

TO: University Faculty and Staff
FROM: Sheila P. Fleishman, Associate Director of Compliance, Student Policy and
Judicial Affairs
RE: Student Records and Parental Notification
Date: November 29, 2004

Parents of undergraduate students frequently contact University staff requesting information on their son or daughter. Common examples are parent requests for information on class grades, academic status, a pending disciplinary matter, a financial obligation, or a housing concern. I am writing to clarify under what circumstances university faculty and staff may provide information to parents.

What information from a student's education records may be disclosed by Rutgers officials to parents or other third parties is largely governed by a federal law known as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). Generally, FERPA would require that a student consent in writing prior to the disclosure of information from the student's education records. Any disclosure to a parent made pursuant to valid consent by a student is permissible. It is also permissible to counsel a student to consider involving their parents in the education process and to contact them for consent in response to a parental inquiry. There are also various exceptions to the general rule under FERPA requiring consent including some that afford colleges and universities some discretion as to what information may be disclosed to parents without consent.

A University committee met in 2000-01 to develop a University-wide policy on parental notification that would be consistent with FERPA and would clarify what information the University would and would not share with parents. This Parental Notification Policy was duly endorsed by the University Senate and was accepted by the University President. The Parental Notification Policy can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/studrec.shtml> and remains in effect. Generally, Rutgers will not disclose information to parents of students without a student's consent. The Parental Notification Policy defines exceptions for three categories of information which may be disclosed to parents without student consent. These are:

- 1) information in connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or received;
- 2) information in connection with a serious injury or other health or safety emergency when deemed necessary to protect the health or the safety of the student or other individuals;
- 3) information that the University has designated as "directory information" unless the student has specifically requested that directory information be kept confidential.

Neither FERPA nor the Parental Notification Policy applies to medical and counseling treatment records that are maintained in the sole possession of medical professionals involved in the treatment of the student. Such records are maintained in accordance with various other state and federal laws that will govern a parent's right of access.

Questions regarding the appropriateness of releasing information from student records, about what constitutes a student record, or about FERPA should be directed to the Office of Compliance, Student Policy and Judicial Affairs at 732-932-9414, cspc@rci.rutgers.edu, or to the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, at (732) 932-8576.