

Post
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The Post's November 20th editorials concerning the Freedom of Information Act and an individual's right to privacy were insightful and informative. American people deserve the opportunity to be better informed about their government and also to have access to federal files on individuals. Students, like the rest of the American public—and we are amazingly like all other Americans, despite labels of radicalism and idealistic beliefs—also deserve freedom of information rights.

In theory, the recently enacted Family Education and Privacy Act, introduced by Senator James L. Buckley, provides students the opportunity to examine their academic files. Along with the usual material that is available for our perusal—transcripts and applications—these files often contain "confidential" material that in all probability (I cannot say for sure, as I am not able to scrutinize confidential material) contains erroneous, and in all likelihood, defamatory observations and comments by secondary level educators unqualified to make such judgments.

Buckley's amendment, if strictly interpreted, should force colleges and universities to unlock confidential files. As is the case with all other citizens, student files are subject to inaccuracies and malicious libel, and, like all other Americans, students should be permitted to inspect information on their permanent records in order to challenge and correct out-of-date and inaccurate information.

Unfortunately, however, academicians and university administrators do not always view students as citizens with the same rights and privileges as all others. This double standard and unwarranted paranoia has caused great consternation and hesitation in complying with the Family Education and Privacy Act. At George Washington University, where administrators are generally responsive, "confidential" materials are being removed from requested student files, at least until the university has established its own guiding ambiguous language in the Buckley amendment. In essence, the University has established its own guidelines that simply maintain the status quo.

What had been expected to be a great boon to students has turned out to be nothing more than a hoax. University administrators are proceeding under the presumption that another amendment will soon be enacted that waters down the original Act to exclude confidential material. If such is the case students will have gained nothing; instead, they, like their fellow citizens, will continue to be subject to harassment and administration secrecy.

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