

## **Confidentiality of Educational Records**

### **Bethany Theological Seminary (BTS) and Earlham School of Religion (ESR)**

follow the general policy of not releasing personal student information to outside agencies without the expressed consent of the student. The Joint Seminaries Registrar makes periodic evaluations of the information placed in student records to ensure that only information related to the specific purpose of the educational program is collected and maintained. In the following policy statement, a "student's record" shall be construed as containing the academic record, the health record (not including counseling files), references (unless a waiver of right to see references has been signed), and record of official response to disciplinary or academic problems.

*The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974* accords to students four basic rights:

- The right to "inspect and review" student records.
- The right to have "an opportunity for a hearing to challenge the contents of their school record."
- The right to have an "opportunity for correction or deletion" of inaccuracies or otherwise inappropriate data.
- The right to require written consent from students themselves for release of information about them.

The state and federal government has the right to subpoena student records, in which case the student's consent is not required but the student is informed. When written reports or transcripts are prepared for release, they are made and forwarded only by professional staff members in the administrative or faculty offices which received the request for information.

Students may request that no information be released unless they are contacted each time there is an inquiry.

A student may waive his/her rights of access to individual written recommendations for admissions, employment or honorary recognitions. Such waiver forms are available in the Admissions Office of each Seminary.

Occasionally it is important that BTS and ESR make available general information about students for educational research purposes. In releasing such data for research, great care is taken to protect the identity of individual students. If the limits of confidentiality are ever in question, formal consent must be obtained from the student.

Students may ask BTS/ESR to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the Academic School responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the Academic decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the Academic Dean's office notifies the student of the decision and advises the student of his/her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures is provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The procedures for granting a request by a student to see any or all part of his/her student record are as follows:

- The student must make a written request to the Joint Seminaries Registrar to see such information.
- As the law requires, access will be granted "within a reasonable period of time, but in no case more than 45 days after the request has been made." The Joint Seminaries Registrar informs the student of when the file is available.
- If the requested records are not maintained by the Registrar's Office, the student is referred to the appropriate office.

Students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures to comply with the requirements of FERPA at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605