

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**Student Right to Privacy and Letters of Recommendation**

Faculty and administrators asked to write letters of reference or recommendations for a student are bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to disclose only facts and information available from personal observation and knowledge unless the student provides a written release for use of other information. FERPA stipulates that "if personally identifiable information obtained from a student's education record is included in a letter of recommendation (grades, GPA, etc.), the writer is required to obtain a signed release from the student which 1) specifies the records that may be disclosed, 2) states the purpose of the disclosure, and 3) identifies the part or class of parties to whom the disclosure can be made" (AACRAO 2006 FERPA Guide, Dennis J. Hicks et al., page 29). Unless right of access is waived, a student has the right to read letters of recommendation.

Students who plan to request letters of recommendation for academic institutions, ordination boards, denominational or other employers, or scholarship and grant agencies should obtain from the Registrar the release from "Permission to Release Education Record Information" and prepare a release form for each seminary official and reference needed. On the form students must provide explicitly any permission to disclose non-directory information, such as grade point average (GPA), grades, grade narratives, class rank, and student academic awards. Information from CPE final evaluations, information regarding disabilities, and information related to student conduct proceedings or counseling are not permitted in letters of reference.

Because of diverse denominational requirements, students are advised that the seminary may be asked to provide information not normally released as part of letters of reference or recommendations. In such cases, students may expect denominational agencies or boards to provide a release form, which replaces the Saint Paul School of Theology release. Students, rather than the seminary, must take responsibility for providing the denominational release forms and understanding denominational requirements that may exceed the normal limits of disclosure specified by the seminary's policy.

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**Permission to Release Education Record Information**

Before completing this release form and before writing letters of reference or recommendations, students and seminary officials should consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook policy and FERPA guidelines on privacy of education records. This release form is to be completed by the student who requests a letter of reference. Students may need an appointment with seminary officials who write letters of recommendation to discern their willingness to serve as a reference.

Name of student (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of request: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of seminary official asked to write the recommendation:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of recipient of recommendation:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Due date of recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of recommendation (check one):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic institution             | <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship or grant agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ordination board or committee    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denominational or other employer |  |

I give permission to the above named seminary official to write a letter of recommendation to the above named recipient. I give permission to include the following educational information in the reference (check all that apply or decline inclusion of all items):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grades   | <input type="checkbox"/> GPA (grade point average) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade narratives   | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic awards           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contextual education or field education supervisor assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above         |

Check one of the following options.

- I waive my right to review a copy of the letter.  
 I do not waive my right to review a copy of the letter.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_