Student Records

The Whiddon College of Medicine (COM) Office of Student Records is responsible for all records of students who are currently, or have previously been, enrolled in the University of South Alabama College of Medicine (Doctor of Medicine program only). Records for Ph.D. students, and all undergraduate and other graduate programs, are handled through the University of South Alabama Registrar's Office. The Whiddon COM follows the University of South Alabama policy which complies with the rights of privacy and access to the education records of the student as set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. University policy concerning student records which is found on the University website (
http://www.southalabama.edu/bulletin/current/academic-policy/records.html
). The specifics of the policy are found in the
University Lowdown
under "Student Record Policy".

FERPA & Your Privacy

What is FERPA?
FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, is a federal law that pertains to the release of and access to educational records. The law, also known as the Buckley Amendment, applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the US Department of Education.

To which information does FERPA apply?
FERPA applies to personally identifiable information in educational records. This includes items such as the student's name, names of family members, addresses, personal identifiers such as social security numbers, and personal characteristics or other information that make the student's identity easily traceable.

What are educational records?
An educational record is any record in any medium which is maintained by the University of South Alabama or an agent acting on behalf of USA, and which is directly related to a student and contains personally identifiable information.

Some types of information are not considered education records and are not protected by FERPA. These include:

Campus law enforcement unit records;
Employment records, except for those whose employment at USA is tied to their status as a student;
USA student medical records
USA alumni records

Does FERPA apply to everyone?
FERPA rights apply to qualifying students. You are a qualifying student if you are currently attending USA, or have attended USA in the past. Applicants to the University or prospective students are not guaranteed rights under FERPA.

What are a student's rights under FERPA?
Under FERPA, a student has a right to:

- **Inspect and review their education records.**
- **Exert some control over the disclosure of information from their education records.**
- **Seek the amendment of any of their education records that they believe are inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of privacy rights.**
- **File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office.**

The University of South Alabama's FERPA policy is published every year in The Lowdown, the USA student handbook. The Lowdown is available from the USA Student Government Association Office, located in the Student Center, room 214.

Do students have a right to see their educational records?
Students have the right to inspect and review their education records. Follow the procedures below.

Students must submit a signed request to the Whiddon COM Student Records office specifying which records need to be reviewed.

A Whiddon COM Student Records staff member will arrange for access to the file and will notify you when and where the inspection may take place. Access will be granted as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the request was received in the Whiddon COM Student Records office.

Students are entitled to an explanation of any of the information contained in their file. If you are unsure of something, please ask us.

How do I correct inaccurate information?
You have the right to seek to amend any of your USA education records that you believe to be inaccurate, misleading, or that violates your right to privacy or any other of your rights.

Contact the Whiddon COM Student Records Office first. You may need to complete a form specifying which information you believe needs to be amended, and why.

If a Whiddon COM Student Records staff member cannot informally resolve the problem, you may request a formal hearing.

If the result of the formal hearing is to deny the request to change the information, you will be given the opportunity to attach a statement of explanation of disagreement, which will remain with that record.

What is directory information?
FERPA identifies certain information, called directory information, that may be disclosed without the student's permission. The university has designated the following information as directory information:

- **Student's name**
- **Local, permanent, and email addresses**
- **Photograph**
- **Major fields of study**
- **Dates of attendance**
- **Enrollment status**
- **Degrees, awards, and honors received, including selection criteria**
- **Classification**
- **Participation in officially recognized activities and sports**
- **Weight and height, if a member of an athletic team**

Who has access to student educational records?
FERPA grants USA the right to disclose information from your education records without your approval to the following:

- **University officials with a legitimate educational interest.**
- **Federal or state agencies, or organizations performing audits or official studies.**
- **Financial Aid Officers.**
- **Accrediting Agencies.**
- **Officials of other institutions in which you seek to enroll.**
- **Appropriate authorities in an emergency situation.**
- **Parties to legal actions through subpoenas and/or court orders.**

What is legitimate educational interest?
Legitimate educational interest means that a university official has a justifiable need to view an education record in order to complete his or her job responsibilities, as defined by the university. At USA, only faculty, administrators, and staff who individually or collectively have a legitimate educational interest in the student records and are acting within the limitations of their need to know may access student educational records without prior consent of the student. This would include personnel in academic offices as well as student support offices (Admissions, Student Accounting, Financial Aid, University Registrar, etc.). This is true even if the student has been granted a non-disclosure agreement.

Whom should I contact with questions or concerns?
Direct general questions to the Whiddon COM Student Records Office.

FERPA For Students

What are my rights under FERPA?

Under FERPA, you have a right to

- **Inspect and review your education records.**
- **Exert some control over the disclosure of information from your education records.**
  Seek the amendment of any of your education records that you believe to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of privacy rights.
- **File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office.**

When do FERPA rights begin?
Your FERPA rights begin when you enroll; that is, when you have registered and paid and classes have begun.

Who can access my educational records?
FERPA grants USA the right to disclose information from your education records without your approval to the following:

- **University officials with a legitimate educational interest.**
- **Federal or state agencies, or organizations performing audits or official studies.**
- **Financial Aid Officers.**
- **Accrediting Agencies.**
- **Officials of other institutions in which you seek to enroll.**
- **Appropriate authorities in an emergency situation.**
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Whom should I contact with questions or concerns?
Direct general questions to the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records.

FERPA For Faculty & Staff

Who are the Designated Records Officials within the College of Medicine?
The University has designated the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records as the records official for the Whiddon COM student academic records and transcripts. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs is the record official responsible for medical student records.

Who on campus may access student records?
School officials with a legitimate educational interest are granted permission by the Associate Deans for Medical Education and Student Affairs to review a medical student's file. A school official is defined as a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the University has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor, 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 education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Examples of official needs include IRB approved educational research. In this case, a Whiddon COM Student Records staff member will de-identify the information before providing it to the school official. In the event that the school official requires information for a specific student, such as to write a letter of recommendation, the student must first contact the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records to grant permission for the school official to view his/her records.

How do I know if a student has signed a Request for Non-disclosure?
When using Banner to access information on a student who has been granted non-disclosure, an alert box will display the message, "Warning: Information about this person is confidential." The user must click "OK" to view the record. The word "Confidential" will appear in the top left-hand corner of every subsequent screen on Banner for that student. Faculty or advisors using PAWS will see the message, "Confidential," on class rosters and degree audits for that student.

The only proper response to inquiries from third parties for any information about such a student must be "Federal Law prevents me from answering this question."

How does FERPA apply to faculty and staff?
Faculty and staff are required by law to handle students' education records in a legally specified manner. The following list should help clarify what is expected.

Do not post grades by name, Jag Number, or any portion of social security number. The University discourages public posting of grades, even if identity codes are used. The University does not permit the emailing of grades. The Office of the Registrar will post final grades on PAWS at the end of the term and students use a secure website to retrieve that information.

- **Do lock desks, file cabinets and rooms that contain student records before leaving them unattended.**
- **Do guard student records on your computer.**
- **Do not put transcripts, degree audits, grades, etc. in the trashcan. Shred any paper containing personally identifiable information.**
- **Do not leave graded papers with student names or Jag Numbers on a table for students to collect. You must not allow students access to other students' grades or personal information.**
- **Do keep your personal professional notes regarding students separate from education records. These "sole possession" notes must be kept private, not accessible by any other person except for a designated substitute.**
- **Do procure a written release from a student if you are accessing an education record to write a recommendation. If you will make reference to grade point average, or a particular grade in a course, etc., you must have a written release.**
- **Do not discuss student daily attendance, academic progress, or grades with a student's parent or guardian. Refer all such inquiries to the proper records official.**
- **Do refer all other third party requests for information from education records to the proper records official.**

When in doubt, err on the side of caution and do not release the requested information. Contact the Whiddon COM Student Records office if you require clarification of any portion of FERPA regulations.

Whom should I contact with questions or concerns?
Direct general questions to the Whiddon COM Student Records office.

FERPA For Parents

FERPA For Parents

May I access my child's student records?
At the post-secondary level, parents have no inherent right to access or inspect their son's or daughter's educational records. The right of access is limited solely to the student.

May I view my child's grades, exams, or academic progress?
Final grades, grades on exams, and other information about academic progress are examples of the confidential information that makes up part of a student's educational record. This information is protected under FERPA and parents do not have access to it.

What about crisis or emergency situations?
If nondirectory information is needed to resolve a crisis or emergency situation, an educational institution may release that information if the institution determines that the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

Whom should I contact with questions or concerns?
Direct general questions to the Whiddon COM Student Records office.

Address/Name Change

All medical students must provide the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records with their address and phone number. University-based email addresses will be provided to each student and email is the primary modality for communication between the Whiddon COM and each student.

A student who wishes to change his/her address or name should contact the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records.

Registration For Courses

All medical students are required by University policy to register prior to each semester. Registration (making course selections and enrolling in classes) is a process that is handled on the web at http://paws.southalabama.edu. Students will need their "J" or "Jag" number as well as their PIN. Students can check their registration appointment time on line at the above listed web site. Once registration is processed, the student is responsible for paying all applicable tuition and fees by the published deadline. Registration is not considered complete until all money owed to the University has been paid and all admissions documents and examinations are furnished. Failure to satisfy any of the admission or registration requirements is sufficient cause for dropping a student from all classes and voiding their registration.

Students can access their account via the web to view charges, make payment for tuition and fees owed, or view their financial aid award status.

Residency Requirements

Students who were accepted as out-of-state students and wish to change to an in-state status should view the current residency reclassification policy found on the
University Registrar's webpage
. While the policy remains the same for all University students, residency reclassification paperwork for medical students should be processed exclusively through the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records.

University of South Alabama Whiddon COM Office of Student Records
5851 USA Drive North, MSB 1005 Mobile, AL 36688 Phone: (251)460-7180

Non-Resident Fee Policy

A non-resident tuition and fee policy has been adopted for students enrolled at the University of South Alabama who are non-residents. All non-resident students, including undergraduate, graduate, and medical students, will be required to pay non-resident tuition and fees.

Reporting And Releasing Of Grades

For modules, final grades are submitted no later than 14 days after the conclusion of the module. For clerkships and electives, including externships, grades are submitted no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the course. Grades are submitted to the Office of Student Records to be entered on the student's official transcript and used for the determination of promotion, probation, or dismissal. Grades are submitted by the appropriate course directors. Grades for comprehensive OSCEs are submitted by the Director of Clinical Skills.

Concurrent with the submission of grades to the Whiddon COM Office of the Student Records, the final grades for modules and OSCEs are provided to the student. Grades for M3 and M4 are released to students from the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records.

1. Grade Change by Faculty

Once a grade of H, P, or F is received by the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records, it can only be changed by the course director and only if it was assigned in error or as the result of an academic, disciplinary, or grievance hearing that prompts a change. A temporary grade of U or X changes to a permanent grade pending successful or unsuccessful remediation by the student and notification of the results to the Whiddon COM Office of Student Records.