U of T Bound by Freedom of Information, Protection of Privacy Act

A FEW YEARS AGO, THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO was a quiet place. It was a place where students could study in peace, away from the prying eyes of the public. But today, everything has changed. The university is now subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), which requires it to release information about its operations and employees.

According to Professor Robert Eisner, director of the university's privacy office, this has had a significant impact on the institution. "Our activities are now subject to public scrutiny," he said. "We must now answer to the public for everything we do." This has led to a dramatic increase in the number of Freedom of Information requests that the university receives. In 1999, the university received 1,200 requests. In 2000, this number had increased to 2,500. Today, the university receives over 5,000 requests per year.

The effect of FIPPA has been felt throughout the university. In the past, the administration could keep information about student affairs confidential. Now, they must release it to the public. This has had a significant impact on the way the university operates. For example, the administration must now release information about student discipline cases. This has led to a decline in the number of incidents that are reported.

The university has also had to adjust its policies to comply with FIPPA. It has created a new office to handle Freedom of Information requests. This office is staffed by trained professionals who are responsible for processing requests and ensuring that the university complies with the law.

The impact of FIPPA on the university has been significant. It has forced the university to become more transparent and to release more information about its operations. However, the university has also been able to use this opportunity to improve its operations. It has been able to identify areas where it can improve its services and to make changes to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its students.

The university is now facing a new challenge. As the number of Freedom of Information requests continues to increase, the university must find a way to meet the demands of the public while still protecting the privacy of its employees and students. This will be a difficult task, but the university is committed to finding a solution. The future of the university is uncertain, but one thing is clear: the impact of FIPPA will continue to be felt for years to come.
Protect Students’ Classroom Privacy

PROFESSOR EMILE BRIAN, OCEAN SCHOOL (ACADEMIC), SAYS THE NEED TO BE AFFIRMATIVE ABOUT FIPPA REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

FIPPA allows universities to collect the personal information necessary to deliver their programs, but it also sets standards for handling personal information. Students’ work, their grades, identification numbers, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are all personal information under FIPPA. Universities are responsible for protecting the individuals’ rights to privacy when handling students’ personal information.

Professor Kenneth Butler, director of the Office of Teaching and Learning, suggests that when talking to students, faculty should use a class that is appropriate to the task at hand, and that they gather the necessary materials for the task at hand.

"We owe it to students to protect their privacy," Butler said. "They should not have to worry about their personal information being used by faculty or educational institutions without their consent."

Classroom Procedures for Instructors Under FIPPA

Q. What practices should I follow for handling assignments and assessments?

A. Write grades and comments inside test books, papers and other materials where they cannot be easily seen by others.

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Q. How should I collect students’ work?

A. Students’ work should be collected with adequate supervision and security so that students cannot see the content of each other’s assignments.

Q. How should I collect assignments in class under supervised conditions?

A. If this cannot be done, arrange for drop-off in your departmental office, the office of the course or in a place where assignments can be collected and held securely for your retrieval.

Q. How should I return students’ work?

A. Assignments should be returned in a class if possible and not be left in a public place for general pickup. Assignments should only be returned to students who have worked on them.

Q. What practices should I follow for posting grades?

A. When posting grades, remember that student identities, including names and student numbers, are personal information, as are their marks. Posting is a courtesy, the official mark for the course is provided through the academic system.

Q. How should I handle attendance in class?

A. Collect only the information that you need to verify a student’s presence. The presence or absence of a student is the personal information of that student.

Q. How can I now take students’ attendance at finals exams?

A. When writing proof of attendance is necessary, students should provide it in such a way that their personal information (including their presence or absence) is not made known to another student.

Q. How should I have students sign up for group work?

A. Employ practices that do not require students to unnecessarily reveal personal information to other students. Ideally, students should have access to a secure, confidential electronic system for group sign-up.

Q. When group work practices are established or necessary parts of the curriculum, students should be informed at the start of the term that their personal information will be collected and used to develop group work schedules. Collect only the information that is necessary to facilitate group work.

Visit www.fippa.utoronto.ca for more detailed information.

FIPPA Means Filing With Care

To ensure that students are properly informed about the collection and use of their personal information, the University of Toronto has developed a FIPPA question and answer sheet for faculty, now available at www.provost.utoronto.ca/English/Guidelines.html. In addition, the university has created a FIPPA ion that provides more information about the requirements within the academic environment and contact the university’s information technology officer (or, in your manager to identify themselves), the university’s FIPPA office or the provost’s office.

Each division has a freedom of information liaison officer. The Office of the Provost and the Division of Information Technology.

FIPPA office or the provost’s office.

This means that students who are receiving FIPPA notices should be aware of the personal information that is being collected and used.

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