

*For Immediate Release*

## Woodbury University Civic Engagement Symposium Showcases Extraordinary Families, Neighborhood Initiatives

***At 2015 Event, Students and Communities Team Up to Give Back***



LOS ANGELES (Dec. 7, 2015) - “Giving back to the community” — a pledge often made but not always honored. But at [Woodbury University](#)'s recent Civic Engagement Symposium, “giving back” proved to be a promise kept, many times over. During the Symposium, students, faculty, staff, alumni and local residents gathered on campus to celebrate singular outreach achievements.

Convened in mid-November, the Symposium shined a light on a sizable field of worthy, ongoing projects that heighten and tighten the bonds between campus and community – and between faculty and students -- in areas of study that include housing, nutrition, transportation, wellness and more. And for a handful of truly standout efforts, the event even offered some formal recognition.

Earning the friendly competition's \$300 first prize was the "Extraordinary Families" (EF) MarCom Project, in which students devised a marketing communications plan to target prospective foster families for non-profit EF, which was created in 2015 through a merger of the Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency and the Child Welfare Initiative. It's precisely the kind of real-world experience that the EF team's faculty advisor, Dr. Mine Uçok Hughes, said she values for her students. "It's vital in marketing education to build bridges between theory and practice," said Dr. Hughes, an associate professor in the School of Business. "Creating opportunities for experiential learning where students learn by doing really does bring marketing theories to life."

Sharing in the hands-on spirit of community involvement was Civic Engagement: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI), which garnered the \$200 second prize. Woodbury students partnered with longtime public improvement mainstay LANI to boost community engagement in L.A.'s Pico Union neighborhood. The class adopted LANI's mission to facilitate community-driven projects by empowering neighborhood business owners and residents to organize and oversee the improvement projects themselves. According to advisor Emily Bills, "students worked together to interact with the community through needs assessment surveys and video testimonial gathering and then produced a tangible resource—a neighborhood guide that serves as a marketing tool for the community."

This year's Symposium presenters included students, educators, academic administrators and community leaders from organizations like Food Forward (<https://foodforward.org>). Each presenter has built a diverse portfolio in his or her respective field and has shown promise in the realms of community engagement and awareness. To view a full list of presenters, see: <http://www.woodburysymposium.com/presenters.html>.

By helping communities take their own positive steps, students become catalysts for change, said Jeanine Centuori, Director of the ACE Center and Associate Professor of Architecture. But being agents of change doesn't stop at the individual level, as Woodbury's own recent civic engagement transformation demonstrates. The Architecture & Civic Engagement (ACE) program that spawned these award winning student outreach programs has itself recently undergone a transformation, morphing into the Agency for Civic Engagement. According to Prof. Centuori, the name change is emblematic of a deeper commitment "to better reflect its newly expanded mission of providing every Woodbury student with the opportunity to learn while serving the needs of nonprofit and community groups."

### **About Woodbury University**

Founded in 1884, Woodbury University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Southern California. With campuses in Burbank/Los Angeles and San Diego, the university offers bachelor's degrees from the School of Architecture, School of Business, School of Media, Culture & Design, and College of Transdisciplinarity, along with a Master of Business Administration, Master of Arts in Media for Social Justice, Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Interior Architecture (MIA), Master of Science in Architecture (MSArch), and Master of Leadership. The San Diego campus offers Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture, Master of Leadership, Master of Interior Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture degrees, as well as an MSArch

degree with a concentration in Real Estate Development. Woodbury ranks in the top 4 percent nationally in *The Economist's* first-ever survey of American colleges. In 2014, the university ranked 15th among the nation's "25 Colleges That Add the Most Value," according to *Money Magazine*, and is a 2014-2015 College of Distinction. Visit [woodbury.edu](http://woodbury.edu) for more information.

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