



Northern California Graduate School Celebrates 50 Years on May 10th, 2025

The Western Institute of Social Research (WISR) celebrates a half century of quality education. Founded in 1975

BERKELEY, CA, UNITED STATES, May 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Founded in 1975 by four young, innovative educators, the small institute, which offers personalized and distance learning graduate degree programs, proudly observes 50 years promoting values of social justice and diversity/inclusiveness.

In 1975, WISR Co-founder and President, John Bilorusky PhD (UC Berkeley, Director of Graduate Studies at University Without Walls-Berkeley, 1972-75) and three colleagues, started a school that became the Western Institute for Social Research (WISR, pron. "wiser"). For most of its first four decades WISR occupied a storefront on Sacramento Street in South Berkeley, with sparse furniture and a typewriter. At first, all they had was their dream and commitment.

Fast forward to 2025 in North Berkeley, WISR is now recognized as institutionally accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). WISR grants two Master's degrees and a Doctorate in Education and Social Change, offering distance education in a small-scale institute designed to provide highly personalized education where each student receives extensive mentoring from faculty and has collaborative opportunities with other students online.

WISR's curriculum is designed especially for those interested in advanced studies in psychology, education, social change and justice, community leadership, diversity/inclusiveness and multiculturalism, and for those seeking to meet the academic requirements for the State of California's Marriage and Family Therapy license and the Licensed Professional Clinical Counseling license.

As John Bilorusky, PhD says: "Thanks to the spirit of collaboration that we have nurtured at WISR -- our mission, collegial culture, people and history -- we have the experience, expertise, conviction, and perseverance to embrace challenges and move forward for many years to come -- far beyond our 50th Anniversary in 2025."

Mission: WISR provides community-involved adults with high-quality, affordable, personalized, learner-centered online graduate education and degrees in a collaborative, multicultural learning community with a commitment to community education and to being a model for

improvements in higher education. WISR has an emphasis on action-oriented inquiry that combines theory and practice to achieve community improvement, educational innovation, and social justice.

More Information about the Western Institute for Social Research (WISR)

WISR has a distinctive mission focusing on social justice, inclusiveness, diversity, and multiculturalism. It offers interactive, distance-learning programs, locally and globally, in the areas of education, community leadership, social change, and psychology (MFT and LPCC).

Although WISR has been California State Approved since April 1977, the road to national accreditation was a long and arduous one for such a small and innovative institution. In 2024, WISR was recognized as institutionally accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC), which in turn is recognized by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a U.S. institutional accreditor.

WISR is also the home of the Center for Child and Family Development, which trains future MFTs and provides free counseling to low-income students in a dozen Bay Area schools.

One of the founders of WISR, Dr. John Bilorusky (PhD, Higher Education, UC Berkeley, 1972) remains a faculty member and is WISR's President. WISR attracts faculty and staff who are strongly committed to its values and emphasis on personalized education and collaboration.

In 1980, WISR received a significant boost toward long-term sustainability by being one of 80 institutions out of 2,000 applicants who received a grant from the US Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education—to do a nationwide demonstration project on teaching, learning and extending the use of action-research methods throughout the larger community.

During the past 50 years, WISR has benefited from the support, creativity, and competence of distinguished Bay Area educators, who did not live to see WISR achieve this accomplishment. They include: Dr. Robert Blackburn, a former Superintendent of Oakland Schools; Dr. Terry Lunsford, a former Chair of UC Berkeley's Social Sciences Field Major and UC Berkeley's Field Studies Program; and Dr. Fernando Alegria, the renowned Latin American poet who was Chair of the Spanish and Portuguese Department at Stanford University.

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