STUDENT RECORDS POLICY

The University accumulates data and keeps records to enable staff and faculty to plan educational opportunities to meet the needs of individual students, to better understand students, to counsel them more effectively, and to assist them in placement in graduate education or employment after graduation.

The University maintains student records in several locations, including the Office of Admissions and Records, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Business Office, offices of academic deans and faculty, Office of Student Affairs, Office of the Director of the University Core Curriculum Program, Office of Graduate Studies and Research, Office of Public Affairs, Career Services, University Health Center, University Counseling Center, Disability Services, and Alumni Office. Provisions are made in these offices for students to review and challenge the accuracy of records when appropriate and upon request.

The University complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and with the Texas Public Information Act. FERPA is a federal law intended to protect the privacy of education records, to establish the rights of students to inspect and review their education records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate or misleading information through informal or formal hearings. Information in student records may be provided to parents without the written consent of the student if the eligible student is a financial dependent of his or her parents as defined under Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Such requests should be submitted to the Office of Admissions and Records.

Students have the right to inspect and review their education records, except for the following:

1. Financial records of the student’s parents.
2. Confidential records and statements of recommendation, which were placed in the education records prior to January 1975.
3. Confidential records and statements of recommendation, which were placed in the student’s education records on or after January 1, 1975, if the student has waived the right to review the letters or statements.

Education records, as defined by FERPA, do not include the following: a personal record of a University faculty or staff member that is in the sole possession of the individual who made it and that has never been revealed to any other person except the maker’s temporary substitute; certain employment records; student health records; student records of personal counseling (records protected under other laws and regulations); and records maintained by a University law enforcement unit that were created by that unit for the purpose of law enforcement. (However, the University may release to an alleged victim of a crime of violence the results of a University disciplinary proceeding concerning the alleged perpetrator of the crime.)

The University maintains two types of student education records: directory information and other student records. Directory information is considered public information and will be released by the University upon request, in accordance with existing law. This public information includes: name; home address; local address; local telephone number; date of birth; field of study; enrollment status (full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, etc.); classification (fr., so., jr., sr.); dates of attendance; degrees, certificates, and other awards received (if any); the type of degree received; date of graduation; name of most recent previous institution attended; and similar information. A student who does not wish this public information to be released must complete the appropriate form and submit it to the Office of Admissions and Records.

With the exception of directory information, the University will not permit the release of personally identifiable information in education records without the prior written consent of the student, except as follows:
1. To appropriate University personnel who need access to educational records to perform their legitimate educational duties.

2. To officials of other schools in which the student seeks to enroll, provided the student is notified of what is being released and is given a copy if desired.

3. To federal, state, or local officials authorized by law.

4. In connection with a student’s application for, or receipt of, financial aid.

5. To organizations conducting educational studies, provided that these organizations do not release personally identifiable data.

6. To accrediting organizations.

7. To the parents who certify that a student is carried as a dependent for federal income tax purposes.

8. To appropriate persons, in an emergency, if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons.

9. To individuals requiring such information by means of a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena, provided a reasonable effort is made to notify the student in advance of compliance.

The University does not maintain records of membership in organizations or of political, racial, or religious affiliations.

The acquisition and dissemination of information for records is based on a respect and concern for the privacy and protection of the individual student. However, the obligation of confidentiality may lapse when the common welfare of the community or the welfare of the individual demands revelation such as in the case of suicidal preoccupations, expressed homicidal thoughts or actions, commission of a felony, or similar circumstances. Evaluation and interpretation of a student’s records shall be done only by a professional and qualified staff person.

POLICIES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Although every effort has been made to provide complete and accurate information in this catalog, changes may occur at any time, without notice, in academic policies and regulations.