

Midwestern State University (MSU) protects the privacy of student records in accordance with Federal Regulations regarding information security whether students are enrolled in distance education courses or attend class on campus. MSU Policy 4.184 (A.1) defines a student as "Any Individual who is or has been in attendance at MSU and regarding whom MSU maintains education records" and defines records (A.2) as "Any records (in handwriting, printing, tapes, film, or other medium) maintained by MSU or an agent of the university which are directly related to the student."

The following procedures and efforts are in place to ensure that student privacy rights are protected for distance education students.

### **Restricted Access to the Distance Education System**

MSU utilizes Desire2Learn (D2L) (link to D2L Pamphlet) as an off-site, hosted delivery system for distance education courses. Student access to the D2L course information is regulated by private passwords that are issued to the students. Students have the ability to change their unique password at any time and it is not shared nor is it requested in pursuing any technical issue. The password is never requested through the OPR's or by the distance education staff.

### **Coursework within D2L**

#### *Confidentiality of Assignments*

Assignments, grades, and correspondences with instructors are not visible to other students. They are only accessible by the instructor.

#### *User Profiles*

User Profiles within each course are only viewable by the instructor and other students. Profile information is controlled and submitted by the student. Students choose what to make available to other users. Only work submitted to open forums and discussion areas can be accessed by other students enrolled in the class.

### **Distance Education Course Materials Retention**

D2L courses are archived on the D2L server for 1 year according to the State of Texas Records Retention Schedule (link to [retention schedule pg. 55](#)). This archive includes course content, student data and grade book. The Desire2Learn archives are accessible by the D2L administrator, and will be accessed only at the request of the Instructor or governing body of the University. After a 1 year period, the course records are destroyed.

### **Confidentiality of Distance Education Assistance Correspondence**

The Distance Education website (link [to homepage](#)) assists students with browser types and versions and provides a browser check up if needed.

Email messages sent through the [Online Problem Report](#) (OPR) are answered by distance education support personnel and only forwarded to an Instructor if it involves the Instructor of the course. Email messages and replies are kept and reviewed by distance education support staff to ensure relevance and expedience of assistance.

### **Non-Secure Sites Outside of University Systems**

If an instructor requires students to post to websites or social networking sites outside of the University (e.g., for interaction with the wider community), FERPA protections for that information as to third parties cannot be assured because the material is not on a University controlled website. Instructors should communicate the risks associated with any postings that will be publicly available on the Internet at the beginning of the course.

All policies, standards, and guidelines for on-campus instruction apply to programs delivered through distance education. Policies regarding the confidentiality of student records are published in the MSU Policies and Procedures Manual [Information Technology Procedures and Policies](#) (4.181). This policy also addresses faculty, staff and student security and privacy concerning computer data, software, and hardware. In addition, MSU abides by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in protecting the confidentiality of student records and information. Information about FERPA is found on the website [http://registrar.mwsu.edu/ferpa/00quiz\\_home.asp](http://registrar.mwsu.edu/ferpa/00quiz_home.asp) as well as annual notification in class schedules, MSU Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and the MSU Student Handbook. Students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Midwestern State University to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

For additional information regarding MSU policies and procedures governing the confidentiality of student information, please see Comprehensive Standard 3.9.2, Student records.