Forty Days of Third-party Validation

Little more than a month has elapsed since the last report, but members of the Woodbury community have accomplished much. These achievements allow us to see ourselves in the eyes of others. The view is flattering.

October 12 to 15, Woodbury University hosted the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) 2006 West Conference “Surfacing Urbanisms: Recent Approaches to Metropolitan Design.” The conference included Keller Easterling from Yale University, Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman from UCLA, Albert Pope from Rice University, Roemer van Toorn from the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and many of our own faculty who chaired sessions, presented papers, and participated in panels. Woodbury University made such a positive impression on the organization and the participants that ACSA asked the co-chairs, Woodbury architecture professors Nick Roberts and Paulette Singley, to write a handbook on organizing a successful conference. In the words of the participants, Woodbury’s conference was a “spectacular success.”

“Woodbury University was an ideal setting,” begins an article in the fall Surface Design Association newsletter about the textile design conference held on campus this summer. The two-page spread with pictures ends like this: “It was a jewel of a conference . . . I encourage the organizers to consider another event in the future.”

Last Spring, Woodbury won a place at the National Science Foundation’s workshop on developing curricula that bring together science faculty and faculty from other areas in the university in order to collaborate on courses that engage students in real world issues. The NSF project is called SENCER, Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities. Through the NSF grant, Woodbury faculty from architecture, science, mathematics, and the social sciences began designing two courses, one on water distribution and one on traffic. After the first report of Woodbury’s work, Rao Chekuri, who teaches physics and is leading Woodbury’s SENCER team, received these words from SENCER’s head: “I was overwhelmed by your report. How much you have done in such a short time and how creative you have been in mixing community based research projects with your coursework!” Along with those words came a request to include the report in SENCER’s national newsletter and an invitation to present Woodbury’s work on Capitol Hill in March. Third-party validation from NSF is not bad!

Third-party validation came to the Business School this past week, when Dean Andre Van Niekerk on his visit to China inked an agreement of cooperation with Zhejiang University. One of China’s oldest institutions and ranked as the number three university in the country, Zhejiang’s business school is considered to be on a par with Stanford, Harvard, and the like. To begin the relationship, Zhejiang will host 15 to 20 Woodbury students for a week in early May.

Again, our students have been achieving notice in ways that show their quality. This past month, business management major Lea Fukutaki was named an Ebell recipient. Ebell makes its awards on the basis of academics and character determined by transcripts, an essay, and an interview. Lea, a straight-A, first-semester sophomore, exemplifies the Woodbury spirit. She expects much of herself, but she also works hard to improve the lives of others. In high school, Lea delivered meals to the disabled and to the poor, she raised money for famine victims, she volunteered at a preschool, and she distributed her homemade Thanksgiving and Christmas cards at a local convalescent home. She is active in many Woodbury organizations. As a member of the Health and Wellness Club, she helps others work on physical and mental wellbeing through nutrition, exercise, and stress-reduction.

A Woodbury studio class in Hollywood taught by professor of Architecture Jeanine Centuori and Russell Rock was recognized and featured in the new book “Design Like You Give a Damn.”

Woodbury faculty also continue to publish books and articles, to present papers, and to be recognized for their creative and professional work. Rene Peralta and Fiamma Montezemolo,
San Diego faculty, recently published *Here is Tijuana*, also released in Spanish as *Aqui es Tijuana*. The result of a two and half year urban research project, the book is a collaboration between anthropologist Montezemolo, architect Peralta and their friend, the writer Heriberto Yepez, who “fused their disciplines and ideologies in an effort to document and rediscover the ubiquitous and unfathomable quality of the city’s urban representation.”

The authors attended a book signing at UCLA and another in Tijuana that Woodbury’s Teddy Cruz made possible.

Doug Cremer, professor of politics and history and the founding director of the Institute for Transdisciplinary Studies, has been invited to deliver a talk on transdisciplinarity at the University of Arizona in March. We anticipate that he will present on this new topic again at the Lilly Conference West and at the WASC Annual Meeting, both in April.

Two weeks ago, Woodbury liberal artist and art historian, Dr. Amy Pederson gave a lecture at the Luckman Gallery at Cal State LA, entitled, “Bull# # and Truth: Superhero Mythology and the Manufacturing of Identity.” Dr. Pederson presented for a packed house an illustrated lecture on the connections between comics and contemporary art. The gallery talk was in conjunction with the exhibition *MINERVA CUEVAS The Economy of the Imaginary: Pirates and Heroes*.

One reviewer has described artist Carolee Toon, who heads Woodbury’s design foundation program, as a master of tonal subtlety. She currently has an exhibition of her artwork at the Mandarin Gallery. A reviewer writes that the show, which also includes the work of foundation teacher Olivia Booth, rocks! The artwork of animation teacher Mike Tracy will be included in the Los Angeles Brewery Walk this fall.

A recent edition of *Leadership in Action* included a piece by Woodbury faculty Joan Marques entitled “Awakened Leadership in Today’s Organizations.” In that work she argues that awakened leaders remain alert to the driving motives of the people and organizations they lead and constantly alert to the environment in which they operate. *The Journal of Management Development* also published her paper “The spiritual worker: An examination of the ripple effect that enhances quality of life in- and outside the work environment,” which describes ways in which non-managerial workers contribute toward establishing spirituality at work.

Recently Woodbury architecture students made their voices heard about the design of downtown, when Professor Aaron Whelton, along with Mina Chow, David Freeland, and Robert Kerr, led an investigation into the Grand Avenue site in their second-year design studios at Woodbury. They broke the entire site into eight parcels so that two groups of eight students worked both individually on their parcels and communally to ensure their project meshed with the overall organization of the park. The students’ work is extraordinary. It appears on the Lear Center web site. You can see it at [http://www.learcenter.org/pdf/GrandWoodbury.pdf](http://www.learcenter.org/pdf/GrandWoodbury.pdf).

All and all, the last 40 days have shown the quality of our faculty and students. Even more activity by Woodbury people is going on in the classrooms and in the world. Take this as the tip of the quality iceberg.