

FERPA

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Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act

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Why we can't talk to you about the bill, even if you pay it, without your student's permission

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is federal legislation that establishes guidelines governing the way educational institutions maintain and supervise student records. The law is intended to assure student records are used for legitimate educational purposes and to control the release of records. The law prohibits the release of records without the prior consent of the student to any third party, including parents.

We understand that many parents have a reason to inquire about or assist their student in paying their tuition bills. In an effort to better serve our students and families, we have provided an opportunity for students to allow parents, guardians or third parties to receive information about the student tuition and fee bill.

A student is required to consent to the release of this information to the designated parent or third party through a waiver process. The student must initiate this waiver online through his/her SPIRE account. The procedures are listed below:

1. Student signs on to SPIRE at www.spire.umass.edu
2. On the Main Menu, select *My Personal Information* then *FERPA Privacy Waiver*.
3. Student may select up to four designees
 - a. For each designee enter first name, last name and a 4-digit code
 - b. For each designee, select the type of information you want released (Financial and/or Housing)

When a parent contacts the Bursar's Office with questions, our staff will ask for the FERPA Privacy Code. This is the 4-digit code that the student has entered on a parent's behalf. We will then verify the code and the fact Financial information has been selected as releasable. **If the parent is not listed as a designee or provides an incorrect access code, we are unable to speak to the parent about a student's bill.**

On the reverse side of this document is the definition of 'releasable information'. Please note: the University staff cannot discuss academic information (i.e., grades) with designees under any circumstances.

More information about the FERPA waiver process may be found at <http://www.oit.umass.edu/support/spire/set-up-your-ferpa-privacy-waiver>.

Financial Information protected by FERPA.

This information may be shared with any person that a student has designated with an Access Code.

- Bursar account balance; charges, payments payment plans, overdue amounts, etc.
- Pending or prior financial aid awards and current disbursements
- Tuition and fee waivers, scholarships refunds and student account status
- University-maintained loan disbursements and repayment history
- Health insurance waiver status
- Withdrawal dates
- Related sanction data

Housing Information protected by FERPA.

This information may be shared with any person that a student has designated with an Access Code.

- Your current and future housing assignments, and directory information
- On-campus housing requirements, preferences, eligibility, obligations, fees and refunds.