

ADVISING NOTES AND PRIVACY

RADFORD
UNIVERSITY

ON FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of a student's educational records. It defines when and what information from a student's educational record may be released to anyone outside Radford University.

An Educational Record is defined as information that is maintained by Radford University and that can be specifically identified with a particular student. Advising notes, whether they are hard copy or electronic, are part of the student's educational record to which the student has a right of access and which can be subpoenaed.

MORE ON FERPA

The university will not release information about a student from records, except directory information, to people (including parents) other than a specified list of exceptions without obtaining the written consent of the student. Radford University has identified the following as directory information.

- Student's name, date of birth, local and home address, phone listing and email address
- Whether a student is currently enrolled and their major field of study
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees and awards received

NOTES ABOUT ADVISING NOTES

Unless the student has given explicit written permission you MAY NOT:

- Post a student's grade in any place, physical or electronic, where someone other than the student has access.
- Make available a list with any restricted information (i.e., SS# or RUID) about the student that can be seen by anyone other than that student.
- Post a photograph of a named student in a public place (i.e., photos of all students in a particular major).
- Transmit an email to a group of individuals where one individual can see the email address of another. To avoid this problem, use the blind copy option unless you are certain no student has requested that their email address information not be released.
- Give out a copy of the student's schedule, or the time/location of a class s/he is in to anyone. In case of an emergency, transfer/refer the person to the Campus Police Department, or offer to give the student a message.
- Talk to a parent or other family member about a student's educational information.

PLEASE INCLUDE IN YOUR ADVISING NOTES

- Include notes that will help the student.
- Include notes that will help future advisors understand the student or the advice that you gave.
- Include notes that will facilitate the relationship with the student.
- Include possible consequences of not following advice given.
- Include referrals of a non-sensitive nature.
- Include comments that help you in future interactions with the student.

PLEASE EXCLUDE FROM YOUR ADVISING NOTES

- Exclude your subjective judgments about the student, especially when they are negative.
- Exclude referrals of a sensitive or personal nature.
- Exclude comments regarding student's instructors, especially when they are negative.

KEY POINTS TO TAKE AWAY

- If in doubt, leave it out.
- Describe, do not evaluate or judge.
- When writing a note, keep it simple.
- Do *not* note a student's conduct actions, disability and/or medical information, unless the student *specifically* requests that it be part of their educational record.
- Ask yourself, would I send these notes directly to the student and their lawyer?

SCENARIOS

The following slides describe scenarios often encountered in Academic Advising and offer suggestions on what an Advisor should and should not keep notes on.

| Scenario | Do Write | Don't Write |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Student has not taken math for a number of years and doesn't want to take a math class and is petrified of taking one.</p> | <p>Student has not had a math class in five years and is concerned about ability to succeed. Discussed importance of starting math sequence ASAP.</p> | <p>Student is scared of math and is avoiding it.</p> |
| <p>Student came in to discuss what he/she feels is a very unfair grading policy that their professor has and wants to drop the class.</p> | <p>Student dropped CORE 201.</p> | <p>Student dropped CORE 201 due to unfair grading policies of instructor.</p> |
| <p>Student came in because they had missed a number of classes because they have in the hospital for cancer treatment and didn't feel well enough to attend. Says treatments are going better now and can return to classes.</p> | <p>Student wanted it noted that he missed two weeks of classes as a result of hospitalization.</p> | <p>Student missed two weeks of classes because of hospitalization for cancer treatment.</p> |

| Scenario | Do Write | Don't Write |
|---|--|--|
| Student has not taken math for a number of years and doesn't want to take a math class and is petrified of taking one. | Student has not had a math class in five years and is concerned about ability to succeed. Discussed importance of starting math sequence ASAP. | Student is scared of math and is avoiding it. |
| Student came in to discuss what he/she feels is a very unfair grading policy that their professor has and wants to drop the class. | Student dropped CORE 201. | Student dropped CORE 201 due to unfair grading policies of instructor. |
| Student came in because they had missed a number of classes because they have in the hospital for cancer treatment and didn't feel well enough to attend. Says treatments are going better now and can return to classes. | Student wanted it noted that he missed two weeks of classes as a result of hospitalization. | Student missed two weeks of classes because of hospitalization for cancer treatment. |

| Scenario | Do Write | Don't Write |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Student requested new academic advisor because they don't like the one they have and s/he isn't answering their calls, or returning emails, and doesn't even know what they're talking about.</p> | <p>Student requested new academic advisor.</p> | <p>Clueless.</p> |
| <p>Student came in to discuss their medical issues. They shared a personal medical issue which is affecting their participation/attendance in their classes.</p> | <p>Student has ongoing medical issue that impedes academic success. Made appropriate referral.</p> | <p>Student is doing poorly in a class- <i>(because of specific medical issue)</i> -what should she really do? OR Student came in to discuss how <i>(specific medical issue)</i> is affecting current success. Referred to Counseling Center.</p> |

| Scenario | Do Write | Don't Write |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Student came in with concerns over their roommate and their addiction issues: sex, drugs, gaming. Student is looking for help as their living arrangements is causing academic issues.</p> | <p>Student came in with roommate issue that was affecting academics. Referred to Residential Life Office and the Dean of Students Office.</p> | <p>Student had problem with roommate regarding sexual activities, drug and gaming addictions. Extremely unhealthy environment. Referred student to Residential Life Office and the Dean of Students Office.</p> |
| <p>Student came in and shared they were having difficulty in the semester. During the conversation it was revealed that they were first generation, lacking family support, and unsure of their next step.</p> | <p>First generation student struggling with the transition of college and expectations. Made appropriate referral.</p> | <p>Student isn't getting help from family. Has no clue. Family has no clue and student needs a lot of help financially and academically to be a success.</p> |

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The full, official FERPA policy adopted by Radford University is available on the Office of the Registrar's web page (www.radford.edu/registrar)

Also on the Registrar's page, you can find the Student Information Release Authorization form.

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) has several resources about privacy and effective advising available on their website at <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>

Remember, if you're in doubt about including something in your advising notes- leave it out.