

## **Parental Notification Policy**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the circumstances and procedures under which the university may notify parents regarding information about a student without the consent of the student.

### **University Philosophy Regarding the Role of Parents and Their Child's Education** *Revised April, 2013*

Susquehanna University believes parents should have a role in their children's education. For this reason, we believe it is appropriate to partner with parents so that together we can help students become independent thinkers and decision makers.

Our primary relationship is with students. We prepare them for successful lives after graduation, guide them toward good decisions and help them learn from the outcomes of those decisions. We expect students to take primary responsibility for their education. They are accountable for fulfilling their academic requirements, meeting their financial obligations and adhering to the university's expectations for appropriate conduct.

Because parents and other family members know their students well, they can play an important role in supporting and advising students during these critical years. Parents can encourage and support students' development by discussing with them their needs, helping them become self-advocates and directing them toward the appropriate resources.

Over the course of students' undergraduate years, parents develop valuable insights about the Susquehanna experience. We encourage them to share their comments, questions and opinions with us. To help keep parents informed, we will use a variety of university publications, online communities and our Web site to communicate about university developments, policies and expectations. Together, the university and parents can support the learning and success of our students.

### **Federal Law Regarding Disclosure of Educational Records**

The right of access to information in a student's educational records is governed by a federal law known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). The right of access to other information, such as medical or counseling records, is governed by applicable state or federal law. As a general rule, students attending a college or university, regardless of age, have the right under FERPA to control disclosure of information from their educational records.<sup>1</sup> FERPA permits colleges and universities to make certain exceptions to this general rule and allows disclosure of certain directory information from a student's educational records without obtaining the student's prior consent. Whenever reasonably possible, the Vice President or a designee will confer with a student before parents are notified. A student may also request that any of this information not be released by writing to the Vice President. However, the Vice President may deny this request and parental notification may be made without consultation with the student. This includes but is not limited to instances of a medical emergency or when, at the discretion of the Vice President, waiting may cause harm to a student or the community.

## **Circumstances When Parental Notification May Occur**

In general, university staff may notify parents when they have knowledge of circumstances adversely affecting a student. The Vice President for Student Life or designee, in consultation with appropriate staff, will determine when parental notification will occur. These situations include:

### **[a] Academic Issues**

Parents/guardians may be notified when a student is at risk of academic suspension, when a student withdraws from the university for any reason and when the academic standing of a dependent student may negatively impact financial aid.

### **[b] Medical and Mental Health**

Health Center and Counseling Center staff are prohibited by law from sharing detailed information regarding complaints or diagnoses, and even attendance at the Health Center or Counseling Center, without express consent from the student. However, staff will encourage students to discuss serious medical and mental health issues with parents or guardians. Counseling Center and Health Center staffs are permitted to violate confidentiality in the case of imminent danger, to the extent that it is necessary to protect the student or others threatened by the student.

- i. Parents/legal guardians of dependent students may be notified by the Vice President for Student Life, or an appointed representative, in the event of hospitalization for life-threatening or other serious illness, including illnesses that would require multiple-day stays, when the hospital does not notify parents.
- ii. The Vice President for Student Life, or an appointed representative, may notify the parents or legal guardians of a dependent student in connection with a serious injury or health or safety emergency when deemed necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other Individuals.
- iii. The Vice President for Student Life, or an appointed representative, may notify parents/legal guardians of a dependent student when they have knowledge of a hospital visit for suspected alcohol poisoning.

In some instances we need parents to travel to Selinsgrove to assist in resolving challenges, especially medical and mental health issues. We expect that parents will respond affirmatively, as such requests are not made without thorough consideration and compelling need.

### **[c] Student Conduct Issues**

Parents/guardians of dependent students may be notified by the university of charges brought against a student that could result in loss of housing, suspension, expulsion or loss of the privilege of participation in commencement ceremonies. Parents will be notified if a student is found responsible for a violation and the sanction includes loss of housing, suspension, expulsion or loss of privilege of participation in commencement exercises. Parents/guardians of dependent students may be notified by the university if a student is found responsible for a violation of the University Alcohol or Drug Policies. (refer to the Code of Student Conduct)

#### **[d] Encouraging Students to Take Responsibility for Parental Notification**

At the point at which it is determined that parental notification is permitted under the provisions of this policy, the student may be given 24 hours to make the initial contact with the parents or legal guardians prior to the university notifying the parents or legal guardians. In the event of parental divorce or separation, the student may designate the parent to be contacted.

: There are various exceptions to this general rule. For example, educational records are subject to subpoena. There are other exceptions, some of which are complex, it is not the purpose of this policy to provide a comprehensive summary of FERPA