LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

Office of the Registrar – 610-330-5090 – registrar@lafayette.edu

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): Quick Guide for Faculty

1. What is FERPA?

- The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)** is a federal law governing the privacy of student educational records and institutional obligations regarding record release and student access.
- Review Lafayette's *Student Education Records Policy (FERPA)* at https://registrar.lafayette.edu/ferpa/

2. Summary of Key Definitions

- **Education Record:** Records directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency, institution, or party acting on its behalf. Records can exist in any medium including electronic data, emails, typed documents, audio/video recordings, film, microfiche, etc.
- **Directory Information:** Record elements not generally considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Lafayette College defines directory information as: student name, campus/home address/P.O. box, phone numbers, College-issued email, date of birth, photo, dates of attendance, class year/expected graduation date, degree program and major, degrees/honors/awards received, participation in College activities, and athletic team weight/height. Students may file a request to withhold directory information.

3. Release of Education Records

- **School Officials** can share Education Records without explicit consent if the official has a legitimate educational interest (i.e. they require access to the record(s) to fulfill their professional responsibilities.)
- **Students can consent** to the release of their Education Records; consent must be explicit and in writing. Students commonly consent to release of records including, but not limited to, transcripts, certifications, and references.
- **Students may designate a Web Proxy**, providing electronic, view-only access to specific record elements. Students can grant, update, and/or revoke proxy access at any time through an online form.

4. Practical Guidelines for Faculty

- **Supported Technology:** Use only College-supported technology for all classroom instruction, research, and grading activities. Do not load any student data or Education Records into public, external, and/or unsupported tools, systems, or sites.
- **Email Protocol:** Conduct all student communications exclusively through official @lafayette.edu email addresses; do not send from or reply to external public domains.
- **Mobile/Personal Device Security:** Do not access or store student data on personal devices (phones, tablets, etc.) If attachments are opened on personal devices, delete them from downloads immediately.
- **Conversational Discretion:** Be mindful of where and with whom you discuss student records. Ensure listeners have a legitimate educational interest and avoid discussions in public spaces or hallways.
- **Recommendations & References:** Require students to complete a signed request/release form before writing recommendation letters or acting as a reference and maintain the release form in your files.
- **Student Advising Notes:** Notes added into Degree Works are viewable by the student and other faculty advisers; be mindful to not include notes of a personal/confidential nature.
- **Parent Inquiries:** Never discuss student details directly with parents; seek guidance from the Office of the Registrar or the student's Class Dean.
- **External/Alumni requests (phone, mail, e-mail):** Do not share any information, and direct to the Office of the Registrar for procedural guidance on FERPA-compliant authorization/release.