

July 18, 2024

Dr. Jeff Bellantoni
Interim CEO/CAO
Woodbury University
7500 North Glenoaks Boulevard
Burbank, CA 91504

Dear CEO Bellantoni:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Woodbury University (WoodU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 28, 2024. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to Woodbury University February 28 – March 1, 2024 using the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Woodbury University prior to the Offsite Review (OSR) and the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Barry Ryan, former President and CEO, Woodbury University; Michele Starkey, former Senior VP, Academic Affairs, Woodbury University; Krista Newkirk, President, University of Redlands; Adrienne McCormick, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Redlands; Heather Lambeth, Director of Assessment and Accreditation/ALO, University of Redlands; and Matthew Bridgewater, Director of Assessment and Accreditation/ALO, Woodbury University. 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.

Procedural History

Simultaneous with the WSCUC reaffirmation review, Woodbury University was undergoing a Change of Control to the University of Redlands. The Change of Control must still go through review and approval by the United States Department of Education.

Actions

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of six years
3. Issue a Formal Notice of Concern
4. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2029 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2030

5. Continue with the previously scheduled Special Visit in spring 2025 to address requirements set by the Commission in April 2024 and requirements from this reaffirmation review as follows:
 - a. employ an appropriate number of faculty members with the relevant qualifications to teach the programs at both Woodbury and Redlands. (CFRs 2.5, 3.1, and 3.2)
 - b. provide evidence of sustainable funding to support the operations of Woodbury while under Redlands' control that anticipates possible costs that may be imposed by external parties. (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5)
 - c. apply an effective faculty-led review process to determine the quality, viability, and staffing levels of academic programs at Redlands during the integration process with Woodbury University. (CFRs 2.6, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.5)
 - d. provide evidence of the implementation of the shared services agreement between Woodbury and Redlands and its impact on Woodbury's operations and academic programs. (CFR 3.5)
 - e. dedicate adequate academic and financial resources to secure teach-out plans for Woodbury University in the case that unfavorable scenarios prevent the integration of the two institutions. (CFR 3.4 & WSCUC Teach-Out Plans and Agreements Policy)
 - f. enhance student support areas where there is low institutional capacity but high student need, especially to facilitate the curricular and post-graduate success of neurodivergent students. (CFRs 2.11 and 2.13)
 - g. continue to embed systematic assessment and program review into the institutional culture in a way that is sustainable and usable. (CFRs 2.7, 2.10, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5)
 - h. create and sustain regular conversations between campus constituents and the governing board to ensure shared understanding of campus priorities. (CFRs 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7)

Commendations

The Commission commends the institution for:

1. Shifting institutional culture toward greater transparency and communication.
2. Demonstrating passion for and steadfast commitment to the care and post-graduate success of students.
3. Aggressively addressing obstacles to student retention and success, including strategic use of the academic early alert system, more systematic resolution of registration blocks, and the expansion of financial literacy resources for students.
4. Navigating the difficult terrain of Covid, diminished human and fiscal resources, and the proposed merger with the University of Redlands, while remaining committed to the Woodbury University mission of providing quality, practical, hands-on, and experiential learning opportunities for all students.

Notice of Concern

A Formal Notice of Concern provides notice to the institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if current trends or findings continue. Institutions issued a Formal Notice of Concern are scheduled for a Special Visit. If the issues are not addressed, a sanction could be imposed as described in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation. A Formal Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website.

Standard at Risk of Non-Compliance and Requiring a Response

Woodbury University is in danger of being found out of compliance with Standard 3, CFRs 3.4 and 3.7. The institution has experienced significant financial problems due to years of declining student enrollment that has contributed to operating expenses exceeding revenues. In addition, significant changes have occurred in leadership and organizational structures. Following the change of control to the University of Redlands, Woodbury University must have: a) viable and sustainable funding to support operations throughout the planned merger, and b) clear leadership and decision-making processes that support and sustain institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

Areas for Development

The Commission also requires the institution to respond to the following areas for development:

1. Create and implement strategies to include all campus stakeholders in budget planning and communication in coordination with the University of Redlands. (CFR 3.4)
2. Define and monitor accurate, evidence-based, multi-year enrollment targets through ongoing collaboration between admissions, academic programs, and the finance offices of Woodbury University and the University of Redlands. (CFR 3.4)
3. Enact policies and procedures through shared governance for starting, discontinuing, and/or pausing academic programs. (CFRs 3.7, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7)
4. Enhance student support areas where there is low institutional capacity but high student need, especially to facilitate the curricular and post-graduate success of neurodivergent students. (CFRs 2.11 and 2.13)
5. Continue to embed systematic assessment and program review into the institutional culture in a way that is sustainable and usable. (CFRs 2.7, 2.10, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5)
6. Create and sustain regular conversations between campus constituents and the governing board to ensure shared understanding of campus priorities. (CFRs 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that Woodbury University completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, Woodbury University should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation

and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of Woodbury University's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Woodbury University 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 Woodbury 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,



Jamiene S. Studley
President

JSS/so

Cc: Tracy Poon Tambascia, Commission Chair
Matthew Bridgewater, Woodbury University ALO
Gregory Lippe, Woodbury University Board Chair
Members of the Accreditation Visit Team
Susan Opp, WSCUC Vice President
Tamela Hawley, WSCUC Vice President
John Hausaman, WSCUC Assistant Vice President