

Hints for Faculty to Avoid FERPA Violations-They Should NOT:

1. Use the SSN/Student ID/Student Names to post grades.
2. Leave graded tests (electronically or in print) for students to sort through.
3. Circulate electronically or in print, class list with the Student Name and SSN/Student ID.
4. Provide anyone, other than the student with student schedules.
5. Provide anyone with lists of students enrolled in your classes.
6. Include confidential information (i.e., grades, #of credits) in a commendation letter without the written consent of the student [Note: If a student provides you a resume with the information, you may disclose whatever is in the resume.]
7. Cover or put away papers that contain confidential information if you are going to step away from your desk.



Birmingham Campus
3060 Wilson Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35221

Bessemer Campus
1100 9th Avenue SW
Bessemer, Alabama 35022

www.lawsonstate.edu

It is the policy of the Alabama State Board of Education and Lawson State Community College, a postsecondary institution under its control, that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or employment.

FERPA Reloaded

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Guidelines for

Lawson State Community College Faculty/Staff



YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS FACULTY MEMBERS

WHEN IN DOUBT—

DON'T GIVE IT OUT!

WHAT IS FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 is a federal law regarding the privacy of student education records. The Act provides students the right to inspect and review educational records, the right to seek to amend those records, and the right to limit disclosure of information from the records.

WHAT IS DIRECTORY INFORMATION?

FERPA requires colleges and universities to define the information that they will release without a student's prior written consent. Lawson State Community College's definition contains a list of those "directory information" items that we MAY release. They are as follows:

- Student's name, address (local and permanent), and telephone number.
- Parents and Spouse.
- Date and place of birth.
- Major field of study.
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports.
- Weight and height statistics for athletic team members.
- Dates of attendance.
- Degrees and awards received.
- Previous educational institution most recently attendance.
- Photographs.

One common misconception is that FERPA requires us to release student information. It does not. Accordingly, you should err on the side of not releasing information when you are in doubt. You should always feel free to ask your immediate supervisor for assistance before releasing the requested information. You can always direct questions to the Office of Student Records.

If a student does not wish the directory information released, he or she may indicate by notifying the Registrar in writing at the time of registration, and the College will withhold the information during that particular semester. The request for nondisclosure of directory information should be renewed each semester.

FERPA pertains to everyone who works at Lawson State Community College, regardless of his or her position. What FERPA says, in effect, is that we may all have access to as much information about students as we need to do our jobs. Clearly, many people who work at the College have no access to student records and have no need for individual student information. Some of the same people, however, may come across confidential information in the course of doing their job. The maintenance staff, for example, may come across confidential information about students. They are equally obligated, as we are, to respect its confidentiality.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A FACULTY MEMBER

????????????????????

Beyond any legal requirements, Lawson State Community College is bound by professional ethics to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position, regardless of their work classification or full-time, part-time or temporary. What follows are some guidelines in compliance with FERPA regulation and Lawson State Community College policy to follow in order to maintain, report and make available information included in student educational records.

Faculty/staff may have access to all the information they need to do their jobs; but have no right to any information not needed to do their jobs. Use a “need to know” (rather than a “right to know”) approach when accessing students’ education records. Faculty/staff must have a legitimate college-related educational or administrative interest (e.g. advising students, retention study, etc.) and a need to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Faculty/staff must take reasonable precautions to safeguard access to student information. **These include shredding documents, not sharing computer IDs and passwords, not allowing anyone else to do work under our IDs and passwords, and not leaving the student information system (AS400 or Faculty Web Suite) up and running and accessible when away from computers.**

General questions may be directed to the Office of Students Records. Comments or suggestions should be addressed to lchisem@lawsonstate.edu or by calling 205-929-3409.

Faculty/staff should not provide copies to students of their transcripts from other institutions. If you release copies of transcripts, you are acting as a third party



testifying as to the accuracy of the information on the transcripts.

Faculty/staff should understand that only the Office of Student Records should release information about a student’s educational record to a third party outside the College.

Faculty/staff should not share non directory information from a student’s education records, such as grades, attendance or class schedules, with parents. You may always refer the parents to the Office of Student Records.

Faculty/staff should refer all judicial orders, subpoenas or other written requests for access to information or data subject to the Freedom of Information Act immediately to the Office of Student Records.

Faculty/staff should not include “educational record” (grades, GPA and other non-directory information) information in a letter of recommendation without written permission of the student.

Faculty/staff should not publicly post grades either by the student’s name, student identification number or social security number. This is a violation of FERPA even if the names are obscured. Faculty can assign students unique numbers or codes that can be used to post grades but the order of the posting must not be alphabetic.

When in doubt, ASK. Faculty/staff should not release information to others when in doubt. Consult with the Office of Student Records.

Faculty/staff should not distribute graded work in a way that exposes the student’s identity (such as on a web site) or leave personally identifiable, graded papers unattended. This is no different from posting grades publicly. If the papers contain personally identifiable information, then leaving them unattended for anyone to see is a violation of FERPA. Possible solutions for distributing grade information to students would be to leave the graded papers (exams, quizzes, and homework) with an assistant or secretary who would ask students for proper identification prior to distributing them, leave graded work in a sealed envelope with only the student’s name on it, or use a code name or number known only to the student and faculty member to identify graded work.

Notification of grades via a postcard violates a student’s privacy. While notification of grades via email is permissible under FERPA, Lawson State prohibits emailing or mailing of grades.



Positive IDs cannot generally be made via telephone or e-mail

FERPA DOS AND DON'TS

DOS

- ◆ DO refer requests to the Office of Student Records when you are uncertain how to respond.
- ◆ DO release a student’s information to him or her when you can positively identify the student. (Be cautious! Positive IDs cannot generally be made via telephone or e-mail.)
- ◆ DO post grades on Blackboard.
- ◆ DO refer parental requests for student record information to the Office of Student Records.
- ◆ DO shred unneeded confidential documents.



DON'TS

- ◆ DON'T provide non-directory information including grades, GPA, and class schedules with any unauthorized third party, including parents, without written consent from the student.
- ◆ DON'T post grades by names, social security numbers, PINS, or any combination thereof on walls, doors, or unauthorized websites.
- ◆ DON'T view education records for personal reasons.