Understanding FERPA

When your child was in high school, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gave you and your child rights to access and control your child's educational records. Now that your child is attending a post-secondary school/college, these same laws transfer ownership of the records directly to your child.

According to FERPA, students attending a post-secondary school are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. While parents understandably have an interest in a student's academic progress, they are not automatically granted access to a student's records without written consent of the student. Parents are encouraged to consult with the student if academic information is needed. Your child may give permission for a third party to access his/her records by filing a Student Consent form.

View the CMU Parents FERPA Brochure

How can I get a copy of my student's grades (APEA or SAMS program)?
The quickest, easiest way for you to receive information about your child's grades, financial statement, or other student information is for your child to provide it to you. Students can look information up online, print it off, and give or email a copy to their parents. Student records are available on their Student Information Online (SIO) record.

How can I get a copy of my student's evaluations (Architecture, Art, Artificial Intelligence, Design, Music, Drama and NHSGA)?
Evaluations are kept on file in the Undergraduate Admission Office and additional copies can be requested by contacting them at 412.268.2082. Please note, the same privacy rights apply for evaluations as the previous answer.

If I'm paying for my child's education, why can't I get a copy of his/her records?
FERPA requires that access to a college student's records must be granted by approval of the student.

My student signed a release form. Can you email a copy of his/her transcript/evaluation?
As a matter of policy, the university does not release private information over the phone or by email.

My student signed the form. Why didn't I receive a copy of his/her grades/evaluations after summer program?
The University doesn't automatically send information to third parties designated by the student. You will need to request a copy of the desired information by sending a letter or fax with your signature. A request must be submitted each time you want to receive protected information.

Does the release form grant me access to my son or daughter's medical and counseling records?
FERPA regulations protect a student's "education records," which include grades, finances, and discipline records. Physical and mental health records are covered by other university policies, federal law, and professional ethics. In general, professionals working in these areas will not release student information except in emergency situations. Your son or daughter can choose to release information from these records to a third party, but they may want to release information on a case-by-case basis. They can talk to the practitioner or the records office in the University Health Services related to medical or counseling records; to the Dean of Students Office for discipline records; or to Pre-College Summer Studies.

Will I be contacted if my child is sick or hurt? What if my child is in academic trouble, or facing
disciplinary action?
In most cases, the Pre-College program staff and faculty will not contact you or provide medical, academic, or disciplinary information without your child's permission. In the case of an emergency, where the health or safety of your son or daughter may be in serious jeopardy, or if there is a concern that he/she may pose a threat to him or herself or to someone else, the Pre-College program staff will contact you. As a general guideline, if your child is able to communicate about the situation, it is up to him/her to decide whether and how to discuss the issues. Also, please know that certain agents of the university, such as the University Health Services staff and University Police, may be subject to non-FERPA reporting requirements when working with minors.

Isn't there a FERPA provision that colleges and universities can contact parents if a student violates alcohol or drug policies?
FERPA regulations allow, but do not require, higher education institutions to provide notice to parents when a student violates federal, state or local laws related to alcohol or drugs. CMU policy states that we can release this information to parents of any students under the age of 21. In the case of the Pre-College program, given that any violation of the alcohol or drug policies is an expellable offense, the Pre-College program staff would generally contact parents as soon as they become aware that a Pre-College student has violated these policies.

Where can I find out more about FERPA?
The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for overseeing FERPA. See the Department's Web site for additional information.

Questions regarding FERPA related to the Pre-College program should be directed to the University Registrar at 412.268.7404 or by e-mail at university-registrars-office@andrew.cmu.edu.