



## "Multicultural is WISer"

Western Institute for Social Research 2930 Shattuck Ave., #300, Berkeley, CA 94705 (510) 655-2830 [mail@wizr.edu](mailto:mail@wizr.edu)

Board of Trustees

January 6, 2018

Marcia Campos, MA  
Board Chair

To WISR faculty, students, Board and friends,

David Yamada, JD, PhD  
Board Vice Chair

WISR has been declared eligible to pursue accreditation by the Distance Education Accreditation Commission ([www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)). Even though WISR offers ongoing opportunities for onsite seminars and face to face interaction, it is possible to study completely from a distance and earn a degree at WISR. As always, there are no guarantees, but we are hopeful that we can achieve accreditation by June 2020. DEAC is approved by the US Department of Education. WASC turned down our application for Eligibility last month, because they felt that we do not have, nor will we be able to develop, the large financial reserve and institutional infrastructure in the next two years that they expect of the (usually very large and conventional academic institutions they accredit).

John Watkins, PhD  
Board Secretary

Charles Greene, MBA  
Board Treasurer

Peggy Baxter, MSW

John Bilorusky, PhD

Sevgi Fernandez, BA

Gabriela Hofmeyer, BS

Vera Labat, MPH

Suzanne Quijano,  
MBA, MA, LMFT

DEAC has a number of very specific guidelines for course syllabi, so we will have to do some further tweaking of our syllabi. Still, as we do so, we will retain WISR's strong emphasis on personalized/individualized degree programs and learning, and of course also, our commitments to social justice, multiculturalism, and action-inquiry and creativity in the content that students study.

We will have to make a transition to having our syllabi accessed through an online Learning Management System (such as Moodle or Canvas), our students will have to do a certain amount of "online studying" (studying some of the WISR-required readings and relevant videos online, not just hard cover print books), and some regular posting of "thinking out loud" ideas for feedback from other students and faculty (online dialogue—which will be easier for some students than having to come to two seminars per month—a requirement that so far only MFT students and a couple of other students have complied with). We will have an initial discussion of first steps toward such refinements at our All School Gathering, Saturday, February 3rd (please try to participate, onsite or by phone/video conference). In addition, our new volunteer staff (and student) Learning Technology Specialist, Mark Wilson, will conduct needed trainings on technology for students and faculty, alike, to help make this transition smooth.

Indeed, WISR has the opportunity now to become, after several years, a rather distinctive and appealing option—a distance learning alternative that:

- Can be onsite and face to face for those who want that,
- Will be engaging and socially progressive, rather than cookie cutter and conformist,

- Will support and encourage self-directed learning that is also highly collaborative (through a combination of seminars, online forums, and student initiated collaborations),
- Will continue to be affordable (despite likely, modest tuition increases in the not too distant future) and accessible to adults—especially those who are attracted by WISR’s long-held, steadfast commitments to our distinctive social and educational mission and methods.

## Update on WISR’s Finances

**In 2017, we received \$44,108.12 in cash donations from 9 currently enrolled students, 5 Board members, 12 alumni, 2 current and/or former faculty, one staff person and 3 friends of WISR. The size of the donations has ranged from \$18 to \$15,000. All part-time faculty have been donating their time; John Bilorusky donated 33% of his salary and the cost of his health benefits for 2017 (\$26,000 in salary, \$9,000+ in health benefits). These donations have been extremely valuable in our efforts to move WISR toward long-term sustainability. Moreover, beyond this, WISR is benefiting from the continuing engagement of students, faculty, Board and alumni in learning at WISR and in WISR’s institutional planning and development.**

One anonymous and very generous donor has given us \$15,000 in 2017, based on our having received just over \$12,000 in donations since their “challenge” match a month ago. If, in 2018, we can come up with \$3,000 to finish matching their \$15,000 already donated, and then an additional \$15,000, they have promised to donate another \$15,000 in 2018. That is, we need \$18,000 to be donated in 2018 to match the \$15,000 added donation pledged.

So far, we have pledges totaling \$12,250 for 2018, so beyond these pledges we need only another \$6,000 to gain another \$15,000 from this donor, in 2018. In addition, in 2018, John Bilorusky will donate one-sixth of his salary (\$13,000) plus health benefits (\$9,000+). Part-time faculty will continue to donate their time. John is asking that we also match his \$13,000 donation of salary.

**So, our challenge for 2018 to match \$18,000 needed to receive the second \$15,000 anonymous donation pledged, and to match the \$13,000 in salary to be donated—or a total of \$28,000. So far, \$12,500 has been pledged by others for 2018, so we need to receive from others who have not yet pledged, an additional \$15,500 for 2018 to receive the \$28,000 in monies from these two offered donations in 2018.**

Based on donations received in 2017, we will be able to pay off the last \$5,000 of debt in January 2018. Our ability to eliminate ALL of our debt is crucial to our becoming accredited, and which stood at \$45,000 in debt 18 months ago, and \$37,500 in debt just six months ago. (go to next page . . .)

Regarding our use of monies in 2018, we will use about \$20,000 of these monies for accreditation fees, about \$6,000 for technology and online library expenses, and about \$8,000 for CPA-related expenses. These expenses will total \$34,000. Remaining funds will be used to set up a much-needed contingency fund—which is also expected by the accreditation agency.

Sincerely,

John Bilorusky, President—on behalf of the Board and Faculty of WISR