

FERPA Q&A

When do the FERPA rights of a student begin?

The first day of class for the student's initial term of attendance at the Trenholm State. The definition of a "student" is defined as any person who is or has been officially enrolled in and is attending or has attended any course offered at the College. This definition does not include prospective students.

What is an education record?

Any record that is maintained by the institution and is personally identifiable to the student. Exceptions to this are medical records, law enforcement records, employment records, alumni records, and sole possession records such as notes in sole possession of the maker, used only as a personal memory aid and not revealed or accessible to any other person.

Who is a "college official"?

A college official is any person employed by the college in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support position; a person elected to the Alabama State Board of Education; a Trenholm State student or a graduate serving on an official college committee or assisting another college official in performing his or her tasks; or a person employed by or under contract to, or serving as the agent of, the college to perform a specific task.

What data has Trenholm State defined as directory information?

The student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, dates of attendance, educational agencies or institutions most recently attended by the student, program of study, degree desired and classification, participation in officially recognized clubs, organizations and activities, degrees and awards received.

Can you share a student's information with their parent?

No. Once a student reaches the age of 18 or attends an institution of postsecondary education, the parents have no rights under FERPA. Only the student can give permission for their parents to have access to their records.

What should you do if your unit receives a subpoena for an academic record?

Forward it to the Director of Admissions and Records as soon as possible.

Can an instructor post grades or exam results in a public place using a portion of the students' social security number or student identification number?

No. In order for an instructor to post grades or scores, they must either have the written permission of the students or use an identifier that is known only to the instructor and each individual student.

If a private business or industry requests directory information for students in your program, must you release this information?

No. An institution is under no obligation to release directory information to anyone. FERPA only says that an institution MAY release directory information. When in doubt, refer the individual to the Director of Admissions and Records.

Do faculty members have a right to inspect education records of any student without giving a reason?

No. Faculty members are considered "school officials", but the faculty member must demonstrate "a legitimate educational interest" in their request to access student records, e.g. advising students, retention study, etc.

You receive a telephone call from a parent claiming there is a family emergency and they need to contact their child immediately. Can you tell the parents the day, time and location of their child's class?

Generally, the answer is "no." At Trenholm State, a student's class schedule is not listed as directory information; therefore this information may not be released. The answer may be "yes" depending on the circumstances of the emergency. FERPA states that if the release of non-directory information is "necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals," then this information may be released.