

Office of the Registrar

Faculty Guidance: Letters of Recommendation and FERPA

This guidance helps faculty determine when a letter of recommendation requires a signed consent under FERPA law.

Step 1: Determine if consent is required.

Step 2: If required, ensure consent is on file.

Step 3: Write the letter, securely send it to the recipient and retain a copy.

Step 1: Determine if consent is required.

- **NO CONSENT REQUIRED:** A recommendation **based solely on the recommender's observation or knowledge**. (e.g. "I observed the student's leadership skills in class.")
- **CONSENT REQUIRED:** A recommendation that **includes any personally identifiable information (grades, GPA, etc.)** (e.g. "The student earned a 3.8 GPA and ranked in the top 10% of the program.")

Step 2: If required, ensure consent is on file.

- **PREFERRED METHOD:** Where possible, you are encouraged to have the student/alum complete the Office of the Registrar's [Faculty Letter of Recommendation Consent](#). Upon submission, the Office of the Registrar will provide the details of the consent to the faculty so they can move forward with the recommendation.
- **ALTERNATE METHOD:** Some recommendation forms might include predefined consent language. Please be sure it meets the following requirements:
 - Must specify the records that may be disclosed in the recommendation.
 - Must clearly state the purpose of the disclosure.
 - Must identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure can be made.

Step 3: Write the letter, securely send it to the recipient and retain a copy.

- Letters of recommendation and any required consents are considered a part of the student's/alum's education record and must be retained according to the document retention schedule of the university. Letters and consents can be forwarded to the Office of the Registrar for storage.
- A student has the right to read the recommendation unless they have waived that right in their signed consent.
- **Always securely send recommendations.** When sending recommendations to third parties, please remember that any documents with personally identifiable information must only be electronically sent through encrypted email or other secure means.

For questions, please contact the Office of the Registrar (Registrars_Office@rush.edu).