

# FERPA 101

## SELF-DIAGNOSTIC QUIZ

Test your knowledge of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Michigan State University Access to Student Information guidelines.

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Prepared by the Office of the Registrar

## QUESTION 1:



You receive a frantic phone call from an individual who says he is a student's father and must get in touch with his daughter or son immediately because of an emergency. Can you tell him when and where her or his next class is today?



**ANSWER:**

**YES, BUT ONLY IF IT IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY EMERGENCY.**

**IF ALL THE FACTS COMBINED LEAD ONE TO THE CONCLUSION A THREAT TO THE SAFETY OR HEALTH OF A STUDENT OR OTHER INDIVIDUAL IS AT RISK, INFORMATION FROM A STUDENT'S EDUCATIONAL RECORD MAY BE RELEASED WITHOUT STUDENT CONSENT.**

**IF THE SITUATION IS ONE IN WHICH THE STUDENT'S SAFETY MAY BE THREATENED, CALL THE MSU DEPARTMENT OF POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY (355-2222).**

**IF YOU QUESTION WHETHER THE CALLER IS THE STUDENT'S PARENT OR WHETHER THE SITUATION CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY IN WHICH INFORMATION SHOULD BE RELEASED, FOR GUIDANCE YOU SHOULD CALL:**

**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR (355-3300) OR  
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL (353-3530).**



## QUESTION 2:



A project belonging to a local police officer, who is enrolled as a student in the course, is missing from a classroom. The next day, this on-duty, uniformed officer comes to the department office to investigate the theft. He asks for a copy of the class list for the course so he can complete his investigation. Can you provide one?



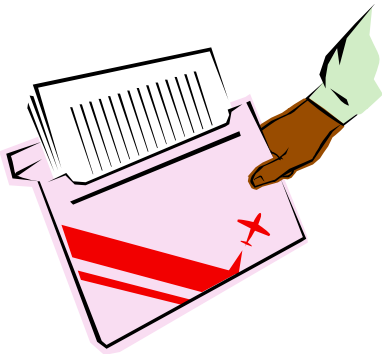
ANSWER:

NO. CLASS LISTS CONTAIN CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT INFORMATION AND CANNOT BE GIVEN TO FELLOW CLASSMATES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. IN THIS CASE, THE FACT THAT THE STUDENT IS ALSO A POLICE OFFICER IS IRRELEVANT.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION CAN BE RELEASED IF PROPERLY SUBPOENAED. SUBPOENAS SHOULD BE REFERRED TO THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OR THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.



### QUESTION 3:



As an instructor, you have been asked to write a letter of recommendation for a student. You would like to review the student's academic folder before writing the letter. Can you review the student's academic folder?



ANSWER:

NO. UNLESS THE STUDENT PROVIDES YOU WITH WRITTEN CONSENT, YOUR NEED-TO-KNOW, AS AN INSTRUCTOR, IS LIMITED TO INFORMATION SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO YOUR CLASS.



## QUESTION 4:

Can instructors leave exams, papers, or graded projects outside of their offices for students to pick up?



ANSWER:

NO. YOU CAN NOT LEAVE PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE MATERIALS IN A PUBLIC PLACE. THIS IS A VIOLATION OF FERPA BECAUSE IT IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR OTHERS TO HAVE ACCESS TO STUDENTS' EDUCATION RECORD.



## QUESTION 5:



An unauthorized person retrieves information from a computer screen that you left unattended. Under FERPA, is Michigan State University responsible?



ANSWER:

YES. THE MEDIUM IN WHICH THE INFORMATION IS HELD IS UNIMPORTANT. INFORMATION ON A COMPUTER SCREEN SHOULD BE TREATED THE SAME AS PRINTED REPORTS. NO INFORMATION SHOULD BE LEFT ACCESSIBLE OR UNATTENDED.



## QUESTION 6:



You receive a call from a company asking for email addresses of several students who attended a recent job fair. Is there any way the company can get this information?



ANSWER:

YES. REFER THEM TO MSU'S HOMEPAGE AT [WWW.MSU.EDU](http://WWW.MSU.EDU) TO SEARCH MSU—PEOPLE TO LOOK UP INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. THE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT, HOWEVER, PROVIDE “LISTS” OF STUDENT NAMES AND ADDRESSES TO SOURCES OUTSIDE OF THE UNIVERSITY.

A STUDENT'S EMAIL ADDRESS IS CONSIDERED TO BE DIRECTORY INFORMATION UNLESS THE STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED THIS INFORMATION.

ALL OTHER REQUESTS FOR STUDENT DATA SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE.



## QUESTION 7:



You receive an e-mail message from a reputable employer asking for names and addresses for students with a GPA of 3.0 or better. They have good job opportunity they would like to share. As this could be helpful to students, can you give the employer this information?



ANSWER:

NO. GPA OR ANY PART THEREOF IS  
CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION. ALTHOUGH  
POTENTIALLY BENEFICIAL FOR THE STUDENT,  
THIS INFORMATION CANNOT BE SHARED  
WITHOUT THE STUDENT'S PERMISSION.



## QUESTION 8:



Professor X wants to know the GPA of Student Y and says he is entitled to it because he is a school official and needs it to complete his official academic responsibilities. Do you give it to him without further question?



## ANSWER:

NO. FURTHER QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ASKED REGARDING THE NEED. IF PROFESSOR X IS THE STUDENT'S ADVISOR OR THE CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT IN WHICH THE STUDENT IS MAJORING, HE CAN HAVE THIS INFORMATION (BUT HE PROBABLY ALREADY HAS ACCESS TO IT HIMSELF). HOWEVER, ALL FACULTY MEMBERS MAY STILL HAVE OR MAY NOT HAVE A LEGITIMATE EDUCATIONAL NEED TO KNOW STUDENT'S INFORMATION. FOR EXAMPLE, IF PROFESSOR X WANTS TO KNOW THE STUDENT'S GPA BECAUSE HE IS TRYING TO DECIDE ON HOW HE SHOULD GRADE THE STUDENT, THIS IS NOT A LEGITIMATE EDUCATION NEED TO KNOW.



## QUESTION 9:



- Your daughter attends school at MSU. She needs her transcript sent to a company so she can get a job. There is a deadline and your daughter does not have time to take care of it herself. Because you work at MSU and have access to her record, can you make the request on her behalf?



## ANSWER:

- No. STUDENT ACADEMIC RECORDS CAN ONLY BE RELEASED WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION DIRECTLY FROM THE STUDENT. SIMPLY BEING AN EMPLOYEE OF THE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT GIVE YOU A LEGITIMATE EDUCATIONAL INTEREST TO COMPLETE YOUR JOB.





DID YOU EARN A 4.0 ON THIS QUIZ? IF NOT, VISIT:

[HTTP://WWW.REG.MSU.EDU/ROINFO/NOTICES/PRIVACYGUIDELINES.ASP](http://www.reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/NOTICES/PRIVACYGUIDELINES.ASP)

TO UPDATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF

**STUDENT RECORDS AND THE FEDERAL FAMILY  
EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)**

AND

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ACCESS TO STUDENT  
INFORMATION**

Update: 8/13/09

