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Transcripts can include notation of disciplinary actions
AACRAO Changes its Recommendation

WASHINGTON, DC, – Historically, US institutions manually recorded student status information on permanent record cards. Once recorded, communicating this information on the transcript was unavoidable because the student's record and transcript were the same document. In modern student record systems, however, maintaining documentation of an action that affects a student's status and recording it on the academic transcript are two separate and distinct activities. Activities so distinct, that in 1996, AACRAO identified the recording of disciplinary actions on the transcript as no longer a recommended best practice.

Disciplinary actions differ from academic actions in that they are typically defined as violations of an institution's code of conduct. They may include, but are not limited to, academic infractions (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) or misbehavior (harassment, sexual misconduct, substance abuse, etc.). Current debate involves the inclusion or exclusion of such actions on the transcript as a method of sharing behavioral information or protecting a student's privacy rights.

With 23 shootings on college campuses in 2015 alone, public opinion on the notation of disciplinary actions on transcript is changing and changing fast. Institutions are feeling the pressure to include these notations on transcripts, as well as the pressure to screen incoming students through their admission's application by asking questions related to encounters with law enforcement even if there was no conviction. Michael Reilly, executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), said that many schools did not like to ask the questions but had been spurred to do so by campus violence. "And they feel they need to do what they can to screen students," he said.

With the release of the *AACRAO 2016 Academic Record and Transcript Guide*, you find survey data of current recordkeeping practices solidly demonstrate that the vast majority of institutions do not record disciplinary violations on the academic transcript. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents indicated that their institution's academic transcript does not reflect students' probationary status for behavioral reasons or students' ineligibility to re-enroll due to minor disciplinary violations and 85 percent indicated that their institutions academic transcript does not reflect students' ineligibility to re-enroll due to major disciplinary violations.

The public, however, wants more transparency. Recent criminal offenses that captured national attention have resulted in changes in state legislation. As of the printing of the AACRAO Guide, two states, New York and Virginia, have passed legislation requiring the notation of disciplinary actions on transcripts.

The opinion of records professionals regarding the inclusion of disciplinary actions on an academic transcript is also shifting. When asked to provide their opinion about best practices even if their opinions differed from their institution's practices, 40 percent indicated that the

academic transcript should reflect a student's ineligibility to re-enroll due to major disciplinary violations, a significant difference from institutional practice of 25 percent.

This will likely continue to be a highly-debated topic and AACRAO advises institutions to consult their local state laws regarding requirements to record such disciplinary actions on the transcript. It is also advised that attention be paid to possible federal action in this area.

AACRAO is a non-profit, voluntary, professional association of more than 11,000 higher education professionals representing approximately 2,600 institutions in more than 40 countries. AACRAO's commitment to the professional development of its members includes best practice guidance on admissions strategies to meet institutional diversity objectives, delivery of academic programs in innovative ways to meet the needs of a changing student body, and exemplary approaches to student retention and completion.

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