

DATA ACCESS POLICY
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
Macalester College
December 2018

This Data Access policy is designed to clarify the conditions under which the Office of Institutional Research may share student, alumni, faculty, or staff data with members of the Macalester community.

Federal regulations, ethics, and confidentiality

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) upholds its responsibility to treat ethically all data about community members (e.g., students, faculty, staff, and alumni). This includes, but is not limited to respecting the confidentiality of data about gender, race, academic performance, and attitudes shared in surveys. These data are protected by the guidelines of FERPA and the standards for ethical social science research.

According to FERPA guidelines, certain information about students is regarded as "directory information." This information is not confidential and may even be disclosed to persons inside or outside the college. Institutional Research is not required to release these data and will determine the appropriateness of all requests for directory information. As of the timing of this policy, directory information included the student's name, local address, local telephone number, e-mail address, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received and most recent previous educational institution attended. Updates to the list of directory information are located at:

<https://www.macalester.edu/documents/studenthandbook/04communityresponsibilities/04-02studentinformation.html>.

FERPA regulations indicate that other information from a student's educational record (aside from directory information) may only be disclosed to officials of the college who have legitimate educational need to know the information in the record. A college official is an employee. A legitimate educational interest occurs if the official needs to know information from students' education record in order to fulfill their official responsibilities. Student workers whose on-campus job responsibilities require them to access confidential information are considered college officials only when working at their place of campus employment. All student workers accessing confidential information should sign a confidentiality agreement if they access confidential information in the course of their jobs.

Access to data by student researchers or student organizations

- **Aggregated data:** Students may access numerous forms of aggregated data on the IR website. If the desired data is not available on the IR website, students may request this data from the IR. The Office of Institutional Research will determine if the request would violate ethical standards and if IR has the time and resources to compile the requested data.
- **Unit-record student data:** Students may have access to anonymized unit-record (i.e., individual student) data that were collected eleven or more years prior to the current academic year. These data will not contain any names, IDs, or other demographic information that the IR determines would make individuals identifiable. Students who request these data need to have the sponsorship of a Macalester faculty or staff member.
 - Students will not be given permission to access unit-record data on faculty, staff, or persons contacted as alumni from any time period.

Access to data by faculty and staff

The Office of Institutional Research exists to help the campus make better decisions and be better informed about Macalester. As a result, IR encourages academic and administrative departments to consult with IR prior to planning any research or needed data analyses.

- **Aggregated data about students, alumni, and faculty:** Faculty and staff may access numerous forms of aggregated data on the IR website, including aggregated data designed for department chairs. If the data needed is not available on the IR website, please contact IR with a data request.
- **Unit-record data about students:**

As mentioned on the prior page of this document, faculty and staff have a legitimate educational need to access unit-record data when it is necessary for them to fulfill their official responsibilities to the college. This would include projects for department improvement, assessment projects, or college committee work. This would exclude projects undertaken for an employee's own research agenda or conducted as part of an employee's degree program.

 - **Current academic year:** Academic department chairs and their department coordinators have access to unit-record data about their current majors and their current students with respect to such factors as their gender, race, expected graduation cohort, and students' other majors. These data are available through the Registrar's Office. Other staff may contact IR for information on current students.
 - **Prior academic years:** IR can provide data for other than the current academic year. In most cases, student data provided to faculty or staff by Institutional Research will be anonymized; no names or IDs will be included in data files. Staff should feel free to ask IR for assistance with conducting your analysis or request that IR conduct the analysis for you.
- **Unit-record data about alumni:** Select information about department alumni is available to chairs and department coordinators through the Advancement Office's Matrix2.
- **Unit-record data about faculty/staff:** Access to faculty or staff unit-record Banner data will be provided only to persons who already have permission (through their employment) to access that data through Banner.

Responsibilities of faculty and staff who access unit-record data:

- It is not appropriate to:
 - provide data access to students who are not your department's employees
 - allow your student employees to analyze the data for purposes beyond their employment (e.g., for an honors thesis, class project, or summer research project)
 - use the data for purposes beyond the project's original department or committee intent, such as for class examples, class exercises, or class assignments
 - release the data to a third party (on or off-campus)
- All data released by IR should be stored in a secure, password-protected folder on the G drive.
- All data should be deleted when the analysis is completed.

Any violation of these responsibilities will be reported to the Provost or Vice President to whom the faculty or staff member reports.