

September 13, 2022

Good Morning Hokies!

I realize that this is a lengthy email, however it is important that you read it so that you clearly understand which items of your educational record are public and which are disclosed only to university officials with an educational right to know. Also, read the important reminders on confidentiality (how to mark your record CONFIDENTIAL) and protecting the privacy of your information.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords you certain rights with respect to your education records. If you have not already done so, visit our website, <https://registrar.vt.edu/FERPA.html> to review further explanation of these regulations and pertinent contact information. FERPA allows you the right to review, to control access, to request amendments, and to file complaints in regards to your educational record at Virginia Tech.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION: FERPA allows for the designation of certain academic record information as "directory" or public information [academic record information not requiring prior written permission to release]. Virginia Tech defines directory information as follows:

- Student's name
- Local and Permanent address (must opt-in for 3rd party release)
- Telephone Number(s) (must opt-in for 3rd party release)
- Email Address (must opt-in for 3rd party release)
- Major field of study (including second majors, minors, etc.)
- Whether a student is currently enrolled
- Enrollment status (full-time, half-time, etc.)
- Class (freshman, sophomore, etc.)
- Academic level (associate, undergraduate, graduate, professional)
- Anticipated graduation date
- Certification of application for degree
- Dates of enrollment
- Degree(s) earned, including date and level of distinction
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD)

Additionally, FERPA allows the release without written consent of non-directory information in the following cases: health and safety of student or others; judicial court order(s); and accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function.

In the event a student seeks or intends to enroll in another institution, Virginia Tech may disclose your educational record to the future institution without prior written consent.

A Commonwealth of Virginia law that went into effect on July 1, 2018 requires students to opt-in before local and permanent address, telephone number, and email address can be released as part of Directory Information. Directions on how to opt-in are in the "How to Opt-In To Release Your Contact Information" section of this email.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS: You may choose to designate some or all of your directory information confidential. However, choose carefully the option of marking your entire record confidential. Doing so will result in the following:

- Student Name and Address excluded from web and printed directories (including Deans List)
- Student Name and degree information excluded from all commencement programs and dean's lists and award listings
- Verification of enrollment, graduation, or degrees awarded will not be provided to third parties, including potential employers.
- Alumni mailings (including VIRGINIA TECH MAGAZINE)

HOW TO MARK YOUR RECORD CONFIDENTIAL: To mark part or all of your record confidential, you may do so via HOKIE SPA. In HOKIE SPA, choose the HOKIE PLUS menu, and click on "Confidentiality Options". Read the instructions carefully before processing. You may choose to mark all or a portion of your record confidential. Confidentiality designations remain in effect until you remove or request removal including after graduation or discontinuation of enrollment at Virginia Tech. Note: if applicable, to mark your ETD confidential please reference the Thesis and Dissertation Approval Form.

HOW TO OPT-IN TO RELEASE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION: To mark your Phone, Email Address, and/or Address 'Public' or 'Hidden', you may do so in the Hokie SPA. In HOKIE SPA, choose the HOKIE PLUS menu, and click on "Confidentiality Options". From there you can choose each of those items to be set as 'Public' or 'Hidden'. PLEASE NOTE: By default, all students contact information is set to 'Hidden'. If you wish it to be made public you will need to make that change. If you wish for it to remain hidden, no action is required.

When an item is marked 'Public' it means that it can be released to 3rd parties without your permission. It will also be able to be displayed on places such as the People Search section of the university website. When an item is marked 'Hidden' it will not be released to any 3rd parties.

TAX DEPENDENT? Effective July 2008, the Commonwealth of Virginia required all higher education institutions to release educational record information to parents of dependent children. This state legislation is allowable within the guidelines of FERPA. If you are a tax dependent of your parent or guardian, you may authorize the receipt of educational record information via the FERPA DISCLOSURE WEB FORM available on HOKIE SPA. Just go to the main menu and click on FERPA (follows the Transcript menu). Note that a PASS CODE is required for full

authorization of the third party. Third parties without the pass code will be unable to receive educational record information. If no FERPA disclosure is on file, the state law allows parents to request the information if they provide the university with proof of tax dependency. The university will notify you if such a request is received.

FERPA WEB DISCLOSURE: All students [regardless of tax dependency] may use the FERPA DISCLOSURE form on the web to allow third parties access to your educational records. Please note that you must assign a PASS CODE to the third party. The third party (for example, your parents), must have your student information as well as the PASS CODE to receive educational record information.

MISSING Person Contact: Student(s) may denote a specific third party as emergency contact as primary in cases of missing person(s). Visit Hokie SPA, choose the Hokie Plus menu, choose 'Update Emergency Contacts'; add 'new emergency contact'. In the pull down selection for relationships, choose "Missing Persons Contact". In case of such an emergency, the university will first contact the missing person designee before any alternate emergency contact(s).

GUEST ACCESS: All students may authorize third parties to view their financial aid and academic record information (grades and transcripts) via the GUEST ACCESS SPA. You control the disclosure and may at any time void the access. The Guest Access menu is viewable via the main menu of HOKIE SPA. Awarding guest access to a third party does NOT grant FERPA disclosure. The university will be unable to discuss your record with a third party without your written consent or a completed FERPA WEB disclosure.

REPORTING FERPA COMPLAINTS: If you wish to report a concern regarding exposure of your personally identifiable information without your permission, please contact the University Registrar, Student Services Building, Suite 250, Virginia Tech, 800 Washington St., SW, Blacksburg, VA 24061; email registrar@vt.edu; phone (540) 231-6252. You may also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington DC 20202-5901

PROTECT YOUR RECORDS!! Remember to never use the automatic 'save' password feature on web browsers. Failing to secure your computer can lead to easy access to your records by anyone accessing your laptop. Do not share your HOKIE SPA ID/PASSWORD. Your SPA account should be treated with the same care as your online banking/credit card accounts. For important advice and information on securing your computer, please visit the Student IT Security Page at <https://security.vt.edu/resources.html>.

FINANCIAL RECORDS: Virginia Tech maintains compliance with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and subsequent regulations as published by the Federal Trade Commission. Further information is available at <https://policies.vt.edu/assets/7025.pdf>.

USE OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS: Virginia Tech uses a generated nine-digit number as the student identifier. However, in some instances, students may be requested to disclose their social security numbers (e.g., recipients of Financial Aid and employees of the University.) The policy on disclosure of Social Security Numbers is available for viewing, <http://www.policies.vt.edu/assets/1060.pdf>.

If you have any questions or concerns relative to this information, please email us at registrar@vt.edu.

I know this is a lot of information so for your convenience, this letter is also located on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

I hope you have a wonderful fall semester!

GO HOKIES!!

Rick Sparks Jr.
University Registrar
Email: registrar@vt.edu