What is FERPA?
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal privacy law that gives students certain protections with regard to their education records, such as grades, transcripts, disciplinary records, contact and family information, and class schedules. Students have the right to review their education records and to request changes under limited circumstances. To protect privacy, the law generally requires schools to ask for written consent before disclosing personally identifiable information to individuals other than the student.

Does FERPA give me a right to see the education records of my son or daughter who is in college?

Although FERPA gives elementary and high school parents rights, when a student turns 18 years old or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, all rights afforded to you as a parent under FERPA transfer to the student (“eligible student”).

However, FERPA provides ways in which a school may share information from an eligible student’s education records with parents without the student’s consent in certain circumstances. For example:

- Schools may disclose education records to parents if a health or safety emergency involves their son or daughter.

  At the University of South Carolina, these are addressed on an individual basis, but the most common is when a parent wants access to a student’s schedule when a family emergency occurs. For safety reasons, USC does not release a student’s class schedule, but in the case of a legitimate emergency, officials may contact the student on the parent’s behalf.

- Schools may inform parents if the student, if he or she is under age 21, has violated any law or policy concerning the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance.

  This type of release is conducted in accordance with the law by the Office of Student Judicial Programs.

- Schools may disclose education records to parents if the student is claimed as a dependent for tax purposes.

  The University of South Carolina uses this exception as a last resort, only when a parent is unable to obtain required records information from his or her son or daughter through normal communications. The parent may submit a notarized affidavit and proof of tax dependency by contacting the Office of the University Registrar.
• A school official may generally share with a parent information that is based on that official’s personal knowledge or observation of the student.

FERPA does not prohibit a University official from speaking in general with a parent about a student, only from releasing records information without consent.

Who else gets to see my son or daughters education records?

To protect student privacy, schools are generally prohibited from disclosing personally identifiable information without the student’s written consent. Exceptions to this rule include:
• disclosures made to school officials with legitimate educational interests;

At the University of South Carolina, a school official is a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position; a person or company with whom the University has contracted to perform required functions (such an attorney, auditor, service provider, or collection agent); a person serving on the Board of Trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

• disclosures made to another school at which the student intends to enroll;

At the University of South Carolina, a student should normally follow procedures to request a release of his/her record to another institution;

• disclosures made to state or local education authorities for auditing or evaluating federal- or state-supported education programs, or enforcing relevant federal laws;

To authorized representatives of the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Defense (Solomon Amendment), U.S. Attorney General, the Comptroller General of the United States, state education authorities, organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the University, and accrediting organizations; to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Immigration and Customs Enforcement Bureau (ICE) in order to comply with the requirements of SEVIS.

• disclosures including information the school has designated as “directory information.”

What is directory information?

FERPA defines “directory information” as information contained in a student’s education record that generally would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.

The University of South Carolina has designated the following items as Directory Information: a student’s name, electronic mail address, local and permanent mailing
addresses and telephone numbers, University ID card photograph, semesters of attendance, enrollment status (full- or part-time), date of admission, date of expected or actual graduation, school, major and minor fields of study, whether or not currently enrolled, classification (freshman, etc.), type of degree being pursued, degrees, honors, and awards received (including scholarships and fellowships), weight and height of members of athletic teams, and whether the student has participated in officially recognized activities and sports sponsored by the University.

The University may disclose any of these items without prior written consent, unless the student has submitted a written request to the Office of the University Registrar not to release directory information pertaining to them. Requests will be processed within one business day after receipt.

Telephone directories are published during the summer; students eligible to enroll for the upcoming fall term are listed in the printed directory unless the Office of the University Registrar is notified by May 31. The electronic directory is updated each weekend; requests for non-disclosure will be honored with the next update after the request is processed by the staff of the Office of the University Registrar.

**Contact Information**

For further information about *FERPA* at the University of South Carolina, parents may contact the Office of the University Registrar, Petigru College, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. 29208; The Registrar’s Privacy concerns line is 803-777-3541 or privacyconcerns@sc.edu.


Family Policy Compliance Office

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Ave. S.W.

Washington, DC 20202-5920

202-260-3887

For quick, informal responses to routine questions about *FERPA*, parents may also e-mail the Family Policy Compliance Office at [FERPA.Customer@ED.Gov](mailto:FERPA.Customer@ED.Gov).