

# FERPA Fundamentals

**featuring**

**The Office of the  
University Registrar**



# What is FERPA?

**FERPA** is the  
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

- It is a Federal Law designed to:
  - Protect the privacy of education records
  - Establish the right of students to inspect and review their education records
  - Provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through formal and informal hearings



# Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Enforced by the Family Policy Compliance Office, which is part of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in Washington, D.C.



# Student and Parents' Rights

- Applies to any educational agency and institution that receives funds under any program administered by the Secretary of Education
- Student rights at the higher-education level are ascribed to the parents at the K-12 level
- NSU considers all students as independent, regardless of age; therefore, education records are not shared with parents without written consent



# Parental Access to NSU Student Records

- Parents stand in the same shoes as any outside party
- Affidavits of parental claims and records of student permission are maintained by EPS in the NetSearch imaging system



# FERPA Rights at the Postsecondary Level

- All students, including continuing education students, students auditing classes, distance education students, and former students about whom an institution maintains an education record or personally identifiable information
- The *Federal* definition does not include an admitted individual who has never attended class



# FERPA's Primary Student Rights

- NSU students must be permitted to inspect and review their own education records
- University officials may not release personally identifiable information about students, nor permit inspection of their records without written permission, unless such action is covered by certain exceptions permitted by the Act



# Our Responsibility

- As NSU employees, we play a crucial role in ensuring that student records are protected from unauthorized access
- Student records contain highly sensitive information, including family information. The contents of these files are likely to have an impact on the overall educational experience of a student
- Protecting a student's privacy is both a legal and ethical requirement of all NSU employees



# Penalties for Ignoring FERPA

- NSU can lose federal funding from the Department of Education
- Students can file formal complaints with the Department of Education
- Disciplinary action can be taken against YOU – up to and including dismissal from employment



# Key Concepts

- Annual notification is required
- Written permission required for disclosure of student education records
- The exceptions to written permission by a student
- Students' right to access their records
- Legitimate educational interest



# Annual Notification

**NSU annually notifies students in attendance of their rights under FERPA:**

- Right to inspect and review education records
- Right to request amendment of education records that the student believes to be inaccurate or misleading
- Right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information in the education record, with certain exceptions
- Right to file a complaint with the ED



# Annual Notification *-continued*

**NSU annually notifies students in attendance of their rights under FERPA:**

- Procedure to inspect and review records
- A statement that education records may be disclosed to school officials without prior written consent (e.g., school officials with a legitimate educational interest, provided to medical personnel in the event of an emergency, shared with law enforcement personnel, provided to an agent working on behalf of the university)



# Key Terms

- Education Record
- Personally Identifiable
- Directory Information
- School Official



# What is the “Education Record”?

- Any record, with certain exceptions, maintained by the institution that is directly related to a student
- This record can contain a student’s name(s) or other information from which an individual student can be personally identified
- Record means any information, maintained in any way, including but not limited to:
  - Handwriting
  - Video or audio tape
  - Computer media
  - Film
  - Print
  - Microfilm and microfiche



# What is an “Education Record”?

**Which of these items are considered education records?**

- A. Financial aid records
- B. A computer-generated list of library books checked out by a student
- C. A printout of what a student has purchased from the Bookstore with his/her SharkCard
- D. A list of websites accessed by the student
- E. All of the above



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# Personally Identifiable

**Personally Identifiable** means data or information that if released would compromise the student's privacy and make his/her identity known with "reasonable certainty"

- Personally Identifiable Information includes:
  - The student's name, the names of the student's parents or other family members
  - The student's address or that of the student's family
  - Personal identifiers (SSN or NSU ID number)
  - Indirect identifiers (date and place of birth, mother's maiden name)
  - A list of personal characteristics or other information that would make the student's identity known with "reasonable certainty"



# What is Not an Education Record

Exceptions to education records include:

- Records created and maintained by a law enforcement unit for a law enforcement purpose
- Employment records (unless contingent on attendance, e.g., FWS, student assistant, teaching assistant)
- Medical records made and maintained in the course of treatment and disclosed only to those individuals providing treatment
- Records that only contain information about a student after he or she is no longer a student at the institution (e.g., alumni records)
- Sole possession notes



# Sole Possession Notes

**Notes made by one person as an individual observation or recollection, are kept in the possession of the maker, and are only shared with a temporary substitute**

- Notes taken in conjunction with any other person are not sole possession notes (counselor's notes, interview notes)
- Sharing these notes with another person, or placing them in an area where they can be viewed by others makes them “education records” subject to FERPA
- Emails are never to be considered sole possession

***Best Advice: If you don't want it reviewed, don't write it down***



# FERPA Records

Which of the following records does FERPA *not* protect?

- A. Records that contain personally identifiable information about a student, but are only in Banner
- B. All paper records that contain personally identifiable information about a student
- C. Faculty and staff personal records about a student that are not shared with others and that are not placed in the student's file



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# So, What is an Education Record?

If you have a record that is:

- Maintained by the institution
- Personally identifiable to a student (i.e., directly related to a student and from which a student can be identified)
- Not one of the excluded categories of records. . .  
. . .then, you have an education record, and

*it is subject to FERPA*



# Directory Information

- Information about a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed
- Students must be notified of the items of directory information
- Students must be given the opportunity to withhold disclosers of Directory Information. This right of non-disclosure applies only to directory information



# NSU's Definition of Directory Information

- Student's name
- Addresses, including email
- Telephone number
- Place of birth
- Major field of study
- Participation in intercollegiate athletics
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- Year in school
- Enrollment status (full-time, part-time, etc.)
- Anticipated graduation date



# ‘Directory Information’ Can Never Include...

- Race
- Gender/Sex
- Social Security number (or part of an SSN)
- Student ID number
- Grades
- Grade point average
- Country of citizenship
- Religion



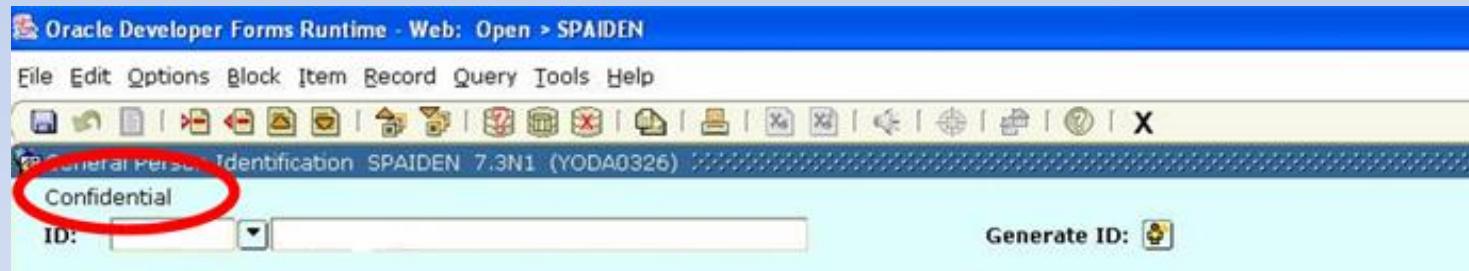
# Directory Information

- It is important to remember that directory information must be defined as such
- If certain data is not defined as ‘directory information,’ then it isn’t directory information and can only be released with the student’s written permission, or the release meets the requirements under one of the exceptions to a student’s written permission found in FERPA



# Directory Information

- When a student requests non-disclosure of Directory Information, a “confidential” message is displayed on the student’s record in Banner



# Directory Information

- The impacts of withholding Directory Information:
  - Names of students on the Dean's List are not published
  - Commencement candidates names are not listed in the ceremony program
  - Verification requests from prospective employers are denied
  - Student cannot be spoken to over the telephone



# School Official

- In order for an education record to be disclosed to a faculty member or other school official without prior written consent, the student must be annually informed of:
  - The specification of criteria for determining who is a school official, and
  - What constitutes a legitimate educational interest

***These two conditions can not be separated***



# NSU's Definition of a School Official

- Employed by the university in an administrative, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement personnel, FWS student, and health staff)
- Contracted by the university (such as an attorney, auditor, collection agent, loan servicing agent, or the National Student Clearinghouse)
- Serving on the Board of Trustees
- Serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks



# Legitimate Educational Interest

- The demonstrated need to know by those officials of an institution who act in the student's educational interest, including faculty, administrators, clerical and professional employees, and others who manage student record information



# Legitimate Educational Interest

**A faculty or staff member has a legitimate educational interest in accessing or reviewing a student's educational records if the faculty or staff member is:**

- Performing a task that is specified in his/her position description or contract and related to a student's education or student discipline
- Providing a service or benefit related to the student or student's family
- Maintaining safety and security on campus



# Legitimate Education Record?

**A professor asks the department AA for a student file. Under FERPA, which of the following best describes compliance with the law:**

- A. The professor is given the entire student file without question
- B. The professor is asked to identify a legitimate educational interest. If one is identified, the professor is given the entire student file
- C. The professor is asked to identify a legitimate educational interest. If one is identified, the professor is given that portion of the student file which is relevant to the task being performed



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# Requirements for Compliance

## Provide students access to their education records:

- They have a right to:
  - Inspect and review within 45 calendar days of the request to inspect
  - Seek an amendment of their education records
  - Request a hearing if the request for amendment is deemed unsatisfactory



# Requirements for Compliance

Limitations to the right to inspect:

- Parental financial information
- Confidential letters and recommendations to which the student has waived his/her right to inspect
- Education records containing information about more than one student
  - The institution must permit access to that part of the record that pertains only to the inquiring student



# Procedures for Compliance

## Disclosure of education record information

- Institutions shall obtain written consent from a student before disclosing any personally-identifiable information from the education record (with certain exceptions). This written consent should:
  - Specify the records to be released
  - State the purpose of the disclosure
  - Identify the party to whom disclosure may be made
  - Be signed and dated by the student



# Exceptions to Prior Consent

**Institutions *may* disclose education records *without written* consent of students with the following:**

- School officials with legitimate educational interest (as defined in annual notification)
- To schools in which a student seeks or intends to enroll
- To federal, state, and local authorities involving an audit or evaluation of compliance with education program
- In connection with financial aid
- To organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the education institution
- To accrediting organizations
- To comply with a judicial order or subpoena



# Exceptions to Prior Consent

**Institutions *may* disclose education records *without written* consent of students for the following:**

- Directory Information
- In a health or safety emergency
- To the student
- Results of a disciplinary hearing
- Disclosure to parents of student under the age of 21, if the institution determines that the student has committed a violation of its drug or alcohol rules or policies (regardless of the student's dependent status)



# Exceptions to Prior Consent

**Which of the following situations might qualify as an exception that allows for the release of student education records information without written consent?**

- A. The Dean of Students tells you that the student has a medical emergency.
- B. The Office of the University Registrar receives a subpoena to produce a copy of a student's education record
- C. The financial aid office calls to verify that a student has completed the necessary coursework for a class
- D. All of the above
- E. A and C only



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# Protect the Record!

**Before discussing or releasing any information to a student about his or her education record:**

- If you do not personally know the student, always verify the student's identity prior to releasing or discussing any information



# Protect the Record!

- The NSU University Call Center authenticates a student's identification using the following protocol before releasing any information



- Full name as it appears in Banner
- NSU ID number (if available)
- Mailing address
- NSU or student email address
- Primary telephone number on file
- Date of birth (month/day)



# Protect the Record!

9.1.0.7 Records List Screen - Windows Internet Explorer provided by Nova Southeastern University

http://novax1.nova.edu/c2s/uxl/jsp/xl\_jspCreateset.jsp

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Favorites 9.1.0.7 Records List Screen

SFSR Records: 1 through 3

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALL		AID YEAR/TERM	BANNER ID	SSN	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	DOC TYPE	STATUS	CAPTURE DATE	CAPTURED BY	VALIDATED BY	QC BY	PIDM	LOC
<input type="checkbox"/>		0000	N0000000	xxx-xx-xxxx	STUDENT	SAMUEL	ROBERT	ROI	C	05/09/2012	XMLAI	OITDMN\DRAPER	EF	1900455	:SFSR1
<input type="checkbox"/>		1213	N0000000	xxx-xx-xxxx	STUDENT	SAMUEL	ROBERT	ATHT	C	05/29/2012	OITDMN\PEDWARD	OITDMN\HO38	DSS	1900455	:SFSR1
<input type="checkbox"/>		1213	N0000000	xxx-xx-xxxx	STUDENT	SAMUEL	ROBERT	MISC	C	06/18/2012	OITDMN\TSTANFOR	OITDMN\BAIDA	IW	1900455	:SFSR1

Exit | Select a Database | Record Search | Find Text | Send | Tools | Help

SFSR Records: 1 through 3

If you receive a request from an individual acting on behalf of the student:

- Before disclosing any information, always access NetSearch to review the ***Release of Information Form (ROI)*** prior to providing any information to a person other than the student



# Major Concepts in FERPA

- Most student records kept by the university are considered “**education records**” that are protected by FERPA
- The **student** has a right to **access and review** his/her education records
- All **education records** are **confidential** and cannot be disclosed, unless the student consents or the request fits one of the exceptions



# Major Concepts in FERPA

- **Faculty and staff** generally may not see a student's education record without first identifying a **legitimate educational interest**, or one of the other exceptions under which records may be reviewed
- **Parents do not have an automatic right** to view their child's postsecondary education records



# A Word of Caution. . .

To avoid violating FERPA, **NEVER. . .**

- Link an NSU ID to a student in a public setting, or place it in the subject line of an email
- Circulate screen shots with visible identifying student information as a training mechanism
- Write down a student's social security number
- Discuss the status of a student's financial aid file with anyone other than the student
- Leave student records in plain sight on a desk or on a computer monitor while you are away from your desk



# THE END



# Thank You!



# Additional Questions?

Please email any questions not answered today to [esssummit@nova.edu](mailto:esssummit@nova.edu).

Thank you for attending!

