

PRIVACY AND ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS (FERPA)

I. Policy Section

8.0 Students

II. Policy Subsection

8.6 Privacy and Access to Student Records (FERPA)

III. Policy Statement

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law protecting the privacy of student education records. GRCC is subject to federal regulations under FERPA and is committed to student privacy and access to their educational records as defined under the law.

FERPA applies to all students, regardless of age (including students under the age of 18) at GRCC. FERPA precludes parents and guardians of minor GRCC students from accessing GRCC education records without valid written consent.

FERPA affords students the following the respect to their educational records:

- A. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the College receives a request for access.
- B. The right to request the amendment of the student's education record that the student believes is inaccurate or misleading.
- C. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. Exceptions which permit disclosure without consent, include disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests and other disclosures specifically authorized by law.
- D. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by GRCC to comply with the requirements of FERPA.
- E. The right to opt out of disclosure of directory information.

IV. Reason for the Policy

Federal Law (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974). The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students the following with respect to their educational records. Schools receiving funds under U.S. Department of Education programs are subject to this regulation.

This policy outlines all rights and protections to students under FERPA.

V. Entities Affected by this Policy

Students
All Grand Rapids Community College Employees
Contractors
Volunteers

VI. Who Should Read this Policy

Students
All Grand Rapids Community College Employees

VII. Related Documents

GRCC FERPA website: <http://cms.grcc.edu/ferpa>
U.S. Department of Education website:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>
15.1 Personally Identifiable Information Policy
3.6 Records Management Policy
FERPA consent form

VIII. Contacts

Policy Owner: Registrar - Student Records/Registrar's Office
Office of General Counsel

IX. Definitions

- A. Student – persons who are or have been enrolled, transferred, withdrawn, or graduated from Grand Rapids Community College.
- B. Dependent Student – For purposes of FERPA permitted disclosure, a dependent student meets the IRS definition of dependent; the student must be listed as a dependent on their parent's IRS tax return. Parents of dependent students do not have rights to student information outside of what is deemed necessary by the financial aid department for the purposes of financial aid, without the written consent of the dependent student in accordance with the procedures of this policy.
- C. Educational Record – Any record which contains student personally identifiable information, with certain exceptions, maintained by an institution. Records include college transcripts, grades, academic standing, financial aid awards and history, student accounts and billing information, class attendance, conduct and discipline records, and advising notes. These records may contain a student's name or information from which an individual student, or students, can be personally (individually) identified and may be maintained in any medium by any school official, with the exception of sole

possession records or private notes that are not released to any other individual.

D. Directory Information – Information not generally considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Including but not limited to:

- Legal name,
- address,
- telephone listing,
- GRCC e-mail address,
- GRCC username,
- student status: part-time/full-time;
- declared academic program,
- weight and height of athletes,
- most recent previous school attended,
- photographs,
- date and place of birth,
- participation in officially recognized activities and sports,
- dates of attendance,
- degrees/certificates,
- date of graduation,
- awards

Directory Information does not include student identification numbers, Social Security numbers, or other personally identifiable information. Personally identifiable is protected information, please reference the procedures outlined in GRCC's Personally Identifiable Information Policy.

A student's right to opt out of directory information disclosure under FERPA does not include the right to refuse to wear or disclose a student ID card or badge.

E. School Official – Any of the following when acting in a student's legitimate educational interest

1. Person employed by the college in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement and health personnel).
2. Company or individual(s) with whom the College has contracted e.g. attorney, auditor, collection agency.
3. Person serving on the Board of Trustees.
4. Student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.
5. Volunteers and Interns working for the College.

F. Legitimate Educational Interest - A school official has legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility acting in a student's educational interest as determined by the Provost Office. External requests for information should be submitted to the Registrar.

G. Authorized representatives – Any entity or individual designated by federal, state, or local authorities including the U.S. attorney general; the secretary of education; or a state or local educational authority to perform an audit, evaluation, or any compliance or enforcement activity in connection with federal legal requirement that relate to federal-or state-supported education programs.

H. Education program – Any program that is principally engaged in the provision of education, including early childhood education, postsecondary education, special education, job training, career and technical education, adult education, and any program administered by an educational agency or institution.

X. Procedures

A. Guidelines for Faculty and Staff

1. Do not use any portion of the Social Security number or Student ID number of a student in a public posting of any kind; e.g., grades or attendance. Students may view final grades using their GRCC Online Student Center.
2. Graded tests and assignments should only be accessible to the specific student submitting them. Faculty may use Blackboard or PeopleSoft Gradebook to post grades. Final grades must be posted in PeopleSoft.
3. When writing a letter of recommendation for a student, you must have written consent from the student if you plan to include anything other than directory information.
4. When releasing non-directory information in person or over the phone, it is required to authenticate a student's identity using reasonable methods. Please see "GRCC FERPA Best Practice Guidelines for Faculty and Staff" for best practices. This guide can be found at <http://www.grcc.edu//studentrecords/studentrightsunderferpa>
5. Official communications should only be sent to the student's GRCC email account. Persons communicating with students regarding educational records should not copy others or forward to others without a legitimate educational interest.
6. Employees who fail to take reasonable measures to secure student educational records will be subject to disciplinary actions. In the case of lost or stolen records containing personally identifiable student information, please follow the incident reporting procedure outlined in the Personally Identifiable Information Policy.

7. Students may not be required to consent to a release of information of their academic record to participate in GRCC programs.
8. GRCC is required to respond to FOIA requests, military recruiters, and educational institutions with student directory information when requested.

B. Stop Form for Information Release

The college may release directory information to other educational institutions about students who are on the graduation list. Students who do not wish this information released must fill out the directory information STOP Form. This form may be obtained by contacting the Student Records/Registrar's office.

C. FERPA Consent Form

Under FERPA, institutions will not disclose any information about students without prior written consent from the student unless otherwise allowed by law, for example required directory information release under FOIA laws and the Solomon Amendment. If a student would like the College to be able to discuss their student record with their parents or other individuals, they must complete the FERPA Consent Form located on the GRCC Student Records/Registrar web page.

D. Student Review of their Records

1. Students should submit to the Registrar written requests that identify the record(s) they wish to inspect. The College will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the College official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.

2. Students may ask the College to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. The student should write the College official responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the College decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the College will confirm in the record that it was not modified, notify the student of the decision and advise the student of his or her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

E. Disclosure of Dependent Student's Educational Records.

The Office of Financial Aid may disclose information contained in financial aid records to parents of Dependent Students.

F. Posting of FERPA

FERPA information will be posted in the catalog, College website and the GRCC Student Handbook.

G. Subpoenas

Any subpoena related to a student or student records which are received by an office at Grand Rapids Community College should be sent directly to the Registrar. Subpoenas are time-sensitive documents, which must be inter-office mailed by staff to the Registrar.

XI. Forms

Stop Information Release
Form FERPA Consent Form

XII. Effective Date

Revised December 7, 2012
Revised September, 2017
Revised June, 2022

XIII. Policy History

Adopted August 13, 1991
Updated for accuracy and Federal policy changes

XIV. Next Review / Revision Date

September, 2025 or upon changes in State or Federal regulations