

# FERPA Explained for Students

## 1. What are my student rights under FERPA?

TAMUK must annually notify students in attendance of their rights under FERPA, including:

- **Right to inspect and review your education records**
- **Right to amend an incorrect record under certain circumstances**
- **Right to consent to disclosure (with exceptions) of information from your education record**
- **Right to file a complaint with US Department of Education**

## 2. When do my FERPA Rights begin?

FERPA applies for a student when he or she enrolls in a higher education institution at any age. Your FERPA rights begin when you enroll for classes.

## 3. What are education records?

With certain exceptions, an education record is any record (1) from which a student can be personally identified and (2) maintained by the university. A student has the right of access to these records. Education records include any records in whatever medium (handwritten, print, magnetic tape, film, diskette, etc.) in the possession of any school official.

## 4. Who is considered a "School Official" at TAMUK?

- A person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel, health staff and volunteers)
- A person or company with whom the University has contracted as its agent to provide a service instead of using University employees or officials (including attorneys, auditors, bookstore)
- A person serving on the Board of Trustees
- 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.

## 5. Can my parents access my student education records?

When a student begins attending a postsecondary institution regardless of age, FERPA rights transfer to the student. Hence, parents have no inherent rights to access or inspect their son or daughter's education records, unless the student is a dependent as defined in section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or parents have obtained a consent from their child to release some or all of their education record information.

## 6. Can my spouse access my student records?

The spouse has no rights under FERPA to access the student's education record.

## **7. How can I restrict the release of my directory information?**

TAMUK may release directory information to anyone unless you send a written request to the Office of the Registrar that it be withheld. All other information included in a student's education record will not be released to anyone without the student's written consent. Detailed information on what is defined as directory information, how to restrict its release, and what happens after directory information is restricted is explained in the Directory Information page.

If you wish to have your directory information set to confidential, fill out the FERPA Authorization Release Form and check the confidential box off. The form is found on the Registrar's Office website under the forms page. NOTE: Restricting certain directory information such as your name, program of study, or degrees received may prohibit any release of information regarding your attendance at TAMUK. This could prevent you from being recognized for awards, participating in commencement ceremonies, receiving enrollment verifications, etc.

## **8. If I restrict the release of my directory information, what happens when the faculty requires me to share my email address with other students for class work and class discussions?**

Restrictions on directory information do not apply to in-class communications. You (the student) have no inherent right to anonymity in the classroom whether it's an online class or a physical classroom. If emails are a required part of your class work and class discussions and deemed necessary by the professor, then he/she may share your email address with your classmates.

## **9. How do I request letters of recommendation from faculty members?**

If you are requesting a letter of recommendation that will include personally identifiable information obtained from your education records (for example, GPA, grades, etc) then the faculty will request a signed release. The release will need to specify the records that may be disclosed, state the purpose of the disclosure, and identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure can be made.

## **10. I am a former TAMUK student. Do I have the same rights as current students to inspect my education records?**

Students who have ceased attendance or who have graduated from TAMUK have the same FERPA rights as currently enrolled students to inspect and review their records and may have a hearing to amend an education record.

## **11. As a former student of TAMUK, may I request that my education records not be disclosed?**

Former students may request non-disclosure of their education records, but TAMUK does not have to honor the request. However, TAMUK can choose to grant the right of non-disclosure to former students.

## **12. How do I authorize release of information to a specified third party?**

Students can authorize the release of non-directory information to a specified third party by filling out and submitting the "Student's Consent for TAMUK to Release Information to Student's Specified Third Party" (PDF) to the Office of the Registrar's Office.

### **13. Whom do I contact with questions or concerns?**

General questions may be directed to the Office of the Registrar.

- Email: [registrar@tamuk.edu](mailto:registrar@tamuk.edu)
- Call: (361) 593-2811

### **14. Where can I find out more information about FERPA?**

- U.S. Department of Education (Office of Compliance)
- AACRAO

