

July 20, 2018

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

Dear President 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 June 27-29, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 to WU November 19-21, 2018. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by WU prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 and the institution's May 18, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleague 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 2 team report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for a period of six years
3. Schedule the reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2023 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2024
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2021
5. Schedule a Progress Report to be submitted by November 1, 2020 to address progress in the following areas
  - a. Demonstrate how the university intends to apply learning outcomes to the diverse student populations it serves. For example, explain how the achieved learning outcomes for a student in Nepal differ from students from Viet Nam or North Africa
  - b. Provide evidence of progress in compensation and benefit planning to align to market norms
  - c. Discuss how the university plans to broaden the base of professional roles in your leadership in the areas of accreditation, institutional research, instructional design, and educational technology to support its growth
  - d. Demonstrate the inclusion of definitions and expectations regarding research, scholarship, and creative activity in the Faculty Handbook and faculty contracts

### **commendations**

The Commission commends Westcliff University in particular for the following:

1. The institutional report was well organized, and the university was very responsive to requests for information.

2. The university's culture is committed to student success, and the student's enthusiasm about the university is the greatest testament to this assertion.
3. The institution's addition of a faculty senate committee devoted to diversity, inclusion and equity is commendable.
4. The synergistic relationship between academics and student services in support of students is exemplary.
5. The university's institutional research capabilities have progressed significantly by providing transparent, public-facing institutional data in support of assessment of student learning activities.
6. The executive team is perceived to provide excellent institutional leadership.
7. The faculty and staff are very engaged and integrated in operations and decision-making processes.
8. Institutional constituents appear to genuinely live out the university's mission at all levels, including students, faculty, administrators, and the executive team including the President and the Board of Trustees.
9. The commitment to the faculty-led assessment plan resulting in student learning outcomes which are clearly and explicitly stated at the institutional, program and course levels.
10. Valuing, promoting and supporting research, scholarship and creative activity is evidenced by the semi-annual publication of the Westcliff International Journal of Applied Research featuring faculty and student research and the annual student research conference.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues by the time of its review for reaffirmation of accreditation:

1. The Board of Trustees should develop a formalized process of self-review and professional development (CFR 3.9)
2. The institution should develop and implement a continuous improvement process for the maturation of Student Learning Outcomes that align with the needs of the local communities that Westcliff University serves (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, and 2.6).
3. In support of the institution's staffing plans, the university should benchmark higher education exemplars and seek resources to assist in the development of compensation planning as well as consider enhancements to its employee benefits plan to attract and retain a high performing workforce (CFR 3.4).
4. The institution should engage professional roles in the areas of accreditation, institutional research, instructional design and education technology to support program development,

academic operations, and the changing external environment (CFR 3.4, 3.7, 4.7) and to help sustain its institutional capacity and educational effectiveness (CFR 3.7). Hiring experienced professionals to lead these areas will permit Westcliff to expand and grow without sacrificing quality.

5. The institution should clearly articulate in the Faculty Handbook and in its contracts its definitions and expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for all categories of faculty (CFR 2.8 and 2.9).
6. The university should continue development and implementation of and reflection on continuous improvement, for the co-curricular student learning outcomes (CFR 2.3).
7. Institutional Research should align their reporting of student demographic data with traditional federal definitions (CFR 1.4).
8. There should be a clear linkage between faculty scholarship and teaching practice as evidenced in assessment of student learning (CFR 2.9).

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that Westcliff University has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the institutional review process for Initial Accreditation conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review for reaffirmation, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Westcliff University must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its accreditation status publicly:

*Westcliff University is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.*

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading. The phrase “fully accredited” is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the degrees offered by Westcliff University at the time of this action, as listed at the end of this letter as the Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process. Degree programs that have been reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other currently approved campuses of the institution without prior Substantive Change action. Offerings at new locations may need to go through Substantive Change approval, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Substantive Change manual.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Westcliff University’s governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Westcliff University’s website

and 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. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

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,



Jamienne S. Studley  
President

JSS/lw

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
David McKinney, ALO  
George Gliaudys, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 team  
Lori Williams, Vice President

Attachment: Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees