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Subject Use of Student Social Security Number

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Campus Community

FROM:Gerianne Sands, Associate Counsel, Office of University Counsel
Ana Maria Torres, Assistant Provost for Registrar and Financial
Aid

RE: Use of Student Social Security Number

DATE:June 5, 2001

In August 2000, legislation was enacted in New York State (Chapter 214 of the Laws of 2000) limiting the use of student social security numbers by educational institutions within New York. The legislation takes effect July 1, 2001.

The general intent of the legislation is to bar the public display of a student's social security number in order to prevent the potential misuse of this sensitive and confidential information. The new law does not prohibit the institution's internal use of the social security number when required for its own legitimate purposes.

The legislation specifically bars the display of a student's social security number in a posting or public listing of grades, on class rosters or other lists provided to teachers, on student identification cards, and in student directories or similar listings.

SUNY System Administration has recommended the elimination of student social security numbers in hard-copy public postings of grades, class rosters, and any lists, whether in hard-copy or electronic media, provided to instructors.

To comply with the new legislation, the Stony Brook Registrar's Office, in collaboration with the Office of University Counsel and the Division of Information Systems, changed the grade sheet, traditionally used by academic departments to post grades. Only the last five digits of the student's social security number shows on the grade sheet. Once the University implements PeopleSoft, the students' social security number will no longer be used as the official student ID, as the new system will assign an "Empl ID" to each student as it does currently for employees.

Social security numbers are allowed to be used in connection with the employment of students to document and report wages and withholdings as permitted by law (42 USC, 405(c)). In addition, since federal regulations require higher education institutions to maintain administrative and fiscal procedures and records to adequately administer student aid programs (CFR 668.14 and 668.16), the financial aid office will continue to require students to provide their social security numbers on the application for financial aid

and other relevant documents.

The campus community must remain vigilant about any intentional or unintentional abuse of the existing privacy laws, including the misuse of the student's social security number. To report any concerns or violations, please contact the Office of University Counsel, 328 Administration, 2-6110.