosure is not permitted prior to receipt of written consent. **The signed consent is restricted to a one-time release.** Students must submit a new consent for each disclosure.
- **Distressed Students:** Faculty, teaching assistants, and readers **can** share information about distressed or disruptive students with University officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information. In addition, if a health or safety emergency exists, faculty, teaching assistants, and readers can share information with other people, within and outside the University, to protect the health or safety of the student or others.

- ***Faculty Access to Records:*** Faculty, teaching assistants, and readers are not automatically entitled to access all information about their students. Faculty have a legitimate educational interest in information only if the information is relevant and necessary for them to fulfill their role in the student's education.
- ***Letters of Recommendation:*** In letters of recommendation, faculty and teaching assistants can discuss their personal observations, but they should not disclose information from student records, such as grades, without the student's written consent.
- ***Unauthorized Disclosure:*** Avoid inadvertently disclosing information from student records. For example:
 - *Do not place* graded or personally identifiable student work in publicly accessible locations (hallway or any unmonitored area) for students to pick up;
 - *Do not post grades or scores publicly* if grades/scores are linked to a student PERM number, name, or other identifiers. Grades or scores may only be posted when a unique ID or exam number known only to the instructor and student is used;
 - *Do not circulate* a class roster that includes student PERM number, name, or other identifiers to persons outside of the class. This includes UCSB employees who do not have a legitimate educational need;
 - *Do not post* grades/scores or other personally identifiable information to unsecured web servers, or web pages that can be accessed by search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.). If you are unsure about the security of data on your department's computers or servers, please consult your departmental IT staff;
 - *Avoid* requiring students to post identifiable homework assignments or projects to publicly accessible online forums (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and other social media spaces);
 - Instead of requiring students to participate in a publicly accessible online blog, allow students to opt out, create a private blog, or use GauchoSpace;
 - If you use Doodle or a similar system to solicit or share calendar or schedule information, create a private poll so students' information is not disclosed to other students or third parties;
 - *Obtain written consent* from students before sharing any personal information, biographical or academic, with third parties including other students, parents, faculty, or external entities;
 - The "cloud computing" environment offers many handy and inexpensive tools. However, placing any information about students on a website or server not under contract with the University could be a violation of FERPA. Make the use of these sites optional, or allow students concerned about privacy to provide their information to you in a secure manner. For more information please see <http://www.policy.ucsb.edu/policies/advisory-docs/clickthrough-guide.pdf>.
 - Employees are strongly encouraged ***not*** to sync their UCSB Google Connect email with their personal devices (phones, tablets, laptops, etc.). Instead, employees should access University email through the UCSB web interface: <https://mail.google.com/a/ucsb.edu>.

**Questions related to FERPA or student records can be referred to the Office of the Registrar
1101 Student Affairs and Administrative Services Building (SAASB)
University of California, Santa Barbara**

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