Understanding FERPA at University Of Rhode Island

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What is FERPA?

• Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974), also known as the Buckley Amendment.

• Federal legislation that requires institutions of higher education to protect the confidentiality of student records.

• Applies to all institutions that receive federal aid from the Dept. of Education (DOE).
Who is protected under FERPA?

- Students, who are currently or formerly enrolled, regardless of their age or status.
- Students that have applied to URI, but have not attended do not fall under FERPA guidelines.
- Deceased students are also excluded.
Educational Records

• An educational record is any record (1) from which a student can be personally identified, and (2) maintained by the University.

• They include any records in whatever medium (handwriting, email, video, etc.) that are in the possession of any school official.
Directory Information

- Information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.
- URI has established the following as directory information:
  - Name
  - Admission status
• Dates of attendance
• Full/Part-time status
• Classification
• Major/minor fields of study
• Degree earned/Awards received
• Participation in officially recognized activities
• Weight/Height of member of athletic teams
An educational institution may disclose personally identifiable information without the consent of a student if:

- The disclosure is to other school officials
- The institution has determined those individuals to have legitimate educational interest
What Does It Mean?

• FERPA permits a “school official” to release non-directory info to other school officials as long as there is a “legitimate educational interest”.

• Before information is released there needs to be a specific reason as to what they intend to do with that information---if not then that’s a violation of FERPA
Parental Access

• Parents have no inherent right to inspect a student’s education record.

• The right to inspect is limited solely to the student.

• Records may only be released to parents ONLY under the following circumstances:
Parental Access Cont’d

- Through written consent of the student.
- In compliance with a subpoena.
- By producing a copy of the most recent Federal Income Tax form showing that the student was claimed as a dependent.
FERPA states that each student has the right to withhold any or all of their information.

Student must complete a “Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information” form.

Once restricted, that information cannot be released without the written consent of the student.