

Sustainability Report 2020

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 in 2020.

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 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.

Westcliff University offers business, education, STEM, and law programs for students from more than 95 countries around the world. Our curriculum is designed to prepare students with the practical and theoretical elements required in the job market today. Additionally, the curriculum is designed to be culturally responsive and encourage students to share their personal experience. 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 2020, 36% 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. Financial aid and resume workshops are regularly scheduled and open to the public. 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/>. Understanding that learning is a continuous journey across lifespan, the University has created the specific guidelines for prospective students and the community to explore different resources offered by Westcliff.

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. Starting from 2019, Westcliff University launched a periodic event - the Distinguished Innovator Speaker Series. The goal of the Distinguished Speaker program is to connect Westcliff students and members of the greater community with thought leaders from various professional fields to learn more about innovation and creative approaches to problem-solving in the modern world. The series uses the Westcliff platform to initiate and facilitate informative, thought-provoking discussions as the University continues to solidify its position as a leading global academic resource.

The series is designed to inspire innovative thinking and stimulate solution-oriented conversations. It provides the greater community an opportunity to hear from and connect with nationally and internationally renowned leaders who have shaped their industry. We included Steve Ecclesine who provided insight into career opportunities in the entertainment business and how to find and apply for those opportunities. We also had Dr. Bidushi Bhattacharya speaking on opportunities within the new space economy. Introducing the webinar audience to immersive technology by Ted Schilowitz, Futurist at Paramount Studios offered an insight into where the technology is headed and how it will influence our lives. Attendees interact and ask questions of the featured speakers after each presentation.

In the second half of 2020, Westcliff launched the REAL Intensive English Program. During our initial semesters, Westcliff University has instituted a 25% scholarship to help contribute to the world community during the COVID pandemic. This 25% scholarship was issued in the REAL Intensive English Program to a total of six (6) students throughout three (3) different sessions. The scholarship was issued a total of eleven (11) times, and a collective \$2,500 was saved by students, with each student earning an average scholarship of \$416. Westcliff University maintains the offer of this 25% scholarship to our students in the REAL program in hopes of affecting positive change and a progressive response to the pandemic as it continues to negatively affect all people around the world.

Westcliff University encourages its students to participate in educational voluntary activities to assist the greater community. The University had the following internships at public interest locations which provide no cost legal services to low income clients in 2020:

- One student at the Tenants Law Firm, Feb. 2019-Present
- Five students at the Veterans Legal Institute, May 2020-Present
- One student at the Orange County Public Defender's Office, Jan. 2020-Apr. 2020

There were another two students who reported volunteer hours towards their pro bono certificates, one at the Immigration Defenders Law Center, and one at Community Legal Aid SoCal and an additional student report volunteer hours at the Veterans Legal Institute.

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 2020, first-generation women represented 38% 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 is generally higher than male students. Women graduated with an average graduation rate of 63%, while male students' graduation rate ranges from 54% to 61%. It is noticed that the graduation rate of two groups gets more balanced in 2020. The improvements resulted from multiple initiatives including curriculum development, personalized tutoring services and enhancing academic resources to students in need.

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 473 students who graduated with a degree in 2020, 113 students graduated with a STEM degree. Of the students who graduate with a STEM major, 41 of them (36%) are female. It is the intention of the University to offer more resources to engage female students in STEM fields. The University has launched the President's Scholarship for Women in STEM to support and celebrate female students who pursue a STEM degree. The College of Technology and Engineering is currently establishing partnerships with external Women in STEM organizations to expand financial, academic and career opportunities to female students.

The University's Innovation Hub launched a distinguished speakers series that connects students with thought leaders in various fields, including STEM. In 2020, the collaboration with Dr. Bidushi - a female person of color and leader in STEM - helps inspire female students to be successful in the field. In 2021, the Innovation Hub has engaged with four female speakers in various subjects to enhance students' opportunities to learn from women leaders. Furthermore,

Westcliff University's Nepali campus partners with "Girls in Tech" - an organization in Nepal dedicated to eliminating gender gaps in technology fields. In June 2020, Westcliff' students in Nepal 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 women's participation in Westcliff University Business Competitions with sponsor prizes and annual International Symposium on Business and Education Research (SYBER). The WE Business Center will continue to provide skills-based workshops on business leadership and on-on-one consulting services to female students.

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. Westcliff financially supports its faculty and staff to participate in external training programs and encourage them to share the knowledge with other colleagues. The number of faculty and staff engaged in professional development in 2021 increased 63% from the previous years.

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. In 2020, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee was formed to align closely with the University's strategic plan. The committee has initiated a number of projects including the Cultural Heritage series to celebrate different cultures and traditions.

Among the 1,781 students who started their degree in 2020, 33.6% 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. In 2020, among the 4,173 students enrolled at Westcliff, 60% 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. For domestic and international students who study in the United States, Westcliff has a range of various scholarships available. These scholarships reflect Westcliff's priorities in developing a diverse and motivated student body looking to unlock their potential through higher education and reach their own lofty academic and career goals. Westcliff has a simple application process that allows current and prospective students to use one application to apply for all scholarships for which they are eligible.

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 Nations 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). 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. Westcliff University conducted a survey to our students to get feedback on their mental health and well-being and results show that students are facing challenges such as anxiety, social isolation, depression, trouble concentrating, etc. Programs and services such as counseling, mental health and stress relief tips, and financial relief were provided for students, faculty, and staff.

Westcliff University has partnered with a third party service, IMPACT Student Life Assistance Program, to offer confidential support to students. Through this program, professional support is available on an unlimited basis, offering you support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Counseling (in-person, video, phone, or chat) is also available, with up to 3 sessions included per concern. Additional services include financial counseling, legal assistance, identity theft prevention and recovery services, resource and referral services for child and eldercare, life/wellness coaching, and medical advocacy.

In an effort to provide on-going support and engage students to take self-care, the Student Affairs team provides monthly reminders, resources, and/or activities to engage students to connect and tune in to their mental health. In the upcoming semesters, the University is also launching a Peer Mentorship program to support our incoming students. Some programs that the Student Affairs team is running to encourage students to take self-care include:

- Stress Awareness Month
- Suicide Prevention Month
- Mental Health Day
- Anti-Bullying Week

- World Kindness Day
- Yoga
- Sound Meditation

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 Social Responsibility Committee exists to advance positive relations and to maintain consistent communication between the university and its communities. In 2020, members of the Westcliff's community participated in multiple community outreach and volunteer events to extend support to the greater community. For a list of community outreach activities, please visit Appendix 1.

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.

The University 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.

SDG 16 - 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.

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.

Law Professor Todd Brower is the current President of the National Association of State Judicial Educators, the professional organization in North America for court education and a member of the International Organization for Judicial Training. He has trained or supervised the training of judges, prosecutors and related court staff in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, and on four continents, including in South Africa, Colombia, El Salvador, Canada, and Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro. Professor Brower teaches annually at the National Judicial College. That organization trains judicial officers from around the US, the tribal courts and internationally. As a researcher, he has conducted studies and published book chapters and articles on court user experiences in the courts of California and the United Kingdom. Professor Brower has published widely in international and US law journals and peer-reviewed scholarly journals and has spoken at academic conferences throughout the world.

Both the law school and the university are committed to providing lawyers with additional education and training beyond graduation from law school. Until the onset of the pandemic the law school was a regular provider of continuing legal education for lawyers (what California calls MCLE). The State Bar requires all lawyers licensed to practice in California to complete at least 25 hours of MCLE every three years. The law school will be reactivating its MCLE programming in the near future. This programming will be aimed at a variety of topics, but with a focus on ethics and recognition and elimination of bias, two subject areas where the State Bar requires lawyers to earn a minimum number of credits as part of their overall MCLE requirement. Programming will be presented by judges and lawyers who are experts in their fields and will encourage active participation by the audience.

The law school takes great pride in its student run, faculty supervised, law review, which publishes articles every year submitted by law professors and practicing attorneys. A regular feature of the law review, which will be reinstated post-pandemic, is an annual symposium that gathers together scholars and practitioners with expertise in the topic of that year's symposium for deep discussion and debate. Past symposium topics have included legalization of marijuana, national security law, immigration reform, and the push for uniform rules of state civil procedure. Each symposium seeks panelists and participants from around the nation who represent divergent and sometimes controversial points of view, with the goal of provoking robust debate and learning.

In late 2021, the University is gaining input directly from the Westcliff community through a Town Hall meeting to discuss challenges posed by COVID-19 and a series of "Level Up" meetings. In the Level Up meetings, various members at all levels of the institution will have the opportunity to meet with university leaders to share their experiences, insights and ideas for the future.

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 Nations](#), 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, South County Outreach and Always Lean Forward Food Donation
- Reduce inequalities through student-volunteer events in partnership with UCP OF Orange County, Together We Rise, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity - Riverside Chapter, Tustin Unified School District
- 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 and encourage Women in STEM

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.



Appendix 1

- 2020 Thanksgiving Charity: Monetary donations were made to the South County outreach. Each dollar donated provided 3 meals from their food bank. The grand total donated on behalf of the Westcliff Athletics' teams was \$1,652.32. This translated to 4,956 meals donated!
- 2020 Stocking drive: Individual items were donated to create stockings for those in need. With all the donations from Westcliff Athletics, we were able to make over 40 Stockings for Mercy House Living Centers occupants.
- Red Table Talk Nights: Led by the SAAC, this forum allows Athletes to Speak about their feelings, talk about personal issues, social issues, team and community issues, while prioritizing the value, inclusion, and voice of each individual.
- Donations toward South County Outreach: \$2000 total toward an organization that provides those in need with over 20,000 pounds of food each month!
 - \$1500 donation toward the organization in May
 - \$500 Matching Donation made in November
- Always Lean Forward Food Donation: Always Lean Forward is a Non Profit Organization that does many different events for the Orange County community. The SAAC team worked with Always Lean Forward to pass out boxes of food to Westcliff Students.
- Games played for charity
 - Men's/ Women's Soccer Pink Out games: Proceeds went to American Cancer Society. Dr. Lee personally matched the donations, providing a total of over \$1000 donated from Westcliff University.
 - Donuts sale on campus: Proceeds went to American Cancer Society, providing approximately \$150 in donations.
 - Men's/ Women's Basketball White Out games: Proceeds went to American Cancer Society, providing approximately \$300 in donations.
 - Westcliff University ESports hosted a 3-hour charity stream, where all proceeds will go toward the Children's Hospital of Orange County. December 16th, 2020, approximately \$200 raised.
- Tustin Unified School District - Dino Dash: each year the Tustin Unified School District hosts a Southern California "Fun Run" for all ages (2K/5K/10K). Westcliff hosted a sponsor booth in 2019 and looks forward to supporting such an out reaching community event this upcoming November.