

June 30, 2017

Dr. Anthony Lee  
Chief Executive Officer  
Westcliff University  
University Tower  
4199 Campus Drive, #650  
Irvine, CA 92612

Dear Dr. Lee:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Westcliff University (WU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting on June 21-23, 2017. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 to WU April 4-6, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Westcliff University prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 and the institution's May 25, 2017 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Mr. George Gliaudys, Board Chair. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team report
2. Grant Candidacy for a period of five years to the June 2022 Commission meeting
3. Schedule a Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 in spring 2018

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends Westcliff for the following:

1. Taking this process of accreditation seriously. The institution exerted an enormous amount of effort to create documents, plans, and exhibits that will serve it well in its journey towards continuous improvement.
2. Adopting and embracing the language, tools, and processes of assessment;
3. Creating a positive culture with a high level of energy and a sense of "family" that permeates every segment of the institution;
4. Demonstrating a high level of commitment to and enthusiasm about the notion of supporting students to be successful;
5. Employing a high-quality instructional delivery approach that spans both online and blended modalities, notably the synchronous delivery model;
6. Engaging in the program review process and benefiting from the development of structures such as the Academic Leadership Team that support its collaborative spirit and culture of improvement.

The Commission identified the following issues for further development:

## Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

The Commission finds that Westcliff University has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, and that CFRs 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4. require further work, as described in the following:

- CFR 1.1 *Institutional statements of purpose*. The Commission recommends that WU reevaluate its statements of institutional purpose, especially as they relate to the market of students the university is targeting, to better clarify and sustain the demographic and target student population, both international and domestic, it intends to recruit, admit, and serve.
- CFR 1.2 *Retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning*. The Commission recommends that institutional data on retention, graduation, and evidence of student learning be more prominently displayed on its website including percentage metrics for graduation, retention, and student satisfaction and the actual numbers of students that these rates represent.
- CFR 1.4 *Diversity of hiring and admissions criteria, and administrative and organizational practices*. The Commission expects WU continue to make progress in the area of diversity of faculty, toward greater alignment of faculty race and ethnicity with the students it serves.

## Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objective through Core Functions

The Commission finds that Westcliff University has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, and that CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, and 2.11 require further work, as described in the following:

- CFR 2.1 *Sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered*. WU will need to ensure appropriate numbers of faculty to continue curriculum improvement work as enrollments increase.
- CFR 2 *Institution mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees*. The meaning of WU's degree, as an institution serving a global student population, is evolving. As it does, the Commission expects that the meaning, quality and integrity of its degrees will become more consistent and coherent.
- CFR 2.2a. *Core competencies*. The Commission recommends that WU revisit its General Education courses to either more specifically and intentionally align them with the separate core disciplines or determine that it should develop a separate General Education curriculum that appropriately supports existing and any future undergraduate academic programs.
- CFR 2.3 *Student learning outcomes and standards of performance, within courses and co-curricular programs*. WU should continue to mature its systems of measurement of educational effectiveness, both within its courses and in its coeducational programs.
- CFR 2.4 *Faculty-developed student learning outcomes and standards of performance are assessed for achievement measurements* The Commission

recommends that the institution's faculty continue their work to ensure quality standards through regular, systematic assessment and program review.

- CFR 2.6 *Expectations for student learning embedded in standards used to evaluate student work*. WU must continue its nascent practices of learning outcomes assessment to make certain that its standards are met through the evaluation of student work.
- CFR 2.8 *Research, scholarship, and creative activity*. The Commission recommends that WU review the rigor and depth of scholarship in its capstone courses by benchmarking with comparable institutions.
- CFR 2.9 *Linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service*. The Commission recommends that the university further clarify expectations pertaining to scholarly activities among its faculty.
- CFR 2.10 *Collects, analyzes and displays disaggregated student data regarding time to completion, achievement and satisfaction*. While acknowledging that the institution has plans to further evaluate disaggregated data regarding student achievement, the Commission supports the team recommendation that additional instruments, both quantitative and qualitative, be developed and added to the assessment plan in support of continuously improving student achievement. WU is also encouraged to include evidence of student achievement on its website in a way that makes it is easy to find and retrieve (as referenced earlier in CFR1.2).
- CFR 2.11 *Co-curricular programs integrated and aligned with goals are assessed for effectiveness*. The Commission recommends that WU continue to develop learning outcomes and an assessment process for co-curricular programs and activities.

### Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The Commission finds that Westcliff University has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy and that CFRs 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, and 3.10 require further work as described in the following:

- CFR 3.1 *Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations*. Because WU's model relies heavily on part-time adjuncts who only teach one or two courses a year, it is recommended that plans to add more full-time faculty be implemented to ensure adequate support for program development and improvement.
- CFR 3.4 *Financial stability, clean audits, sufficient resources; realistic plans for any deficits; integrated budgeting; enrollment management; diversified revenue sources*. WU must prepare a formal, multi-year budget that includes a realistic enrollment management plan aligned with projected revenue.
- CFR 3.5 *Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objectives*. The Commission recommends that WU continue to develop and mature a comprehensive integrated alignment between enrollment expectations, realistic program development, concomitant infrastructure development, and anticipated labor costs. The university needs to continue to

develop plans for technology replacements, LMS upgrades and enhancements, and general office technology.

- CFR 3.7 *Clear, consistent decision-making structures and processes*. The Commission recommends that a scalable staffing model with clear reporting lines, including appropriately qualified faculty, be developed.
- CFR 3.10 *Effective academic leadership by faculty*. The Commission recommends that faculty continue working together to develop a rigorous process of program review.

#### Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

The Commission finds that Westcliff University has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy and that CFRs 4.1, 4.6, and 4.7 require further work as described in the following:

- CFR 4.1 *Quality-assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvements*. The Commission recommends that faculty focus on calibration and consistency in the assessment of learning outcomes and in grading. In addition, plans should be made to ensure sufficient student services staff as enrollment grows, such that they will continue to monitor online course activity and report that activity to faculty.
- CFR 4.6 *Reflection and planning with multiple constituents; strategic plans align with purposes; address key priorities and future directions; plans are monitored and revised as required*. The Commission recommends WU prepare more detailed strategic and budget plans in line with enrollment projections and the costs of new academic degree program development.
- CFR 4.7 *Anticipating and responding to a changing higher educational environment*. WU should engage in formal and systematic market analysis and environmental scans as part of its program development planning process.

In taking this action, the Commission confirms that Westcliff University has met all of the WSCUC Standards a level sufficient to grant Candidacy. The Commission has scheduled the Seeking Accreditation Visit in Spring 2018.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe that status publicly:

*Westcliff University has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of five years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.*

Federal law requires that the WSCUC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

Institutions granted Candidacy are required to:

1. Submit an Annual Report in the format required by the Commission.
2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, certificates, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process.
3. Pay Annual Membership Dues prorated from the date of this action. An Annual Dues statement will be sent under separate cover.

In keeping with WSCUC review protocols, the required subsequent review and Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 will focus only on those issues identified under each Standard (above) deemed to require additional development. (Please also reference the team report for additional context for the Commission's findings.)

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Westcliff University governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Westcliff University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President

MEP/lw

Cc: William Ladusaw Commission Chair  
David McKinney, ALO  
George Gliaudys, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team  
Richard Osborn, Vice President  
Lori Williams, Vice President