FERPA and Confidentiality of Student Educational Records

FERPA is a federal law; following it is not optional. Faculty need to know what is and isn’t allowed. Here are the most important things to remember.

* Educational records (personal information, schedules, grades, etc.) are confidential and may not be released to anyone outside the college without the written consent of the student.
* Students often consent to allow parental access to records. The Registrar’s Office keeps this information and can inform you about the access the student is allowing for specific individuals. Please remember that students can revoke this access at any time.
* You are responsible for protecting the records in your possession.
* You and others at the college have access to educational records when they have a legitimate need to know.
* When you aren’t sure about a FERPA situation, call the Registrar, Leah Russell, at 375-2211.
* Students requesting a copy of their transcript should be referred to the Registrar’s Office.

FERPA does NOT limit your ability to get academic or other help for a student that needs it. FERPA does NOT limit your ability to report concerns about a student’s behavior. These are legitimate reasons that others on campus need to know information that you would normally keep confidential. FERPA does not limit your ability to collect program assessment data containing student identifications, but such identifications should be removed when final reports are generated.

Specific things that faculty are tempted to do, but must not

* Put a stack of graded papers somewhere for students to sort through to find their own.
* Post grades in a public place showing any part of a student’s name or ID number.
* Circulate an attendance sheet with any part of a student’s ID number shown.
* Discuss a student’s grade in the presence of anyone except the student—even if the student initiates the conversation.
* Discuss grades over the phone.
* Send email that includes information on a student’s grades or progress to or from a non-RC email address. If you discuss grades or other business with a student via email, you must use your RC email account and send the message to the student’s RC email account.
* Provide an oral or letter of recommendation for a student without getting a written consent from the student. Without written consent, your recommendation must be limited to your personal observations. No grades, gpa, or other educational records may be included.