



## **CAREER SERVICES CREDENTIAL FILE INFORMATION**

### **What is a Credential File?**

The credential file is composed of letters of reference that may assist and support your applications for employment or graduate schools. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 give you the right to review a reference written after January 1, 1975. This form of reference is commonly known as an "open" reference. The law also provides the option to waive this right to review; such a reference is then termed "closed."

Many employers prefer only confidential references. They view them as a more honest evaluation of the student. Thus, positive references of this nature might hold more weight than nonconfidential or "open" letters of recommendation. The main disadvantage of confidential references is that you forfeit the right to have access to what is written.

### **Setting Up Your Credential File**

The first step in creating your file is to fill out the Career Services Credential Registration Form. Return this to the Career Services Office. Next, decide if you want an "open or closed" file. Complete the waiver section of each recommendation form as desired.

Career Services will provide you with the recommendation/reference forms to be given to faculty or employers who could speak in your behalf. Fill in the top section of each form, and have each reference return it directly to Career Services. Four or five recommendations are sufficient.

### **Statement of the Confidential Nature of Recommendations**

Historically, references placed in a student's credential file have been considered the property of the writer of the recommendation and the contents were shared only with the potential bona fide employers and/or graduate school admissions offices. As such, these references have been maintained in a confidential manner and the Career Services Office policy has been to deny even the student access to his or her files. Recent legislation, however, has necessitated changing this policy from a mandatory to an optional status.

The Buckley-Pell Amendment to Public Law 93-380 (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) states the credential files established after December 31, 1974 must be open to students unless they specifically waive that right. The law also states that students cannot be made to sign a waiver as a prerequisite for utilization of the credential file service. Although your credential file exists for your benefit and you control its' contents, it remains the property of the Career Services Office of Shenandoah University.



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### **Maintenance of Your Credential File**

**Removing letters of recommendation from your file** - Letters of recommendation (confidential and non-confidential) can be removed from your file only by a written request (signed and dated) to our office from the individual who wrote the letter. If that person is deceased, letters may be removed at your request. If you have decided on a confidential file and wish to reverse this decision, we are obligated to return the letters to the recommenders. You must contact them directly if you wish them to review the letters with you.

**Withholding parts of your file** - You may, at any time, request our office to permanently or temporarily withhold parts of your credentials file when it is sent out. This request must be in writing, signed and dated by the registrant.

**File Maintenance** - You are responsible for making sure your file is complete and for updating your letters of reference. New references/evaluations should be added and old ones retired. After a period of seven years without any activity of either updating, sending materials from the file, or notification to the university to maintain the file by the SU alumni, *credential files will be removed from the system and destroyed.*

**Credential Mailing Service** - There is no cost for establishing a file. Credential files will be sent out only upon your written request and are sent directly to the prospective employers and graduate school officials. Credential files are not sent to employment agencies, relatives, unidentified post office boxes, street addresses or "third-party" participants. You should send files to employers only when specifically requested to do so.

**Transcripts** - The Registrar's Office is responsible for the maintenance of Shenandoah University transcripts. Transcripts should be included with your application only when requested by an employer or graduate school. Students and alumni who do not have an active Credential File must request official transcripts from the Registrar's Office. For more information obtaining or sending an official transcript, please contact the Registrar's Office at (540) 665-5585.

**Teaching certificates are not automatically granted** - To secure a certificate, an application must be submitted to the State Department of Education. Application forms are usually secured from employing school officials. Forms are also available in the Registrar's Office.

### **Using Your Credential File**

To have your credential file sent to a prospective employer or graduate school, submit the name and address to the Career Services Office in writing. Any number of files may be sent at a given time. Credential files are sent out only after the Career Services Registration Form has been completed and signed.