What is FERPA and for what purpose does it exist?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (FERPA) is a federal law. The purpose of this law is to afford all post-secondary students certain rights pertaining to their educational records.

What does FERPA guarantee?

- FERPA gives students the right to
  - inspect and review their own records
  - request amendments to their record
  - have some control over the disclosure or release of personally identifiable information from their records

Who is responsible for seeing that FERPA is upheld?

- Generally speaking, all Institute employees who have access to records are responsible for guarding the confidentiality of student records.
- Specifically, requests for access to records, requests for amendment of records, and complaints regarding any violation of FERPA are to be filed with the Office of the Registrar.

Disclosure or release of student information

- Institute employees are not allowed to disclose information (other than "Directory Information") without the student's written consent except under very limited conditions.

What is Directory Information?

- "Directory Information" is information not generally considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The Georgia Institute of Technology considers the following information to be "Directory Information;"
  - Name, address, e-mail address and telephone listing
  - Level (graduate or undergraduate)
  - Field of study (major)
  - Dates of attendance
  - Degrees and date awarded
- "Directory Information" cannot include student identification numbers or social security numbers.
- Students can also prohibit the release of all Directory Information.
How can I know if a student has asked that no information be released?

- Students who have asked that no information be released have the word “CONFIDENTIAL” displayed at the top of every form in BANNER.
- “CONFIDENTIAL” also displays next to the student’s name on the web forms that you will use when assigning grades, looking for address information, etc.

Parents are not exempt from FERPA restrictions

- Parents do not have the right to access records of students over the age of 18 at the post-secondary level except in these three cases:
  - They have the written consent of the student
  - In response to a subpoena (the student must be notified that records were released)
  - They can prove that they claimed the student as a dependent on their most recent Federal Income Tax form

What should you do if you are not sure if you can release information?

- When in doubt, saying nothing is your best option
- It is far better to NOT release information than to release information incorrectly

Which requests should you forward to the Registrar’s Office?

- All requests for
  - transcripts
  - certification requests – verification of enrollment for lenders, health insurance, good student car insurance discount forms, etc.
  - the academic record of any student

Conclusions

- No one can possibly know every detail of FERPA and how it is to be applied.
- When in doubt, DON’T release information!
- Failure to comply with FERPA can cause legal difficulty for Georgia Tech and for you personally.
- QUESTIONS? E-mail comments@registrar.gatech.edu