

# Security Passphrase Business Practices

When a student has a FERPA-sensitive inquiry, the university must verify the student's identity before disclosing protected information. If the student has an education record request in person or over the phone and cannot present a photo ID, university employees must request the student's security passphrase.

Students set their security passphrase through [Buff Portal](#); university employees view the passphrase through Campus Solutions or the [MyCUInfo](#) Faculty Center.

The following documentation explains the purpose of the requirement; business practices for requesting and verifying security passphrases; and recommended responses when a student's passphrase is not established, is stated incorrectly or contains inappropriate language.

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# Look Up the Student's Passphrase

CU Boulder faculty and staff can view a student's established security passphrase [through the MyCUInfo Faculty Center](#) or by [logging in to Campus Solutions directly](#) (click the link to skip ahead to that section).

## Using the MyCUInfo Faculty Center

1. Log in to [MyCUInfo](#). On the "Teaching Tools" tab, click "Go to Faculty Center."

The screenshot shows the 'Teaching Tools' tab selected in the top navigation bar. Below it, the 'FACULTY TOOLKIT' section is visible. Under 'Course Information: Fall 2019', there is a list of courses. At the bottom of this section, a button labeled 'Go to Faculty Center' is highlighted with a red arrow pointing to it.

2. Find the class in which the student is enrolled, then click "Class Roster."

The screenshot shows the 'Faculty Center' interface with the 'My Schedule' tab selected. In the 'Select display option' section, there are two radio buttons: 'Show All Classes' (selected) and 'Show Enrolled Classes Only'. Below this, a 'Class Roster' link is circled with a red arrow. The main content area shows a grid of class rosters for the Spring 2015 term at CU Boulder.

3. Find the student in the roster and click the FERPA window shade icon.

The screenshot shows the 'Class Roster' page. At the top, there are tabs for 'Faculty Center', 'Search', 'my schedule', 'class roster', and 'grade roster'. Below these are buttons for 'Enrollment Status' (set to 'Enrolled'), 'Enrollment Capacity' (18), 'Enrolled' (4), 'Dropped' (0), 'Waitlisted' (0), and 'Select display option' (with 'Include photos in list' and 'Link to Photos' checked). The main area is titled 'Enrolled Students' and contains a table with columns: Notify, Photo, FERPA, ID, Name, and Level. The FERPA column for student number 2 has a small window shade icon with a red circle around it. A large red arrow points from the left towards this icon. The table rows are numbered 1 through 4.

4. In the new window, click "CU Security Passphrase."

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Releasable FERPA Directory Information' for 'Ralphie Buffalo'. It includes sections for 'Bio/Demo Data' and other releasable information like name, address, phone, and email. At the bottom right, there is a link labeled 'CU Security Passphrase' which is circled in red. A large red arrow points from the left towards this link.

5. If the student has given you a passphrase, compare it to the one on your screen.

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Security Passphrase' for 'Sally Z9ZSRBLD01'. It displays the 'Security Passphrase' field containing 'She sells sea shells by the sea shore' and the 'Student's Passphrase' label. A large green arrow points from the left towards the student's name, and another green arrow points from the left towards the student's passphrase.

6. Continue to [Respond to the Student](#).

## Using Campus Solutions

If a student has an educational record request in person or over the phone and cannot present a photo ID:

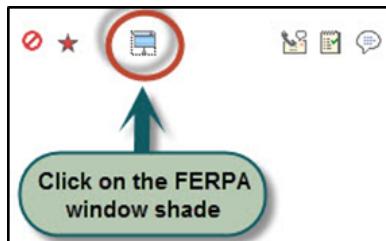
1. Ask the student, "What are your student ID number and security passphrase?"

**Note:** Request both pieces of information at the same time. Asking for the student ID number first, then requesting the security passphrase after you've opened the student's record, confirms that the student exists before the requestor's identity has been verified.

2. Look up the student's record in Campus Solutions.

**Note:** Use test ID 100567993 to view a sample security passphrase.

3. Click the FERPA window shade icon.



4. In the new window, click "CU Security Passphrase."

Releasable FERPA Directory Information

Ralphie Buffalo

Bio/Demo Data

Releasable Name   Releasable Address   Releasable Phone   ReleasableEmail

CU Security Passphrase

Return

5. Compare the passphrase provided by the student to the one on your screen.

CU

Security Passphrase

Sally Z9ZSRBLD01   Student's name

Security Passphrase

She sells sea shells by the sea shore   Student's Passphrase

Return

6. Continue to [Respond to the Student](#).

# Respond to the Student

## If the Passphrase Matches

You have confirmed the student's identity and may provide the requested information, regardless of the student's privacy settings.

## If the Passphrase Is Incorrect

1. First, determine whether the student has "PRIVACY" on their account.

**NO:** Continue to step 2.

**YES: You must respond, "We have no information about that person."**

If the student volunteers that they're on full privacy, you may say, "Students on full privacy have to confirm their identity by either visiting our office in person with a photo ID or stating their established security passphrase before we can release their personal information."

2. **Do not reveal that the password is incorrect; you have not yet verified the student's identity.**  
Simply tell the student how to look up their passphrase through Buff Portal (see the [Set Your Security Passphrase](#) webpage for step-by-step instructions).

## If No Passphrase Is Established

3. First, determine whether the student has "PRIVACY" on their account.

**NO:** Continue to step 2.

**YES: You must respond, "We have no information about that person."**

If the student volunteers that they are on privacy, you may say, "Students on full privacy have to confirm their identity by either visiting our office in person with a photo ID or stating their established security passphrase before we can release their personal information."

4. **Do not reveal that the password is incorrect; you have not yet verified the student's identity.**  
Advise the student that they need to either:
  - a. Establish a passphrase through Buff Portal while you wait or before contacting you again (see the [Set Your Security Passphrase](#) webpage for step-by-step instructions; to see changes to the passphrase, close and reopen the "CU Security Passphrase" window), or
  - b. Confirm their identity by visiting your office in person with a photo ID.

## If the Passphrase Contains Lewd, Intimidating, Abusive or Aggressive Language

What constitutes inappropriate language is highly subjective. If you are offended by the student's stated passphrase, you may follow the steps below.

1. Ask the student to change their security passphrase:

- a. Over the phone: "Your passphrase is inappropriate. I can stay on the line until you change it, or you can visit our office in person with a photo ID."
- b. In person: "Your passphrase is inappropriate. I'll be happy to assist you after you change it, or you may come back with a photo ID."

**Note:** To see changes to the passphrase, close and reopen the “CU Security Passphrase” window.

2. If the student chooses not to change the passphrase, you may submit a report to the Office of the Registrar for follow-up. Email the student’s ID number to [sarah.layton@colorado.edu](mailto:sarah.layton@colorado.edu).
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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How do students set their security passphrase?**

Step-by-step instructions are available on the Office of the Registrar’s [Set Your Security Passphrase](#) page.

### **Are there restrictions on what a student can set as their security passphrase?**

The only characters that can be used in a passphrase are letters (upper or lowercase) and spaces. Numbers, punctuation and other characters are not accepted. There is no minimum character requirement, but a longer phrase (up to 50 characters are accepted) offers greater security to the student.

### **Can we make any exceptions to the security passphrase requirement?**

No. If the student cannot present a photo ID, they must correctly state their established security passphrase before accessing or discussing their FERPA-protected information.

### **Do the stated and established passphrases have to match exactly?**

The stated security passphrase must be very close to what the student established through Buff Portal. Minor word omissions or transpositions may be acceptable; use your professional discretion.

### **What if a third party contacts us and provides the student’s security passphrase?**

A security passphrase can only be used to verify a *student’s* identity. A parent, guardian, sponsor or other third party must state the password associated with the [FERPA Consent to Release](#) on file for that student. To look up a student’s FERPA Consent(s) to Release and verify the third party’s password, see [Verifying FERPA Consent](#).