

# SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

## Student Dependency/Parental Access Policy

### ***PHILOSOPHY***

As a general matter, the College treats its students as adults who are capable of making their own decisions regarding the exercise of their rights of access to and privacy in their education records. Nevertheless, consistent with *The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, Saint Mary's College may release information from a **dependent student's** education record to parents and legal guardians, when the College believes that it is in a student's best interest, in health and safety emergencies, and in certain other limited circumstances.

### ***STUDENT DEPENDENCY/PARENTAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION RECORDS***

- Saint Mary's College is committed to complying with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* regarding the maintenance and release of directory information, education records and personal information contained in education records.
- For FERPA purposes only, the College assumes that a student is a dependent of her parents/guardians as defined in the Internal Revenue Code.\* At Enrollment at the beginning of each semester, students have the opportunity to confirm their dependency status.
  - \*For a parent to claim a child as a dependent, the child must be:
    - Under age 19 at the end of the year, OR
    - Under age 24 at the end of the year and a full-time student, OR
    - Any age if permanently and totally disabled, OR
    - Any age provided the child's gross income for the year is less than \$3,400 and the parent must have provided more than half of the child's total support for the year.
- The College uses an opt-out approach to verifying/changing dependency. Students are given the opportunity to opt-out, indicating they are not dependents, by providing paper documentation of financial independence to the Registrar (See: Documentation Required to Declare Independence).
- The College **may** release education records to parents or legal guardians of dependent students as provided in FERPA and outlined in the annual *Notification of Rights (Section 3, c)*. In general, the College does not make routine disclosures of information to parents or others absent authorization from the student.
- It is the student's responsibility to decide whether to share her education records with her parents (through PRISM or other means).

### ***DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED TO DECLARE INDEPENDENCE***

Dependency status remains in effect for an entire calendar year. (EXAMPLE: If a student is claimed as a dependent on her parent's 2007 income tax return, she will remain a dependent for the entire 2008 calendar year, even though she may declare independence during the 2008 calendar year). When appropriate documentation is received, the dependency status will change to Independent.

The following information must be submitted to the Registrar (161 Le Mans Hall) as documentation of financial independence: First page of the parents' and student's Income Tax Form 1040 for the current year.

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