

# Frequently Asked Questions by Parents

(rev. January 2019)

## **My student has received an email from the Director of Academic Integrity. What does this mean?**

It means that your student has been referred to the Director of Academic Integrity for an alleged violation of University policy. Your student is required to meet with the Director of Academic Integrity to discuss the academic integrity process, the information that was presented in the referral, and to get information from your student about what happened. A referral does not mean that your student will be found responsible. The violations are alleged and are pending until a full disciplinary investigation is completed.

## **Will a decision be made about my student during this meeting?**

It depends on your student's individual circumstances. Many students choose to accept responsibility for their actions in which case the Director of Academic Integrity will assign appropriate sanctions and the case is closed. In some cases, the student elects to have the case heard by the Academic Integrity Committee, who after hearing all the evidence and speaking with the student and any witnesses makes a decision in the case (responsible, not responsible, or case dismissed) and then the committee assigns appropriate sanctions. Students who are facing suspension or expulsion from the institution are given the option of having the Academic Integrity Committee hear the case, or sending the case through the TUAPA process.

## **Can I call the office and get the details about my student's case?**

Your student's Academic Integrity file is considered an educational record. Educational records are protected documents per the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). We are prevented from releasing these records to anyone, including parents, without the written consent of the student. We simply cannot provide details of your student's situation without this form on file. We CAN discuss the process with you and answer general questions not related to the specific case.

## **Where can my student sign a FERPA wavier for Academic Integrity?**

Your student can come to the Cope Administration Building, room 111 to fill out the FERPA wavier. The wavier can be for a specific academic integrity case or all of their academic integrity cases. The Director of Academic Integrity will explain the FERPA wavier to your student and answer any questions they may have prior to the student signing the wavier.

## **Where can I learn more about FERPA?**

FERPA is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education. The Department maintains a FERPA website (with links to FERPA regulations) at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

## **How can I support my student through the disciplinary process?**

You can discuss the issue with your student and encourage them to use the process as an educational tool. You can empower your student to handle the situation on their own to prepare for the conflicts they will face after college. You can also attend the disciplinary meeting(s) as an advisor for your student. Your role as advisor is limited to advising your student. An advisor cannot make opening statements, cross-examine witnesses, engage in argument, or represent the student in any way. The

advisor is simply there to encourage, support, and guide the student. We encourage you to talk to your student to determine the amount of support your student will need.

**How will I know if my child is subject to University disciplinary action?**

You may not know. Student disciplinary records are protected under FERPA. The best practice is for your son or daughter to inform you about any disciplinary charges directly.

**Does MTSU have any programs designed to assist parents in communicating with their students?**

Yes. MTSU offers students and parents the opportunity to participate in the Partners in Education (PIE) program. Please refer to the following website for additional information: [www.mtsu.edu/pie](http://www.mtsu.edu/pie)

**What type of offenses typically result in suspension or expulsion from the institution?**

There is no hard and fast answer to this question as each academic integrity case varies from individual to individual; however, there are some general categories that more often result in separation from the institution. These offenses include but are not limited to significant academic integrity (plagiarizing an entire paper, stealing test answers), buying and/or selling papers and/or test answers, and multiple violations of the academic integrity policy.

**What do you consider when sanctioning a student?**

The nature of the offense, previous disciplinary history, motivation for the behavior, mitigating and aggravating circumstances, sanctioning precedents, and the developmental and educational impact for the individual student and MTSU community. We look at each case on an individual basis. Our goal is not to satisfy students, many students AND parents are not happy with the outcome of the judicial process; however, we do aim for equality and fairness in procedure. When a student leaves our office we want them to feel that they have been treated fairly and with dignity.

**Do I need to hire an attorney for my student?**

The student academic integrity process is not a legal process. Students are permitted to have an advisor(s) with them throughout the disciplinary process; however, the advisor is not permitted to represent the student. Ultimately, the decision is yours and your students to make.

**Where can I learn more about the Academic Integrity policy?**

You can read the academic integrity policy at: <http://www.mtsu.edu/policies/academic-affairs-students/312.php>