
WESTERN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY POLICIES

The Western Institute for Social Research (WISR) complies with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), the Federal law which requires educational institutions to establish a written policy with regard to the privacy rights of students. It also requires such institutions to make a statement describing their procedures with regard to students' privacy rights available. WISR shall maintain the confidentiality of education records in accordance with the provisions of FERPA and shall accord all the rights under the law to all students who are or have been in attendance at WISR. FERPA prohibits the WISR and its employees from releasing educational information about students (including grades) to third parties (including guardians and parents of minors) without the prior written consent of the student. Faculty members must comply with all federal laws, state laws, agreements with third parties, and WISR policies and principles pertaining to the use, protection, and disclosure of various types of confidential, proprietary, and private information. Such policies apply even after the faculty member's relationship with WISR ends. Questions concerning information about or the application of FERPA should be referred to the Administrative Dean, (marilyn.jackson@wizr.edu).

Student Records

WISR keeps student records on file, as required by the State of California. Transcripts of student credit earned are permanently kept and all other records are kept for a minimum of five years. State of California visiting teams are permitted to access these files to review WISR's educational programs. WISR complies with FERPA regulations, and we are currently in the initial stages of taking steps toward complying with the more stringent requirements of European Union's GDPR laws (General Data Protection Regulation).

Right of Inspection

WISR protects students' privacy and students will be updated annually on WISR's policies. Under FERPA, eligible students have the right to inspect and review their educational records within 45 days of their request.

Online Viewing

Students are permitted to review the contents of their administrative and academic files online upon request to the Administrative Dean: marilyn.jackson@wizr.edu, with a copy to admin@wizr.edu. Students may expect to gain access to view their files within 45 days as per FERPA guidelines.

Student administrative files include admission, transcript and payment information and

Academic files include their learning portfolio, working portfolio including papers they have written and the course syllabi they have submitted, faculty evaluations of their projects/courses, rough drafts, other supporting documents, and media pertaining to their academic work and studies at WISR.

Amending a Record

Current students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.

Filing a Complaint

Students may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education under FERPA. Complaints by a student must be in writing and contain specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a violation of FERPA has occurred and must be filed within 180 days of the alleged violation or within 180 days after they knew about the violation.

WISR Email Addresses

WISR assigns email addresses ending in @wizr.edu to all students. Any requests for student information from an email address ending in "the student name @wizr.edu" is deemed valid and WISR will release student information to that email address. Because WISR requires all students to use their @wizr.edu email addresses for all WISR communications, WISR will not release any student information to any email address other than those ending in @wizr.edu. When someone requests student information using an email not ending in @wizr.edu, WISR staff will reply with: Thank you for contacting WISR. We do not recognize your email address. Please use your student email address to request student information.

Directory Information

Per FERPA guidelines: Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell guardians or parents of minors and eligible students about directory information and allow them a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Staff may at times share email, phone numbers, or mailing addresses among students, faculty, staff or board members. We do not give information to the public without a student's written consent and per FERPA guidelines. WISR does not currently distribute a published directory of information among students. Currently, students can contact each other on the WISR Space in Google Spaces or if they know someone's name, they can email to their firstname.lastname@wizr.edu email address.

Student ID Numbers

WISR assigns a unique student ID number to each student. When creating datasheets or reports, student ID numbers can be used instead of student names.

Graduation

WISR periodically holds graduation ceremonies. When there is a graduation ceremony, students who participate, are by doing so, consenting to have their name, degree program and final thesis or dissertation's title shared with the audience and public, unless they tell us otherwise.

Files

All student records are stored digitally and maintained online. Access to this drive is restricted to the following authorized personnel: President, AcD, AdD, VP-CQI, Finance Director, Coordinator of Academic Administration (CAA), Administrative Assistant (AA), LxD and the Chair of the Board who use an encrypted password. Faculty members, including core faculty, who work collaboratively to review student progress, are given access to student files.

WISR does not maintain paper archival student records. WISR does occasionally receive hardcopy documents for the student record. These are scanned into our online system and then securely destroyed. Destruction of these documents occurs when records are no longer needed for their original purpose to protect student privacy and minimize data security risks. Until being destroyed, these documents are maintained in a locked, fireproof Student Records File Cabinet. Access to the Student Records File Cabinet is restricted to the following authorized personnel: President, Administrative Dean, Finance Director (FD) and Administrative Assistant (AA) who have access to keys to the Student Records File Cabinet.

Third-Party Access

Any third party requesting student information will have to provide WISR with written authorization for the release of information, signed by the student or alumnus/alumna whose information is being sought. WISR staff will verify that the signature on the release matches the signature that WISR has on file for that student or alumnus/alumna. WISR staff will review the release to ascertain the specific information being sought. Only after the signature is validated and the specific information sought is ascertained will WISR staff release student information to third parties.

Student Inquiries

When a student calls WISR asking about their WISR student information, WISR staff asks the caller for his/her student ID number, date of birth, and degree program, to verify that the caller is in fact or was a student at WISR, before releasing any student information. This number is also found on their final transcript for alumni. This information will be in their profile sheet in their Business Profile folder that may be shared with the student's wisr.edu Google account.

Alumni Inquiries

When an alumnus/alumna requests student information via email from an email address that WISR does not recognize, WISR staff will ask the alumnus/alumna to call WISR and provide three pieces of demographic data: (1) Date of birth; (2) Degree program; (3) Date of graduation. After the identity of the alumnus/alumna associated with the unrecognized email address has been validated, WISR staff will release student information to that email address.

Student Academic Work

Neither other WISR students, alumni, nor the general public are permitted to view any portion of a student's (or alum's) learning portfolio, without the student's permission. This includes the papers, syllabi, transcripts and multimedia academic products submitted as part of their academic work at WISR. As needed, Faculty, Board, and Advisory Committee members are permitted to view student work as are visiting teams sent to WISR by State or accreditation agencies. WISR students are encouraged, but not required, to consider their academic work as a contribution to public inquiry, research and the advancement of other students academically. Students are strongly encouraged to make as much of their work available to others, as they feel comfortable in doing-this includes in their portfolio, on WISR's website, and/or larger publication. WISR faculty actively assist students in disseminating and publishing their work. WISR will answer inquiries about a student's degrees attained and coursework completed, only if the student has authorized WISR to do so. WISR will not answer such inquiries for those students who owe WISR money (except for those students who are repaying deferred tuition and who are up to date in making those payments).