Helpful Guidelines to Implement Information Security

How can you protect information? What can you do to assure confidentiality? Listed below are some strategies, rules and basic in-office and out-of-office procedures. The list is not all-inclusive but will provide a helpful start.

First and foremost, remember Customer Service is our priority at all times!

There are going to be situations that are challenging. It is important to maintain the Information Security Procedures, but to do so professionally and with the essential customer service skills of courtesy, empathy, and patience. We need to remember that this is confusing and overwhelming to most people. It is our job to explain the reasons for these safeguards, as well as the proper procedures we are required by federal law to follow.

Only access information if it is job related

Do not “look up” information about your friends, enemies, neighbors, family, etc. unless it is job related—there is a “need to know.” Examples: you may have to file something in a friend’s file – YES, it’s job related; your sister comes in to request a copy of her academic transcript – YES, it’s job related. You want to know what grade your daughter earned in a class – NO, it’s not job related; you want to find out what classes your friend registered for – NO, it’s not job related.

Protect information from others

Clear your computer screen when you leave your desk or if you are dealing with another student. Someone looking at your terminal may find out all kinds of information about the student whose record you have on the computer screen. Do not just throw any “education records” in the garbage or recycle bin; instead shred anything that is to be thrown away so that students’ name, social security number, grades, etc. are protected.

Do not discuss students by name or situation in a public place where other students or people are present. Do not make any comments about a student at work or away from work. It is sometimes very easy to add something to a social conversation such as “He says he’s so smart. Well, I know he only has a 1.25 GPA at IVCC”.

Dealing with parents and spouses

Parents and spouses have no inherent rights to inspect a student’s education records or to be given information about the student (unless it is directory information). The right to inspect is limited solely to the student. Records may be released to parents or spouses only if the student has given his/her written consent.
Preventing the release of information

If a student has requested not to release information, a “Confidentiality” warning sign will appear on the computer screen when you access that student on the computer system. This means no information, including directory information, may be released. Nothing may be released; no telephone number, no address, nothing usually allowed under the release of directory information. Your response to the individual requesting information should be “We have no information about this person.” If the individual persists, refer him/her to the Director of Admissions.

Ongoing evaluation of office procedures

Evaluating our internal systems is the responsibility of each office across campus to be sure we are continually employing the necessary safeguards to be in compliance with FERPA and GLB. If there are procedures that are questionable or that don’t protect the security of student records (for example, student documents not being shredded), please discuss the procedures with your supervisor or contact a member of the Information Security Team for assistance. This includes Colleague-related issues that may arise—if you have questions, ASK!!

To avoid violations of information security procedures, DO NOT:

- At any time use any part of the Social Security number of a student in a public posting of grades.
- Link the name of a student with that student’s Social Security number in any public manner.
- Leave graded tests in a stack for students to pick up by sorting through the papers of all students.
- Circulate a printed class list with student name and Social Security number or grades as an attendance roster.
- Discuss the progress of any student with anyone other than the student (including parents) without the consent of the student (or proper IRS documentation from parents).
- Provide anyone with lists of students enrolled in your classes for any commercial purpose.
- Provide anyone with student schedules or assist anyone other than college employees in finding a student on campus.
- Leave the door open when your office is vacant.
- Leave grades, test scores, etc., or personal information in the classroom between classes or during breaks.
- Leave student records (class lists, grades, work or home phones, student schedules, etc.) in view on your desk or on your computer.
- Share your password with anyone—this includes people within your office. Everyone needs to use their own passwords and log-ins.

If you are ever in doubt, ask a member of the Information Security Team.