PROTECTION OF STUDENT PRIVACY

FERPA and Student Privacy

The Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for all FERPA related issues, which includes informing PTC employees of their responsibilities concerning the release of student confidential records or information. Because an online environment creates a record of student activity, it is subject to FERPA privacy rights, unlike verbal exchanges in a physical classroom.

PTC's policies and procedures for reviewing student educational records are located in the PTC Catalog, the Student Handbook, and the Office of Academic Affairs. In addition, requests for an amendment of records can be made at the Office of Academic Affairs.

Access to Student Records

The College maintains electronic student records through the Student Information System (SIS), which is used to store and manage alumni, student, applicant, and inquiry records. The SIS provides users access to student transcripts and assessment scores and permits authorized users to build student schedules, track student attendance, and manage various types of student data. Initially, PTC enters students into the SIS at the time of their inquiry about the college. The system accumulates student data from inquiry and matriculation through to alumni status.

Students' records are kept private and are only accessed by those staff and faculty who have a legitimate educational interest under FERPA guidelines. The HR department enters the employee's biographical information and position into the SIS. The IT Department then grants employees access to the SIS based on their role at the institution. The access level is determined by certain criteria, such as employee job description, employment level, and the employee's level of interaction with students. Management approves all access levels, and the IT Department establishes user access. User access may be increased or decreased based on an employee's change in job duties, a position change, or an associated reason that would require management approval.

Student Identity Verification

To identify students enrolled in distance education courses, Pittsburgh Technical College (PTC) requires a username and password. Every PTC student receives a temporary login for their PTC account, which includes the Blackboard Learning Management System, PTC Student Portal. The student email system has a separate login. Students must reset each password during the initial login, and can then change passwords at intervals (up to once per day) appropriate to them to maintain account security. Each student's login is unique and part of the verification process used for accessing online courses.

Student Password Protection

Students who are enrolled in on ground or online PTC programs are given a username and a temporary password to their PTC email account and a My PTC Dashboard account. The Dashboard gives students access to course schedules, grades, the Blackboard Learning Management System, and other relevant data. Each student is required to create a password for each of these accounts to ensure privacy. Students can

change passwords at intervals (up to once per day) appropriate to them in order to maintain account security.

On occasion, a student will forget a password and require assistance to gain access to school email or their Dashboard. Depending if the student is on ground or online, one of two procedures will be used to reset a student password.

The procedure for resetting a password for on-ground students is as follows:

- The on ground student must visit the IT department, in person, during business hours. The IT representative will identify the student via the Student Information System (SIS) photo linked to the student's account.

- If a student does not have a photo in SIS, a state issued photo ID is acceptable.

- If there is a rare occurrence in which the student has no SIS photo or photo ID, the IT representative will follow the identification procedure for online students.

The procedure for resetting a password for online students is as follows:

- The student must call PTC and speak with an IT representative by asking for the IT department.

- The IT representative will ask for the student's username or first and last name to locate the matching account on SIS.

- Once the student file is located, the IT representative will check the enrollment status of the student. The student must be actively enrolled to reset an account password.

- If the student is not enrolled, the representative will direct the student to speak with a Student Advisor (SA) before continuing to assist with resetting an account.

- Once the IT department confirms the student's status, the representative will ask the student a series of 3-5 questions, pulled randomly from data in the student's SIS account, to determine student identity. The IT Department poses general questions such as "previous address," "phone number," etc. and does not pull information directly from a SIS record or disclose any personally identifiable information about a student during the password reset process.

- If the student answers the questions correctly, the representative will complete the password change by issuing a temporary password for the requested account. The representative will provide the student with instructions on how to change the password during the next login to safeguard privacy.

Office Responsible

When a potential student applies to PTC, Admissions, and Financial Planning gather information to complete a preliminary plan. If a student decides to move forward with the enrollment process, the Financial Planner will assist and have the student complete a FAFSA. To complete the FAFSA students use documentation, such as tax returns, tax transcripts, and W-2 employment forms. PTC uses documents from the completion of the FAFSA to verify the student's social security number, and to run any background checks if it is a requirement to enroll in a program.

Once the data is entered in the Student Information System (SIS) a student's login is established. This login typically consists of the student's initials, followed by a numeric number related to the sequence numbering in SIS. This login then allows student's access to the PTC network as well as areas such as Blackboard for online classes. Students initially log in to the system with a standard password and then be requested to establish their private password. This is typically done at Orientation, prior to the student beginning program. If students forget their password, they would be required to contact the IT Department, verify identity and this would allow IT to reset the student's login for access to the network.