

From High School to College: Student Privacy and Communication

Transcript

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Good Afternoon and welcome to our Hawkeye Parents & Families Webinar Series. My name is Danielle Martinez and I work in Academic Support & Retention and will be the moderator for today's webinar. These monthly webinars are designed to integrate parents & family members as stakeholders in your students' education and provide you with up to date information that may apply to your student's transition to the University of Iowa. We understand you are an important part of your students' support system and they may continue to seek your advice and guidance on many issues ranging from roommate concerns, grades, or health resources or what to do in their courses. Therefore, we want you to be an informed resource for your student.

We hope that these webinars provide a platform for us to consistently engage with you by providing a proactive, open forum for questions, concerns, and dialogue. Today's webinar is **From High School to College: Student Privacy & Communication** Hosted by: Academic Support & Retention, the Office of the Registrar, and the Academic Advising Center. Our guests today are: Larry Lockwood, Assistant Provost and University Registrar from the Office of the Registrar and Maureen Schafer, Senior Associate Director from the Academic Advising Center. In the webinar today, you will gain a greater understanding of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and how it relates to the communication you will be given from the University of Iowa, understand the differences in communication from high school to college, and understand how to implement a communication plan that works best for your family.

Each webinar is recorded and then posted on the Academic Support & Retention website so it can be accessed at a later date or viewed by individuals who were not able to attend the live webinar. Therefore, during the presentations, your mic functions will be muted. Later we will have a Question & Answer portion, where you can use the raise hand function or type in your question into the question box on the side. Let's get started with an overview of **FERPA & Student Privacy**

Program

FERPA & Student Privacy

Larry: Hi good afternoon, this is Larry Lockwood. FERPA was passed in 1974, it is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and it protects the privacy of the student's educational records and the schools that receive funding from the secretary of education. FERPA was passed in 1974 but there were previous legislation passed earlier that will present why this was necessary. In 1972, the age of majority law was passed where it gave all the rights for drinking, for smoking, for signing contracts, to 18-21 year olds. This was done in March of 1972 and came out of the Vietnam War. If we can send 18 year olds off to fight and to die, we certainly can give them the rights that every other person has at age 18. Under FERPA, colleges must not release educational records without the written consent of the student. This regulation does not apply to some directory information that we deem as directory information such as name and phone number, dorm room, etc. And I'll give you a list of that later on. Unless the student has blocked disclosure, now we do give the right to block that information to the student. Only about 400 students of our 32,000 student on campus have blocked that information. They

would rather have someone be able to get ahold of them than to block any information. Under FERPA, college students have the right to access their own records, to seek correction of erroneous records, and to block disclosure of any or all directory information.

Some of the directory, if you look a little bit further at the next slide, their local address and phone number, their email address, the hometown and state they're from, their HawkID, their college class and year, dates of attendance, major, the fact that they're full or part time, most recent education institution attended, the degrees awarded etc. And at the last one is the height and weight of the athletic team members. Now when this law was passed, apparently there was a little humor going on in the federal government, just like there is today, and the different senators from different states wanted to know how big the front line was and so this got added to the law. And so now we have to produce a list of the height and weight of the football team, which is ridiculous. We laugh every time somebody asks for that by the way.

So directory information, generally speaking, directory information may be released without the student consent. And that is usually done if there has been a request by the department of education or the state department of education and we usually give only statistical information and gross statistical information. Usually the name of the student is not associated with the record we release.

So releasing directory information off campus, external requests of information are handled through the office of the registrar. If a company asks for a list of students from us, we will provide that for them. Because in Iowa, we have an open records law that any public information can be released publicly. So their names, their addresses, the information that we just talked about on the page before would be releasable. We get the name and the address of the requester, the indicated interest in the directory information, the names and addresses of the persons to whom the records are going to and the date of disclosure. We maintain this information in case our information was used erroneously or illegally and it's been done a few times. Some of the requests we get on a routine basis is from the military. So we allow them to have access to, once a semester, to the names and they usually send it out and what they are doing is sending out recruiting information. We also send it out to Mama's Cookie Company here in town, and when they send advertisements to the students they do it through the email. And she is interested in selling her cookies. The same thing is true of other restaurants here in town that are trying to get in contact with the students. We can't block that request, we must go ahead and handle it. There's about 250-300 requests a semester for this type of information. One of the rights that the student has is that they can take a look at the records at any time. So they can come into our office and see what their transcript looks like or any records that we might maintain. And what we've done over the last five to ten years is to electronically give them access to everything. There isn't anything in our record system that the student doesn't have access to. So they can go out through ISIS, which is our student record system that students register through, they update their information, change of address, all of those processes can be done through ISIS. And they have total access to their financial aid information, their billing information, their grade system. And they can pass this information on to you and we'll talk about this a little bit later on. Some of the people who can access the student records here on campus may include faculty, administrators, researchers, clerical professional employees, support staff and members of the board of trustees. And any student who might be serving on a committee such as a review committee, an appeals committee, we usually involve our students with many of the student committees we have like faculty or administrative committees because we feel that students are business and need to know what is going on at all times. So even if a student withheld

their information, these type of committees, if they have an educational need to know, have access to that information.

Now there are other organizations who can access this information too. Such as if we receive a subpoena, we would have to send a record off to that agency, but we would also send it to the student at the same time saying that their record had been subpoenaed. Persons in organizations providing financial aid, so we do get requests from banks to verify full time attendance for a student, national student clearing house is a place we also send information to. We would send information from a request from a dean's office. Although they do now have access electronically to all that information. Accredited organizations come in and spot check student records to make sure that what they're being taught, what their courses are on their transcript or what this institution says they should be. And their spot checks periodically every five years. Authorized representatives from the government agencies come in and evaluate audit records as well. But usually they are looking at one percent of the student records. And it is the total student record that we give them.

What about parental rights? FERPA's rights transfer to the student when they come to a post-secondary institution. So in high school, you had access to the student record, you spoke for the student, you're the parent, you were in control. But once they come into the university, whether they be 16 or 17 years old, the rights transfer to the student. Unlike the general population, students under the general age of 21 may be given access to information regarding violation of law and university policy and control substance if the parents has that information on their taxes. So if you declare them as a student, or I should say if you declare them as a dependent, and they are under the age of 21, we would be in contact with you, if something like this happened. An alcohol problem, a drug problem, anything in violation of the student rules, you may be contacted. If there is an emergency situation, where the student becomes ill, or you feel that there is an issue going on with them that you don't understand, and it is for the health and welfare of the student, you can contact the university and we will talk about the student. So you wouldn't need consent of the student to talk about them, especially for health and welfare. We want to make sure that the students are safe and any issues that are present that we can resolve them for the benefit of the student.

So we do have a system that we created a number of years ago, to allow access to the student record. It is called a Guest Account. Parents, guardians, and others may be granted access to view the student record through this guest account. Students will grant the level of access to you and you may have up to three active accounts at any one time. And this allows for divorce parents to both have access to the student record, and a third party as well.

The students create a guest account through ISIS. So the student will go in through their ISIS account and tab down to their guest account and set up a password for you. And that password will be yours and you can access that student record and certain levels of that student record as much as you want. So the student would set this account up, call you and let you know what your password is and then you can access different levels of information. You can look at the admissions profile, you can view their schedule, their grades, and their financial aid. You can view fees, the billing, the 1098 account. There are a number of other accesses that you would have access to as well as the automated payment system. And we felt allowing the student to give you this access would benefit you and the campus because students often don't get things done on time, and you will. So we want you to have this access and we want you to have an open dialogue with you as much as

possible too if there are issues that are related to the student. Changing and deleting access is the right of the student. So once they give you that access, they can delete that access at any time. A number of years ago when we were doing this with paper, and we give a presentation at orientation, many of the parents say, "We want that form to allow us to get access." So we turned in forms and out of the freshman class, 4400 students, 3750 filled out a form giving access to the parents. When they came to campus in the fall, 3168 took that access away. So that wasn't a good process. But as long as you are communicating with your son or daughter, we have set this system to allow as easy access as possible. So do talk to your son or daughter to get your password and to access to the levels and areas that you'd like.

Then we have some screenshots here that show you gain that access, and the Registrar's office also has a website that you can go to get the same information.

Viewing the student information. I'm going to see if there's a couple other ones. Oh award notifications, aid disbursements, there are a number of other screens that we are going to give you access to. The university is also in the future planning in ISIS will allow you to set up your own passwords and not have to go through your child once they give you access. So once you get your first password and first sign on, you can change your own in the future. So much of what the student sees, you will be able to see at some point in time. Now if you have the student's password and sign on, you have total access to their entire system. We discourage that because the student may change their password and then you don't have the correct password to get into the system. And they you're going to call us and say, "I lost that password, what is my student's password?" We're not going to give it to you. So do stay in communication with your son or daughter so that if they've given you that access, you can continue to have it. Now FERPA doesn't affect the parent conversation with academic advisors. Only that you are given permission to talk to the advisor. The student can go out on ISIS and allow access to you to talk to anyone on campus or a specific advisor. And that student can also set a date range. They can say forever, they can say this week, or today, but that access is allowable by your student through permission that is on ISIS. And we hope that if an issue does come up, that they use that to allow you to have that access, because when you call us, that is the first thing we will check to see, if you are given permission to talk about certain issues that the student is having problems with. So that is kind of an overview of the FERPA rules as the registrar's office sees them. And now I'd like to give you to Maureen Schafer.

Maureen: Well thank you, Larry. Good afternoon everyone. I'm Maureen Schafer from Academic Advising Center and I am happy to be here with you today. Larry has shared with us some important info on FERPA and how your students have the ability to share certain information with you. I would like to talk a little about how FERPA comes into play when parents contact the University seeking information related to their students and I will share that from the perspective of academic advising. You may know from Orientation that the staff I work at the Academic Advising Center advise the majority of the first-year students. The only students we do NOT advise are those who are directly admitted to their college – Engineering, Nursing and Business. The perspective I will provide today is from my work at the Advising Center but I think the approach we will discuss will help with any interaction you might have with a faculty or staff member at the University.

When I think about the occasions when parents call our office, I think there are typically two general categories of reasons parents call:

- i. Questions related to monitoring students' academic progress

- ii. Seeking information
- iii. Let's talk about both of these situations

One of the biggest changes from high school to college is how students monitor their progress and how much information they have at any given time. Our advisors will talk with students about how to monitor their progress and how it is different from high school. In most high schools students have access to some sort of website such as "PowerSchool" to monitor each of their classes. These sites get students used to being able to get a snapshot view of their progress in each class – all of the assignments, their current grade and often their current overall GPA. That level of detail is not going to be similar here at the University.

Students at Iowa use ICON which stands for Iowa Courses Online. When they log into their ICON site, they will most likely see each of their courses. The level to which professors use ICON can vary – some post all assignments there, some post announcements, some collect papers there through the Dropbox function and many record grades there. This is good for you to know so that you can ask your student if they are monitoring their grades on ICON. What it doesn't have is a running tab of their grades as many had in high school. They need to check their course syllabus for the grading scale to know where they stand. Some courses are graded on a curve and they may not know where they stand grade-wise until the end of the semester. When students are uncertain of their grades I tell them to talk with their TA or professor to get further clarification. Those can be helpful conversations. We find that first-year students are a little intimidated to go see professors and TAs during office hours but they get more comfortable with it over time.

Sometimes parents will call us to check to see how students are doing in their classes. Even if a student has given consent for us to speak to parents, we still don't know how they are doing in each class. As advisors, we don't have access to their ICON site. We only see midterm grades that are in the D and F range and final grades. So it is each student's responsibility to keep up with their classes and how they are doing.

As I mentioned, this is a significant change from high school and we help students navigate the tools available to them because this will be an important skill they will need all 4 years. We appreciate parents help in talking to students about how they are monitoring their progress. If your student has questions about this, they can talk to their professors, TAs and their academic advisor.

The other general category of parent inquiries is in regard to seeking information. This can take the shape of seeking info about their student or seeking information about policies and procedures. I want to prepare you for how these conversations might go and give you some tips on how to ask questions. In general, we encourage you to get as much information from your student as possible and then contact us if you still have questions. If you are calling to seek information about your student, this is where we will be limited by FERPA and the advisor will tell you that over the phone. If your student has completed the online consent form, we can more freely talk with you about their situation. I still think the conversation can be fruitful even if we don't have consent from your student. This is where you asking the right questions can help you. My main recommendation is for you to ask us your question in the frame of policy, procedure or philosophy. If you frame your question that way, there is a lot we can talk about. Where we are limited is in sharing personal information about our interactions with your student. Let's look at an example: Mary is the mother of a first-year student at Iowa. Mary gets the sense that her daughter is floundering in school. She is not sure she has even seen her advisor. Her daughter reports that her first few tests haven't gone well and Mary is not sure if

she knows about or has connected with resources. She's really worried about her but is not sure if she is telling the whole story. Mary feels stuck and doesn't know what to do. She doesn't want to be a helicopter parent but is wondering how this is going to go for her daughter. I think it is OK for Mary to call us in that situation. I would recommend that Mary start the conversation by telling the advisor she is aware of FERPA and how advisors are limited in what they can share about specific students and that she is calling to inquire about our process at the Advising Center and to get some advice.

She can then structure her questions to ask about procedures, not about the advisor's interactions with her daughter. The question is, if a first-year student is struggling, how do you know? When do students come in for advising? After getting answers to those questions, Mary can ask for advice on where she and her daughter can get information on academic help resources on campus. Mary is welcome to then share any info with the advisor.

The more the advisor knows about what is going on with the student, the more they can help. Remember – FERPA doesn't prevent YOU from talking....you can share all you want. While the advisor can't say it on the phone, the advisor will likely outreach to that student right away if she hasn't seen her yet.

I think it is important to let you know that we have a developmental approach to our work with students. Our role is to help your student navigate the university. We view every interaction as a teachable moment so that as time goes on, they have the skills to help themselves. It's similar to parenting in that we are teaching them to not need us anymore.

If you run interference for them, they don't gain these valuable skills. So the approach we recommend is to talk to your student. If they are confused or need some help, talk with them about their options and encourage them to reach out to the appropriate person to help them. Once they do this, they will build that skill and are more likely to reach out in the future. You may have seen this in high school where they were intimidated at first but got more comfortable over time.

If you feel stuck and want some advice, give us a call. We are a partnership and we value your role

In general, I want you to know that FERPA does not prevent us from talking with you. As an example, I took a parent phone call yesterday and was able to have a lengthy conversation with a mother without even know who her student was for most of the conversation. She shared information about her daughter and the situation and I was able to share with her what resources we have at Iowa to support her student. Near the end of the conversation I took the student's name so that I could ensure that we follow up with the student, but in no way did FERPA prevent us from having a successful conversation. So we will navigate this new road along with you as we all work to help your students succeed at Iowa.

Danielle – I will turn it back to you now for questions.

Danielle: So thanks so much, Maureen and Larry, for all of the great information about FERPA and how we can use this to help guide our conversations. So now we are going to move into the question and answer portion of our webinar. Please remember that we have lots of people attending this webinar and presenters are unable to answer questions about specifics on your student's experience, but can provide information that may be helpful

in guiding your student. As a reminder, if you have a question, type in your question into the question box on the side. We will then read the question so all participants can hear and then presenters will answer.

If you are unable to type your question and you need to use the mic function, please use the raise hand function, so we can unmute your mic. If we are unable to get to your question during the webinar, we will follow-up with you via email to answer the question.

(Q&A with participants)

Danielle: Does the password for a student's ISIS record expire at any length of time?

Larry: Well yes it does. It first started expiring after 90 days and we knew that was a problem. So I think you have one year to change your password. We are trying to make sure that this is the same rule for the rest of campus. We have to change our passwords after one year so we like to use the same criteria.

Danielle: We also got a question about where you can remind us to find a FERPA release for the students so they can sign off.

Larry: The FERPA release is on the student record on ISIS. So all the students use ISIS to register, they use it to change their address. It is easy to go onto ISIS for the student and to let them know, and to put the dates in that they are going to release and who that information is being released to. Or the same thing, who you want to talk to.

Danielle: Maureen, we have a question about how do we structure our conversations with students to ask them about their grades? 31:05!!!!!!

Maureen: Yeah this is a really good point and something I forgot to mention when I was talking about the different between grades in high school and grades in college. In high school, students have lots of grades. So there is lots of information that they are checking on a daily basis in high school for homework that has been graded. That really changes at the university because they may have a lot of work to do here, but it may be that in one of their classes, their entire grade is based on two exams and a final. And so I think the question to ask your student is, "tell me about the grading for your different classes. How is it varying and how do you feel about your progress so far?" Because then it really is going to vary by class and so I think that will open up a conversation to determine if the student needs to go talk to a professor or TA about their grade for a particular class. But especially at this point in time, we're in week three, they very likely have not had anything graded yet depending on their classes so that's not uncommon.

Danielle: Maureen, there is a logistical question on where students can find their advisor? Sometimes they come for orientation and it's a whirlwind of information and they don't remember that person's name.

Maureen: Absolutely. So going back to Larry's response before, students should go into their ISIS account. And when they get into ISIS, there is a menu at the top that says student records. And under their student records is where they can find their advisor information. So that is very important for them to know.

Danielle: Hey Larry, going back to the question about guest ID, there are some folks that are wondering when it expires like in November. Can that expiration date be changed?

Larry: Yes, you can change the expiration date when your son or daughter gives you a new password. So if she gives you a new password, you can change it now or you can change it in October, and you'd get an additional time.

Danielle: There is a question about if the RAs are allowed to speak to parents with how their student is doing.

Larry: Well if you put the RA on the release information to talk to the RA, then yes you would have access to them. The RAs do have access to student record information because they have to work with the students. So having your son or daughter put that person's name under their file, or under that release form, then the RA can talk to you about any issues that are going on in the dorm.

Maureen: But what you're saying Larry is that without that release, RAs are held to the same restrictions that we are.

Danielle: I would also say that sometimes RAs are probably a little more difficult to get a hold of because they are also student so just as my own experience, formerly working in housing, sometimes a hall coordinator is an easier person to get ahold of because they are a full time staff member who supervises RAs so they have all their information.

Alright, we have one more coming in. So folks want to know who else can see their child's educational record. Just their advisor and their instructors? Or other folks on campus?

Larry: Well out of the Dean's Office, there are people who help students all the time, so there are actually 2600 people on this campus that can view the student record. So we are one of the most open on campus. We don't want a student to not be able to talk to somebody, and if they came in to talk to me, I'm going to open up and take a look at their student record to see what the issues are, if they're financial, I'll look at their financial aid, we'll talk about options, how to give them somebody to talk to at the financial aid office that can help them. If they've received their aid and they need more money, we'll talk about short term loans that they might get access to, but I will involve somebody in the financial aid's office as well, and they can get access to the student record. So what we are trying to do is, the more open the record is on campus, the better we can help the student.

Danielle: That looks like that's all the questions that we have. So thank you everybody for attending, that's all we have for you today. Thank you to our presenters, Larry Lockwood and Maureen Schafer, and thank you for joining us. And just a reminder, all webinars will be posted online, at uc-uiowa.edu/family-resources. If you have other questions and want them answered later, you can email us at uc-retention@uiowa.edu for a response from a University of Iowa staff member. Or they can call Larry Lockwood, and his phone number is 319-335-0217. Please join us for our next month's webinar, which is handling homesickness, and we know that homesickness is sort of coming on for students right around now, they might be missing you, so join us next month as we talk about that and strategies for success hosted by the Academic Support and Retention team and the University Counseling service on Friday October 2nd from noon to one. Thank you so much, and On Iowa, Go Hawks.