The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 is a federal law regarding the privacy of student education records. The Act provides students the right to inspect and review educational records, the right to seek to amend those records, and the right to limit disclosure of information from the records.

WHAT IS DIRECTORY INFORMATION?
FERPA requires colleges and universities to define the information that they will release without a student’s prior written consent. Lawson State Community College’s definition contains a list of those “directory information” items that we MAY release. They are as follows:

- Student’s name, address (local and permanent), and telephone number.
- Parents and Spouse.
- Date and place of birth.
- Major field of study.
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports.
- Weight and height statistics for athletic team members.
- Dates of attendance.
- Degrees and awards received.
- Previous educational institution most recently attended.
- Photographs.

One common misconception is that FERPA requires us to release student information. It does not. Accordingly, you should err on the side of not releasing information when you are in doubt. You should always feel free to ask your immediate supervisor for assistance before releasing the requested information. You can always direct questions to the Office of Student Records.

If a student does not wish the directory information released, he or she may indicate by notifying the Registrar in writing at the time of registration, and the College will withhold the information during that particular semester. The request for nondisclosure of directory information should be renewed each semester.

FERPA pertains to everyone who works at Lawson State Community College, regardless of his or her position. What FERPA says, in effect, is that we may all have access to as much information about students as we need to do our jobs. Clearly, many people who work at the College have no access to student records and have no need for individual student information. Some of the same people, however, may come across confidential information in the course of doing their job. The maintenance staff, for example, may come across confidential information about students. They are equally obligated, as we are, to respect its confidentiality.
Faculty/staff should not provide copies to students of their transcripts from other institutions. If you release copies of transcripts, you are acting as a third party testifying as to the accuracy of the information on the transcripts.

Faculty/staff should understand that only the Office of Student Records should release information about a student's educational record to a third party outside the College.

Faculty/staff should not share non-directory information from a student’s education records, such as grades, attendance or class schedules, with parents. You may always refer the parents to the Office of Student Records.

Faculty/staff should refer all judicial orders, subpoenas or other written requests for access to information or data subject to the Freedom of Information Act immediately to the Office of Student Records.

Faculty/staff should not include “educational record” (grades, GPA and other non-directory information) in a letter of recommendation without written permission of the student.

Faculty/staff should not publicly post grades either by the order of the posting must not be alphabetic. Faculty can assign students unique numbers or codes that can be used to post grades but such numbers are obscured. Faculty should not include “educational record” in a letter of recommendation without written permission of the student.

Faculty/staff should not distribute graded work in a way that exposes the student’s identity (such as on a web site) or leave personally identifiable, graded papers unattended. This is no different from posting grades publicly. If the papers contain personally identifiable information, then leaving them unattended for anyone to see is a violation of FERPA.

Possible solutions for distributing grade information to students would be to leave the graded papers (exams, quizzes, and homework) with an assistant or secretary, or use a code name or number known only to the student and faculty member to identify graded work.

Notification of grades via a postcard violates a student’s privacy. While notification of grades via email is permissible under FERPA, Lawson State prohibits emailing or mailing of grades.

General questions may be directed to the Office of Students Records. Comments or suggestions should be addressed to lchisem@lawsonstate.edu by calling 205-929-3409.