

Sustainability Report 2019

Executive summary

Westcliff University's institutional mission is to educate, inspire, and empower students from around the world to acquire the competencies to excel personally and professionally through practical, innovative, high-quality distance and campus programs. The University promotes entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability through its programs and in the University's culture.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. This report summarizes the University's progress and impact on six sustainability goals in local and global communities.

The six sustainability goals include in this report are:

- SDG 4: Quality Education
- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

SDG 4: Quality of Education

According to the United Nations, the progress towards inclusive and equitable quality education has been significantly slow. In 2030, there still will be over 200 million children who will not have access to quality education ([United Nations, n.d.](#)). Higher education plays an important role in educating the current and next generation of leaders and educators. As an active member of the global community, Westcliff University commits to deliver quality education to its students so that the University's graduates achieve the skills and knowledge that could contribute to improving the economic growth of their local communities.

Westcliff University offers business, education, STEM, and law programs for students from more than 90 countries around the world. Our curriculum is designed to prepare students with the practical and theoretical elements required in the job market today. Unlike the U.S. where students need to obtain certain teacher credentials in order to teach, in countries such as Nepal and Vietnam, students with a BBA, MBA, MATESOL or DBA degree can teach at the primary level. Students with an MBA or DBA degree can teach at tertiary level as well. In 2019, 44% of



Westcliff students graduated with a degree that qualifies them to teach at the primary school level in their home countries.

Westcliff University promotes social responsibility in its curriculum so that students graduate with an understanding of how they may use their acquired skills and knowledge to improve conditions for those who are less fortunate. Not only do the graduates pursue teaching careers, they also participate in non-profit organizations that aim to end educational inequity in their communities. For example, Westcliff students from Nepal actively participate in Teach for Nepal - a movement of young professionals who are committed to ensure that all children in Nepal receive quality education. Westcliff University's campus in Nepal collaborates with Teach for Nepal to ensure that the program is running efficiently.

The University provides access to educational resources for those not studying at the University through multiple channels. Western State College of Law at Westcliff University - the oldest law school in Orange County, California, United States, with 53 years of establishment - offers its students, faculty, staff, alumni, students from other law schools, attorneys, and judges access to its extensive library resources. Furthermore, Western State College of Law creates the Continuing Education to Increase Skills for Lawyers (CLE) courses - which are offered to local attorneys who want to improve their professional skills. Western State has contributed significantly to the needs of the local community in the form of pro bono legal services through the college's immigration clinic, an area of critical need in the immigrant-dense region of Southern California.

The Department of Institutional Research maintains a database of news, articles, whitepapers, and research with topics in higher education, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The database is public and accessible through the department's website at: <https://ir.westcliff.edu/resources/>

In 2019, Westcliff University successfully launched a new series of events - the Distinguished Innovator Speaker Series. The series connects thought leaders from various professional fields with students and members of the greater community who are interested in applying creative approaches to solve problems.

As an equal opportunity institution, Westcliff University offers its resources and education opportunities to all, regardless of their background, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetics, retaliation, armed forces service members, or veteran status.

SDG 5 - Gender Equality

Gender equality is not only a fundamental right, but also a foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable society (United Nations. n.d.). Over the last decades, there has been great improvement in gender equality: more girls gain access to education, more women achieve leadership positions in the private and public sectors, and more movements exist that



empower women and enhance gender equality around the world (e.g., HeForShe, EqualityNow, etc.).

Westcliff University is committed to providing quality education and services for all genders. This practice is applied in all aspects of the University, including staff, faculty, and students.

In 2019, first-generation women represented 29% of all women who started a degree program at Westcliff University. Completion rate is tracked every year by the Department of Institutional Research, disaggregated by degree program, age, ethnicity, and gender. According to Westcliff University's Department of Institutional Research, the graduation rate for female students in 2018 was higher than for men in 2018. Women graduated with a 71% graduation rate, while men graduated with a 61% graduation rate. This was also higher than the undergraduate national average, which is 60%.

STEM education engages students in tackling sustainability challenges at the local community, national, and global levels. As a university with strong STEM programs, Westcliff provides STEM education and resources to ensure student access to the fields and for lifelong learning. Among all 471 students who graduated with a degree in 2019, 72 graduated with a STEM degree and 106 graduated with a law degree. Approximately 48% of the 2019 graduates are female students. Of the students who graduate with a STEM major, 42% of them are female.

The University's Innovation Hub launched a distinguished speakers series that connects students with thought leaders in various fields, including STEM. The collaboration with Dr. Bidushi - a female person of color and leader in STEM - helps inspire female students to be successful in the field. Furthermore, Westcliff University partners with "Girls in Tech" - an organization in Nepal dedicated to eliminating gender gaps in technology fields. In June 2020, Westcliff students formed thirteen teams that participated in a 5-day program sponsored by UNICEF's Gender Unlimited Youth Challenge and designed to cultivate new solutions to the challenges of gender equality. Regarding entrepreneurship, the University's Westcliff Entrepreneurs (WE) Business Center for Women provides support to empower female entrepreneurs by facilitating them in the University's business plan competitions and connecting them with external resources from the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO).

SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

In order to attract, motivate, and retain a productive workforce, Westcliff will endeavor to provide competitive compensation, comparable to that paid by other employers in the higher education industry for similar work. The University's Human Resources Department ensures that all employees, regardless of their background, gender, race/ethnicity are treated equally.



Harassment or unlawful discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, or military and veteran status, volunteer or internship status or any other classification protected by state or federal laws (including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act) is illegal and prohibited by University policy. Such conduct by or towards any employee, contract worker, customer, vendor or anyone else who does business with the University will not be tolerated. Any employee or contract worker who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of his/her employment or engagement. To the extent a customer, vendor, or other person with whom the University does business engages in unlawful harassment or discrimination, the University will take appropriate corrective action.

In the past three years, Westcliff University continuously tracked employee's benefits and measured them against industry benchmarks. Employer contribution to employee's health insurance benefits increased 17% from 2019 to 2020. To empower its employees and enhance professional development, the University offers 90% scholarships to its employees when applying to a program.

On the other hand, as an important member of the local and global community, Westcliff University offers quality education to its students and ensures that students become an important part of the local economy after graduation. The university's curriculum emphasizes practical experience. Students are encouraged to participate in internship programs and gain real-world experience. In the past three years, Westcliff University maintains a consistent proportion of students who engaged in an internship (30% globally and 60% within the US).

The institution places a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship by offering entrepreneurship courses, programs, mentoring students who have an interest in entrepreneurship and establishing business incubators that assist start-ups in launching their businesses. To encourage future female leaders, the incubators have reserved seats for female-run businesses.

SDG 10 - Reduce Inequality

Westcliff University strives to reduce social inequalities at all levels. The University is committed to providing services and recruiting students from under-represented groups. This includes first-generation students, students from developing countries, and students with disabilities. Westcliff has anti-discrimination policies written in the student and employee handbook and enforced by the University.

Among the 1,706 students who started their degree in 2019, 32% of them represented first-generation students. The percentage is similar to other schools' first-generation student



population, such as Stony Brook University, which has 31% first-generation students, and Arizona State University, which has 23% first-generation students.

Among the 2,305 students who took a course in 2018 at Westcliff, 39% of the students were from developing countries such as Nepal, Vietnam, Nigeria, Egypt and India. In 2019, among the 3,154 students who took a course, 66% of them were from developing countries, compared to the world's average of approximately 33% for international students enrolled at a university globally.

Westcliff University believes that financial limitations should not be a barrier for students to obtain education. The University provides financial assistance to students in lower income countries. Through partnership with the Nepali government, it offers financial assistance to all students in its Nepali campuses. There are 10 different scholarship types offered to Nepali students, including the Diversity Excellence Scholarship that awarded minority students with a proven record of excellence.

Westcliff University is committed to providing individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its educational programs and services. According to the United Nation in the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." (Article 1). In 2019, 0.03% of Westcliff University's student population represented students with disabilities. Among Westcliff employees, two percent represent employees with disabilities. Students and employees with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations to ensure that they have full and equal access to the School's educational resources, consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794) ("Section 504") and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12182) ("ADA"), their related statutes and regulations, and corresponding state and local laws. The Disability Services Coordinator at Westcliff University has been designated to coordinate the University's efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities as identified in the legislation which promulgates the provision of disability services. For example, in 2019, due to a student's disability, the University provided extra time for the student to complete writing assignments and quizzes for their courses.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Westcliff University took action to protect the health and safety of the entire Westcliff family by moving to 100% online instruction. Programs and services such as counseling, mental health and stress relief tips, and financial relief were provided for students, faculty, and staff.

SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

All voices are heard



Westcliff University takes pride in having representation at the University at all levels to ensure that all interests and concerns are heard and recognized. The University strives to have University governance that is consistent with diversity and inclusivity. Westcliff University has elected representation at all levels, including student, faculty, and staff (non-faculty employee).

The student class president collaborates with academic and non-academic leaders by attending faculty senate meetings, roundtables, and focus groups to discuss important issues and to make sure their concerns and recommendations are heard by the school's administration since the students will be greatly impacted by the decisions at these board meetings.

Students have the opportunity to join student unions that are recognized by the University. College of Law students have the option of being members of the Student Bar Association (SBA). The association's purpose is to represent the student body and to promote fellowship and unity among students, faculty, and the administration. Members of the association organize events and activities that are embedded in areas of the law. Furthermore, the SBA publishes *The Precedent*, the college's student newspaper and distributes it monthly. Numerous subsidiary clubs are under the SBA umbrella that are dedicated to specific interests in law that are based on defined groups and interests.

Another student union that is recognized by the University is the Student Athletic Advisory Council (SAAC). Run by student athletes from Westcliff University, the council allows a representative from each athletic team to discuss important issues and make recommendations that would benefit the teams.

The Student Ambassador Program is a leadership program that offers Westcliff University students the chance to represent and promote Westcliff University to prospective students, their families, and other guests. These ambassadors represent the university at social events, sports functions, and outreach events.

Westcliff certainly believes in the importance of engaging with local stakeholders. It not only increases the visibility of the University within the community but also provides a better understanding of the issues surrounding the area. The University offers the Westcliff University Distinguished Speakers Innovator Speaker Series for the community to participate in and view. The series brings thought leaders from various professional fields to its students and the greater community. Leaders from such fields as business, technology, and media have participated in the series. It supports the university's goal of serving as a leading academic resource by providing a platform for informative and thought-provoking discussions.

Furthermore, Westcliff has established Program Advisory Councils (PAC) to give representatives from segments of the marketplace opportunities to communicate and make recommendations that relate to the university's instructional programs. The Council members



meet at least once a year to advise the university on program objectives, curriculum, and course materials that would better suit the ever changing marketplace by reviewing and participating in labor markets, community development, studies, and legislation. Similarly to the PACs, the Board of Advisors (BOA) at Western State College of Law delivers expert advice and knowledge that support the development of the University and benefits the stakeholders and community. The BOA is composed of business and legal professionals that have the knowledge and experience of growing post-secondary institutions and the effects it has on the local communities. Members of the BOA represent the communities that include distinguished attorneys and presidents of universities.

Westcliff wholeheartedly supports academic freedom and believes it is an integral part of the growth of the University and it allows individuals to be autonomous without fear of repercussion. Academic freedom is the right of the students, faculty, and all those involved with the University. It not only pertains to inside the classroom but also includes what occurs outside the campus. Westcliff gives a platform for students which is a safe space to express their concerns and ideas. Those associated with Westcliff have the right to freely express their concerns with the University or those associated with it as long as it does not violate any law or professional ethics.

Westcliff assures that important information regarding the school's financial data is easily accessible for the public to view. The University believes that transparency allows for accountability and is integral for the school's success. Westcliff's financial data are published on the National Center for Education Statistics website, where the public can view and download the information. Financial data such as student financial aid and enrollment cost can also be obtained from the website.

Working with governments to make impact in local, national, and international communities

Faculty and Administrators of Westcliff have a history of working with governments. They consult with government bodies and give expert advice that influences the organization's decisions and policies in multiple aspects, such as education, entrepreneurship, and international relations.

For example, Full-time Law Professor and attorney Kevin Mohr is the former Chair and Special Advisor to the State Bar of California's Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct and is currently the Consultant to the State Bar of California's Special Commission for the Revision of the California Rules of Professional Conduct. Mohr is also a member of the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Professional and Ethics Committee and the Peter M. Elliot Inn of Court.

Another example is that of Dr. Julie Ciancio, Dean of the College of Education and the Director of International Development at Westcliff University, who previously served as an English Language Specialist and Senior English Language Fellow for the US State Department of Bureau of Educational Affairs.

The University recognizes that lawyers require additional education and training outside the classroom. The law school also conducts seminars and seminar panels with noted guest speakers in the legal profession. The school offers continuing education for local lawyers to increase their knowledge and skills in the field. These review symposia highlight various legal professions and give new lawyers practical training and knowledge on what lawyers may face in the legal profession including such topics as discrimination and harassment. Distinguished panels including local judges and attorneys come to these training sessions and provide their expertise in the legal field that will help the guests in the real world.

Not only does the University collaborate with local regulators and lawyers, but it also produces a significant amount of graduates in the law fields. In 2019, Westcliff had a total of 471 graduates and 106 of them graduated from law and enforcement related courses. Numerous graduates of the law program end up serving the community and working as public servants as district attorneys or judges.

SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

This sustainability goal aims to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development by bringing governments, civil society, scientists, academia, and the private sector together to achieve the SDGs ([United Nation](#), n.d). Higher education plays an important role in providing students with a well-rounded understanding of how global challenges need to be addressed. The knowledge about sustainability in classrooms enhances the development of students' global competence and ability to collaborate and lead across national boundaries.

Westcliff University is offering classes in all of its programs where students learn about and become more globally aware of sustainability challenges. In its undergraduate programs (BBA, BAEd, and BSIT), 9 out of 21 current general education courses have course contents and/or assignments that educate students about sustainability topics. In its MBA program, the university offers courses in agribusiness that promote sustainable agriculture and raise awareness to end hunger. In 2020, the University revamped the General Education curriculum to incorporate more sustainability related topics.

The University partners with a number of non-profit organizations, in addressing sustainability challenges:

- Eliminate gender gap in technology: partnership with Girls in Tech
- Enhance education access: partnership with Teach in Nepal and the Nepali Ministry of Education

- Contribute to end hunger through student-volunteer events in partnership with Second Harvest FoodBank and South County Outreach
- Reduce inequalities through student-volunteer events in partnership with UCP OF Orange County, Together We Rise, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity - Riverside Chapter
- Promote good health and well-being through charity events with American Cancer Society/Association, Mercy Hospital, Children's Hospital of Orange County
- Collaborate with a variety of local and international organizations in responding to COVID-19
- Form partnerships with organizations that focus on entrepreneurship

In addition, Westcliff University is actively involved in policy-making discussion and conferences, at a local, regional, national and/or global levels to implement programs and policies to address sustainability goals. Through international collaboration, the University compares different approaches and develops best practices on addressing sustainability goals.

- Westcliff University partners with the Nepali Ministry Education to deliver quality education to students and continuously improve its curriculum in sustainability topics.
- Westcliff University's academic leadership team participates in the Washington International Education Conference, the CHEA Annual Conference and CIQG annual meeting to share useful tactics, discuss challenges that impact education.
- Westcliff University's executives attend the California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools (CAPPS) Conference and CEO Day to discuss legislative policies with state governors and state legislators.
- The University's faculty actively participate in The Boards of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group (WBG) to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness.
- Westcliff's faculty participated in the International Entrepreneurship Forum (IEF), which discussed the value of entrepreneurship to sustainable development goals. The 16th IEF included keynote speakers from government agencies, educational institutions, and professionals who have an interest in sustainable development and entrepreneurship.
- In the wake of COVID-19, the University conducted an international virtual conference that assessed the impact of the pandemic on education and how to overcome its challenges. The conference brought together local and international educators and leaders to exchange knowledge, insights, and experience in delivering quality education during the crisis.
- Westcliff representatives have contributed their expertise and insights on panels and through publications to share insights and suggestions on how institutions of higher education can navigate the changes in the industry caused by the pandemic.