Woodbury University Context Statement/White Paper
Prepared by WASC Re-Accreditation Steering Committee (WRSC)
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The draft document below is the result of the campus identity search retreats and activities. This document will form the basis for continuing discussions on campus and with the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board at this and subsequent meetings.

The Challenge

The new millennium will see a dramatic increase in the rate of change in the forces that shape universities. James Duderstadt, President Emeritus of the University of Michigan, states that “not only will social and technical change be a challenge to the American university, it will be the watchword for the years ahead.” Some futurists predict that this change will not just be rapid; it will grow exponentially over the century.

This climate of accelerating change is coupled with a greater expectation on the part of accreditors to see continuous improvement and accountability in universities. These forces are causing many universities to review their defining characteristics to make sure they are up to date with the needs of today’s students, and develop ways to continuously improve the quality of their operations in meeting those needs.

These two factors pose a tremendous challenge for university Boards and senior administrators: how can the university hold to its identity and control its own destiny, while having the capacity to change quickly enough to meet social, technological, and market changes?

Many universities are finding that the solution to these key challenges is to revisit their missions, visions, or values to keep pace with the new educational climate. At Woodbury, driven by the impetus of our reaccreditors’ expectations of a University fully aligned around a mission, we see that a major challenge will be to define Woodbury’s core characteristics in light of the needs students have for a 21st Century education.

Woodbury’s Response to the Challenge

Woodbury University’s history reflects sensitivity to emerging forces that have shaped the educational needs of Southern California. The development of programs in business, architecture, design, and, most recently, organizational
leadership reflects this, as do the populations targeted for these programs and the means of their delivery.

Because Woodbury University’s faculty have always comprised practicing professionals as well as teachers, they have brought to the university an informing awareness of the forces that continually alter the conditions of work, the practice of professions, and the cultural, scientific, social, and economic realities.

Responding to these changes, Woodbury University has continually reinvented itself without losing sight of the core ideas that its mission statement captures.

Today Woodbury University’s faculty and staff anticipate a future in which change, driven by technology, will occur with greater rapidity. They also see that the new citizen will be a part of a global community—as opposed to an international community composed of discrete and independent nations—where every cultural, scientific, social, and economic reality will require a worldwide perspective, understanding and approach.

In this context, the community has come together to endorse a series of principles that in the foreseeable future must be infused into the Woodbury University’s academic programs and must be supported by the university’s operations. While the words of the mission and vision statements of the university may remain unchanged, those words must be informed by these six principles and take their current definition from them.

Below is the list of principles as defined by the community.

1. **Transdisciplinarity**
   Woodbury University has a history of creating fields of study in ways that draw on many different disciplines. In the future, transdisciplinarity will replace interdisciplinarity in the same way that globalism replaces internationalism. Transdisciplinarity understands the interdependence of all knowledge and widens the forms of knowing to include emotional intelligences, intuition, and physical knowing.

2. **Social Responsibility**
   Social responsibility no longer is an option for the educated. At base, social responsibility implies a respect for the planet, a respect for its people and the environment. It asserts that all action has impact on the planet and that understanding that impact and accepting responsibility for of one’s actions is the moral and ethical
condition for the educated global citizen. Civic engagement has come to embrace principles of sustainability as well as social justice.

3. **Innovation and Creativity**  
Creativity suggests that one is a maker of knowledge, goods, concepts and not just a receiver of them. Innovation suggests that what one makes is new and forward-looking.

4. **Communication**  
While written and oral communication are still the basis of all human interaction, the diversity of forms in which those communications take place have swelled, as have the people and places that one must communicate with. In addition to the expanding media, the types of communication have expanded and given heightened importance to visual and physical communication as well.

5. **The Integrated Student**  
Because of the principles above, Woodbury University finds it more important than ever to assure that the aspects of a student’s personal and professional life are fully integrated. What one will do as a professional is an outgrowth of what one will become as a person.

6. **Academic Quality**  
In times of great change, standards can change. The university seeks, as it has always done, to add value to the lives of its students through the educational experiences it provides. At the same time, the course and outcomes of learning must adhere to the highest principles and goals. This provides insurance to the students and to the community that the learning at Woodbury University is not only significant but of significant quality.

Although these six principles are defined primarily in academic ways that echo and expand principles that inform the liberal arts, all areas and operations should embody these principles. In other words, transdisciplinarity requires that all parts of the university work together across operational lines, in order to understand and support each other. Enrollment services, for instance, should embody this, as it should also support the growth of academic quality. All parts of the institution must embody social responsibility and good communication, and the concept of integration must assure that institutional structures and processes fully incorporate the lives of our students. All parts of the institution should work together to promote the continuous improvement of academic quality.