

Student Records Policy

As provided by Public Law 93-380, Protection of Rights of Privacy of Parents and Students, Northwest Shoals Community College maintains information about students which facilitates the educational development of the student and the effective administration of the College in order to guarantee the rights of privacy and access as provided by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The College has formulated the following policies and procedures:

A. General Policy

It is the policy of Northwest Shoals Community College that all student records are maintained for five years after the student graduates or leaves the institution. Records are then stored in a fireproof alphabetical filing system in the records room at each campus and only the official permanent record (official application for admission, official transcript containing grades and credit and other official transcripts/GED) is maintained. Other information contained in the student record is destroyed in keeping with the State Record Manual published by the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. No information from records, files, or other data directly related to a student other than public information defined below shall be disclosed to individuals or agencies outside the College without the written consent of the student except pursuant to a lawful subpoena or court order or except in the case of educational or governmental officials as provided by law. Information contained in such records may be shared within the College.

Students shall have access to all such information with the exceptions set out below in accordance with the procedure outlined within this policy statement.

B. Definition of Student

For the purpose of this policy, a “student” is defined as “any individual currently or previously enrolled in any course(s) offered by the College.”

C. Definition of Educational Records

Student educational records are defined as those records, files, documents, and other material which contain information directly related to students. Records of instructional, supervisory, and administrative personnel which are the sole possession of the maker and accessible only to the maker or a substitute are specifically excluded from this definition of educational records.

Records which are made or maintained by institutional counselors or other professionals or paraprofessionals, and which are maintained in connection with personal treatment or personal counseling and are not available to anyone not involved officially within the College are also excluded from a student’s educational records. Such records, however, are available to a physician or appropriate professional of the student’s choice, if requested.

D. Public Information

The following is a list of public information which may be made available by the College without prior consent of the student and is considered part of the public record of the student’s attendance:

1. Student’s name
2. Student’s address (local and permanent)
3. Student’s telephone number
4. Date and place of birth of student
5. Major field of study

6. Student's participation in officially recognized activities, clubs, organizations, and weight and height of members of athletic institution teams
7. Dates of attendance of student
8. Degrees and awards received by student
9. The institution most recently previously attended by the student

If any student has an objection to any of the aforementioned information being released during any given term or academic year, the student should notify, in person or in writing, the Dean of Students.

E. Location of Individuals Responsible for Student Records

The College has designated the following officials as being responsible for students' records within their respective areas:

Dean of Students - The Dean will see that all students upon acceptance to the institution will have an individual student record file containing all admissions criteria needed for acceptance to the institution. The Dean is charged with the responsibility of continuously maintaining all students' files in a safe and orderly manner, updating all records needed on the individual student, and updating and maintaining an adequate backup system for all student records.

Regional Chief Fiscal Officer - The Regional Chief Fiscal Officer will have the responsibility of seeing that all provisions as set forth in this policy are applied to the release of financial information concerning individual students.

F. Disclosure of Student Records to the Student

The student is accorded the right to inspect in the presence of the appropriate official as stated in section "E" of this policy statement records, files, and data primarily and directly related to the student. In order to inspect one's file, the student should go to the office of the appropriate official, present a valid photo identification, and initiate a written request. If the named student cannot personally appear, the student must submit a notarized request to the appropriate official. The request for inspection shall be granted by the College within forty-five (45) days of the time of the receipt. If in the opinion of the appropriate official inspection can reasonably be accomplished only by providing copies of documents, such copies shall be made and provided to the student. The right of inspection does not include financial statements of parents, confidential recommendations placed in the file prior to January 1, 1975, other confidential recommendations, nor access to items waived by the student in accordance with paragraph H.

G. Challenging the Contents of the Record

The College will respond to any reasonable request for an explanation or interpretation of any item in a student's file. Requests for such explanation or interpretation should be addressed in writing to the appropriate official.

If after inspecting a record a student wishes to challenge any part of the file's content, a written request for a hearing should be addressed to the President, who will set a date and time for the hearing within forty-five (45) days of receiving the written request. The request for a hearing should identify the item or items in the file to be challenged and state the grounds for challenge, i.e., inaccuracy, misleading nature, inappropriateness. The President with the appropriate records official as stated in section E shall examine the contested item(s) in the file and shall examine any documents or hear any testimony the student wishes to present. The President and the records official may decide that the items should be retained or that they should be deleted or altered. There may be a decision that the material is accurate and appropriate but that the student should be allowed to place a written explanation in the file. The President shall issue a written decision within ten (10) days of the conclusion of the hearing.

H. Waiver of Access

The College may request that a student waive his/her right to inspect confidential recommendations regarding that student's application for admission, application for employment, the receipt of an honor, or other recognition. If a student receives a request for waiver, the student may sign and return the waiver, may request a list of names of persons who will be asked for recommendations before signing, or may refuse to waive the right to access.

Such a waiver shall not be a condition for admission to the institution, financial aid assistance, or any other benefits received by students at the College.

I. Providing Records to Third Parties

The general policy of the College is to refuse access to a student's records to third parties without the written consent of the individual student. Should a student wish to have such records released, a written request must be directed to the proper official specifying the records to be released, the person to whom records are to be released, and a request for copies to the student if desired. The College will then transfer or grant access to the information. The established service fee for producing photocopies of records will be assessed against the person whose record is involved.

Transcripts are not provided for noncredit courses. A student's records may be available to the following persons under conditions noted without written consent of the student:

1. School officials including administrators, instructors, department heads, counselors, and staff designated by such persons within the College who have a legitimate educational interest.
2. Official representatives of federal departments or agencies, or state education authorities for purpose of audits, evaluative studies, etc. Data collected will be protected to prevent personal identification except when specifically authorized by federal law. The data or copies that may be on file at the College will be destroyed when no longer needed.
3. Financial aid officers when such information is relevant to financial aid needs analysis or other aspects of determining and/or renewing financial assistance to the individual student.
4. Release of educational records of deceased students may only be released to the student's parents or the executor/executrix of the deceased student's estate. A record of requests for access, the legitimate interest involved, and action taken will be placed in the student's file for all requests of the file except those from school officials as noted in paragraph one above. Inspection of individual student records other than by the personnel noted in paragraph one above will be supervised by the appropriate official or designee. The student's record shall not be taken from the designated official's office area.
5. Officials of other educational or governmental agencies based on the case of need.

J. Student Issued Records-Transcripts

The transcript policy of Northwest Shoals Community College includes the following:

- In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the Admissions/Records Office must have electronic student consent to issue official Northwest Shoals Community College transcripts to institutions, companies, agencies, etc. Records officials will not copy or otherwise reproduce copies of official student transcripts and other information obtained from transfer students as official transcript requirements.
- Official transcripts may be issued from Northwest Shoals Community College in electronic form through OneACCS - Credentials Solutions.
- Transcript request forms can be accessed within our website. From the menu, select Current Students, NWSCC Transcript Release. There is a charge for processing official transcripts. The amount is due upon submission of the electronic request.
- Official transcript requests are processed as they are received. Processing times are longer at the end of each academic semester. To ensure timely delivery, requests should be made at least two working days before the transcripts are needed.

- Transcripts will not be issued for students who have outstanding admission or financial obligations to the College or any disciplinary action.

K. Changes in the Policy

This policy statement is subject to change by additional federal regulations or court decisions that may modify and/or negate any portion of the regulations in Public Law 93-380. This statement of policy will be published in the future in appropriate college publications. To provide additional notice of the policy, copies will be posted on bulletin boards on all campuses of the College.