

THE  
**EXCELLIGENT**

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**United World  
College Costa Rica**

*Educating Agents of Change. Inspiring Impact*







# United World College Costa Rica

*Educating Agents of Change.  
Inspiring Impact*







**W**ith an aim to bring together youth from different nations to become champions of peace through an education based on shared learning, collaboration, and understanding there began The United World Colleges (UWC) movement in 1962 at the height of the Cold War. The moment runs with simple yet so powerful mission of *making education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future*. Today 18 schools and colleges in 18 countries and 4 continents are a part of this UWC initiative, delivering a challenging and transformational education to over 9,500 students each year.

The 11th college in the UWC movement and the only one in Latin America established back in 2006 is UWC Costa Rica which evolved from the SOS International Children's Village High School, a part of the SOS Children's Villages International which is "a global federation that works to protect and care for children who have lost parental care, or who stand at risk of losing it." Per Grieg, a Norwegian philanthropist and founder of the Grieg Foundation made this transition possible.

#### **From all corners of globe ...**

The uniting element across all UWC stakeholders, programs and activities is the simple idea that bringing diverse people together

to live and learn through joined experiences will strengthen their understanding of each other to help make the world a better place. At UWC Costa Rica, the student community is formed by teens from all corners of the globe representing 127 nationalities since 2006 and from life situations as diverse as refugee settlements to major cosmopolitan centers, and across all religious, ethnic, socio-economic, and gender lines. They arrive often without any common language, but they share one thing: They are risk-takers who want to challenge and expand their vision for their lives. For two years, these highly motivated youth live and learn together in this very intentional setting which combines innovative values-based academic and experiential education principles in all aspects of their life at UWC Costa Rica. Education at UWC gives youth expanded comfort zones, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and confidence to embrace uncertainties, build community, and take on challenges. They are diverse global citizens but wherever they move on in their lives—from their universities, into education, medicine and STEM fields, corporate sector, international service, law, non-profits, governance, etc, they carry a belief that they want their lives to matter and to be part of making this a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. UWC Costa Rica

is extraordinarily diverse. 204 students, from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, represent 72 countries, from Argentina to Zambia. (See appendix for the full list.) Seventy-nine percent receive a scholarship, with more than 36% on a full scholarship and another 43% on a partial scholarship.

They deliberately seek a student body that represents the broadest spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds the students learn to appreciate and embrace each other's unique perspectives and talents. Their students often learn as much from each other as they do in the classroom. UWC is unique in that students are selected by national committees in their home countries—there are more than 160 such committees in the UWC movement. The application process is extremely competitive. Worldwide, about one in ten applicants are selected.

#### ***Students Currently attend UWC Costa Rica from 72 countries:***

Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bermuda, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong SAR, India, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Macedonia, Mauritius,











Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Singapore, Somaliland, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, Ukraine, United States of America, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zambia.

### **Growth Statistics and Composition of students.**

Over the last 12 years, UWC Costa Rica has seen steady growth. Enrollment has more than doubled, growing from 96 students to 204. The College was named an *Ashoka Changemaker School*, accredited by *Council of International of International Schools*, and recognized as a “Top Ten Best International School in Latin America” by the Knowledge Review.

UWC Costa Rica’s strength and success come not only from its dedicated faculty but also from its distinctive model of experiential education and core competencies. Through the robust Core Competencies Program, designed to guide the ways in which the community learns and lives, UWC Costa Rica students develop skills in Leadership, Diversity, Sustainability, Social Responsibility, Healthy Lifestyles, and Conflict Resolution. Furthermore, their students constantly benefit from their

deliberately diverse campus community. Promising young people from vastly different backgrounds live and learn from each other in their close-knit residential community. Currently, the UWC Costa Rica student body consists of:

- 26% of students coming from Latin America and the Caribbean
- 28% of students coming from Europe
- 28% of students coming from the Asia & Pacific Islands
- 12% of students coming from Africa and the Middle East
- 6% of students coming from the U.S. and Canada

In the past 12 years, UWC Costa Rica has enrolled students from a total of 127 countries. Just as important, they bring young people from vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds through an intensive, transformational, educational experience. UWC Costa Rica students come to not only appreciate, but also to embrace and celebrate the perspectives of others. This prepares them to be empathetic, passionate leaders who are well prepared to have a lasting, positive impact on the world.

### **Various Programs at UWC Costa Rica**

There are various programs offered at UWC Costa Rica briefed

as follows.

#### ***Wellness Program:***

UWC Costa Rica strives to give their students the best environment possible so they can understand the importance of mental health and promote it for the rest of their lives. Mental health is everyone’s business and also an individual responsibility. They consider everyone at UWC Costa Rica to be a contributor to the wellbeing of the entire community. The program has the priority to train student leaders and residential staff on the basics of peer-to-peer support, a culture of respect and wellness, prevention of mental health crises, mental health emergency intervention, and coordinated mental health care within the UWC Costa Rica structure.

#### ***Agents of Change Program:***

Agents of Change is a 2-year experiential learning adventure in which students become aware of their capacity for positive change, form their own project teams and partner with local communities or organizations while getting trained step-by-step in designing, implementing and evaluating a project from a social entrepreneurship approach. The program aims to provide students with a mindset and skill set for them to put ideas into action, while exploring different paths to do that: social entrepreneurship, activism, STEM. The program is



made out steps that are called “The Agents of Change process” based on the Ashoka’s Change Maker process. This process allow students to learn how to recognize themselves as agents of positive impact, work collaboratively and put empathy on practice. They work with partners as PuntoJes and Viva Idea to strengthen student’s skills.

### **Outreach Program:**

As of 2018, 2,000 international youth have gone through the UWC Costa Rica Outreach Program, which is conducted in partnership with other relevant organizations and is an extension of UWC Costa Rica that aims to share our mission of developing socially responsible young people through short-term intensive programs.

### **After Graduation**

UWC Costa Rica graduates are sought after by fine universities and colleges across the globe. College presidents report that UWC Costa Rica students enrich their classrooms and campuses with their leadership, activism, critical thinking, their spirit, and engagement. They become campus leaders that promote peace, understanding of people from different cultures and backgrounds, and environmental sustainability. UWC Costa Rica graduates are regularly admitted to the best universities in the world, for example: In U.S. universities like Brown University, Columbia University, Dartmouth

College, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Middlebury College, Princeton University, Rhode Island School of Design, Yale University, and Stanford University in Europe universities like The London School of Economics and Political Science, University College London, University of Oxford, Amsterdam University College, BI Norwegian Business School, Sciences Po (Menton) and University of Oslo and in Canada, Latin America, Asia & Middle East the renowned universities like McGill University, New York University- Abu Dhabi, Simon Fraser University, Waseda University, Japan, Universidad de Costa Rica, UNAM - Universidad Autonoma de Mexico.

The graduates have been awarded Morehead-Cain Scholarship at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, International Leader of Tomorrow Award at University of British Columbia, UWC Scholarship at York University, Loran Scholarship of Canada Ko Annan Scholarship at Macalester College, UWC Bursary at University College London, NYU-Abu Dhabi Scholarship.

### **co-Curricular activities**

Co-curricular activities are meant to complement the experiential learning journey of students at UWC Costa Rica so they can identify personal strengths and areas of growth; practice taking initiative, show commitment and perseverance when tackling challenges; become more familiar

with the Costa Rican context; develop an ethics of on and off campus service, engage on issues of global significance, cultivate a social entrepreneurship mindset and develop skills for teamwork and project development. They do so under the umbrella of experiential education, exploring different opportunities:

- **CAS Experiences:** Weekly workshops on any one or a combination of co-curricular strands: Creativity, Action, Service - mainly lead by students and with the purpose of making the best of the wide diversity of sociocultural backgrounds and skills of UWC students through peer learning as well as to create an ethics of on and off campus service. They encourage them to use the mindset of:
- **Service Week:** Once a year, all students leave in a week-long service learning trip. Last year, 14 projects were developed in all seven provinces of Costa Rica.

There are two main service experiences:

1. National Parks and protected areas
  2. Collaborative work with communities and organizations
- **Service Learning Field Trips:** Once a year, all students leave in a 4-day service learning field trip of their choice, in groups of minimum 10 and maximum 18 students, accompanied by two





UWC Costa Rica staff and with a previously agreed volunteering and learning purpose.

- **Thematic/Regional Celebrations and Special Events:** Designated weeks in which students lead a wide range of activities to raise awareness, celebrate and/or co-create knowledge and experience with their peers on their region in the world or a cause they feel passionate about. Special events such as UWC Festival, Peace One Day, MUN, Women's week and other similar are also offered for students to lead, co-create and or participate



# EARNED CREDIBILITY

“UWC has put the time and the effort to reach the part of the world which is most deserted with very less amenities, and so here I am. I moved from a mechanic going to school in a deserted area to an engineer at from an Ivy League school. I’m the first Western Saharan student to attend an Ivy League school and it’s all thanks to UWC Costa Rica and those who donate to make such a change possible.

After graduating from UWC Costa Rica, I was accepted to continue my education at Brown University where I studied engineering. Since 2017, I have worked for Veryst Engineering, LLC in Providence, Rhode Island as a Mechanical Engineer. Giving to UWC is probably one of the best ways to invest in future generations and impact the lives of those who have no means to make their life better.”

**Bachir Ahmed, Algeria and  
Western Sahara  
Brown University,  
Engineering**

“I have supported UWC Costa Rica through my annual giving for more than 5 years. I am also one of the monthly donors. I have had the wonderful opportunity of speaking to both UWC Costa Rica alumnae and students in order to write interviews for a publication. What strikes me so strongly is that each of these young people have a dedication and interest in playing a significant part of creating a just and compassionate global community. I also am taken with the dedication of the UWC Costa Rica board and staff to become active participants and supporters of the students. As Howard Zinn stated, “To have hope, one does not need certainty but only possibility.” And that’s why I support UWC-CR— so much is possible!”

**Eileen McDargh Elvins –  
USA, Annual Giving Donor  
(5+ years)**

“Since the beginning of my UWC adventure, I value the most the maturity of the students. This is no different at UWC Costa Rica. I’m literally sad on Friday that I need to wait two more days to get in class with my students again. But don’t get me wrong, I like weekends and my spare time too :) UWC impacts my life. Thanks to the movement, I am exposed to very open-minded, mature and diverse students and staff who helped me to broaden my horizon of opinions and perspectives. Thanks to UWC I grew as a person in fast forward mode.

It is important for me to dedicate my time and assets at UWC Costa Rica because my students deserve the most from their teacher. This would be true in any other school too but at UWC the reward I receive from my students has particularly large impact on my well-being.”

**Matteuz Jurecki, Poland  
Staff Giving,  
Physics Teacher**