We encourage students’ individual responsibility for their education because we believe that it is in their best interest. Parents should be aware that by law, most academic information cannot be released to anyone but the student to whom it pertains. We can give you information on general academic policies and practices and suggest some questions you might want to ask your student. The information Texas A&M University can release is restricted because of federal law, mostly embodied in what is familiarly known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). If you need information, your student is the best source, and we encourage you to establish a policy of openness and honesty when it comes to information about their work and their activities. After all, there are no legal or ethical restrictions to prevent them from answering your questions!

The University encourages students to exercise all of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Operating under the premise that the educational process is a cooperative venture between a student and the University, the policy emphasizes the following rights of eligible students:

- the right to inspect and review, with certain limited exceptions, the student’s education records, including the right to receive explanations and interpretations of the records and to obtain copies of the records when such are needed to allow the student to effectively exercise his/her right of inspection and review;
- the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
- One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person or entity: (a) employed by the university or the university system in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position; (b) serving on a university governing body or duly authorized panel or committee; or (c) employed by or under contract to the university to perform a special task, function, or service for the university.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the information requested is necessary for that official to (a) perform appropriate tasks that are specified in his/her position description or in the performance of regularly assigned duties by a lawful supervisor; (b) fulfill the terms of a contractual agreement; (c) perform a task related to a student’s education; (d) perform a task related to the discipline of a student; or (e) provide a service or benefit relating to the student or student’s family, such as health care, counseling, financial aid, job placement, or former student-related activities.

Disclosure to a school official having a legitimate educational interest does not constitute university authorization to transmit, share, or disclose any or all information received to third parties unless such disclosure is permitted or required by law; the right to correct a student’s education records when the records are inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of FERPA; the right to report violations of FERPA to the Department of Education; the right to be informed about FERPA rights.

All the rights and protections given students under FERPA belong to the student, however, information in student records may be provided to parents/legal guardians without the written consent of the student if the eligible student is a financial dependent of her/his parents/legal guardians as defined under Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.