



PROCEDURE: 6.3.1p3.L.

Wiregrass Distance Education Student Privacy

Revised: February 1, 2022

Adopted: February 10, 2020

Purpose

The purpose of the Distance Education Student Privacy Procedure is to protect the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses or programs. The procedure will ensure the security of student personal information, academic records, and the dissemination of the information.

Family Educational Rights of Privacy Act (FERPA)

All students enrolled at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC), regardless of the mode of instruction, are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Students are notified of their FERPA rights during new student orientation, and the information is published on the WGTC website, and the WGTC Student Handbook and Catalog. In addition, there is an annual notification sent to all students. To ensure that faculty and staff understand and carry out the commitments to confidentiality, integrity, and security of student academic records, WGTC requires annual FERPA training. In addition to FERPA, Wiregrass has advanced measures for distance education student privacy protection.

Secure Login

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College uses Blackboard Learn, a learning management system (LMS) that allows students to access distance education classes. Students use their Single-Sign-On credentials which are automatically generated in the Banner system. All users of the college's learning management system are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and any other access credentials assigned. The credentials may not be shared or given to anyone, for any reason, other than to the user to whom they were assigned. Users are responsible for any and all uses of their account. Students and faculty may change their password at any time if they feel their credentials have been compromised. Any user assigned a college admin account for the LMS reviews and signs the LMS Administrator Acknowledgement and Compliance Statement that protects employees and students.

Online Courses Backup and Retention

The LMS is managed through GVTC, Office of Technical Education, under an enterprise level contract at the Technical College System of Georgia. Under this agreement, Blackboard, Inc., provides the learning management system, services, and backup capabilities coordinated and maintained through TCSG. Blackboard's PostgreSQL database service provides enhanced availability and durability such that in the event of a database failure, the service would cut-over to an alternate availability zone. The PostgreSQL database service also takes nightly backups. The Learn SaaS offering uses Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) for backups of critical file system data. This data is backed up every five minutes. S3 offers "11 nines" of data durability.

GVTC maintains courses on the college system. Course access is based on the TCSG Student Records Retention policy. Backups of the LMS data are stored and managed by Blackboard. Blackboard Learn automatically backs up all courses with activity within the last 7 days and maintains for 30 days.

Third-Party Software

The Distance Education department collects and reviews vendor statements for security of student personal information from third-party providers and ensures that all third-party software/sites used by instructors follow the same minimum standards set forth by GVTC.

Graded Materials

Students are given the role of 'student' in the LMS so only the student's information and grades can be viewed by the student. Graded submissions and the Grade Center categories and columns are archived in the course and retained according to the TCSG Student Records Retention Policy. Program faculty collect and maintain all course material required to verify grades and student performances toward standards that are necessary for accreditation purposes.

Responsibility

The Dean for Academic Success has the overall responsibility of ensuring this procedure is implemented.

References

TCSG Procedure 6.3.1p1. Student Records Procedures

TCSG Procedure 6.3.2p. Student Records Retention Schedule

TCSG Procedure 6.3.2p.L. Wiregrass Student Records Retention Schedule Procedure