

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
SPECIAL VISIT**

To Woodbury University and University of Redlands  
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The team evaluated the institutions under the 2023 Handbook and Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institutions' status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institutions. This report and the Commission letters are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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## SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

### A. Description of the Institution, its Accreditation History, as Relevant, and the Visit

This report contains the team’s findings and recommendations following a joint special visit to the University of Redlands and Woodbury University. The Special Visit was conducted as part of the ongoing accreditation process to ensure that both the University of Redlands and Woodbury University remain in compliance with WSCUC’s 2023 Standards of Accreditation as the merger process continues.

The Special Visit occurred following approval by the WSCUC Commission of a change of control of Woodbury University to become a subsidiary of the University of Redlands as the first step toward a proposed merger between the two institutions.

The University of Redlands is a private, independent liberal arts and professional university committed to providing a personalized education and preparing students for a life of personal and professional growth and service to the community. Redlands provides a welcoming environment devoted to education justice, where access and opportunity come together to equip individuals to build a better future for themselves and those around them.

Redlands offers over 40 undergraduate and 33 graduate programs, blending liberal arts and professional study, applied and theoretical education, traditional majors, and self-designed curricula. The University’s total student enrollment is approximately 3,100. According to the Fall 2024 census, the University’s students included 1,963 in the College of Arts and Sciences, 482 in the School of Business & Society, 571 in the School of Education, 71 in the San Francisco Theological Seminary, and 187 in the School of Continuing Studies.

In 2023, the University of Redlands received a reaffirmation of accreditation for a period of six years. It was also asked to provide a progress report in spring 2024 that focused on its strategic plan and its

strategic enrollment, and to participate in a special visit in spring 2025 that highlighted financial sustainability, strategic enrollment planning, and faculty morale.

Woodbury University is a private, non-profit university with a single location in Burbank, California. Founded in 1884 with initial campuses in Downtown and Central Los Angeles, Woodbury University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Southern California. The university consists of the School of Business; the School of Architecture; the School of Media, Culture, and Design; and the division of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The institution seeks to transform students into innovative professionals who will contribute responsibly to the global community. Woodbury achieves academic excellence by focusing on purposeful student engagement, establishing external partnerships, and ensuring that all of its processes, services, and environment enrich the student experience. As of fall 2023, Woodbury had an enrollment of 858 FTE, the vast majority of whom are enrolled in the School of Architecture or the School of Media, Culture, and Design.

In 2024, Woodbury University received a reaffirmation of accreditation for a period of six years and a formal Notice of Concern from the WSCUC Commission. It was also asked to participate in a special visit in spring 2025 that focused on evidence of appropriate staffing; sustainable funding; an effective faculty-led review process to determine the quality, viability, and staffing levels of academic programs at Redlands during the integration process; the implementation of the shared services agreement and its impact on Woodbury's operations and academic programs; adequate academic and financial resources to secure teach-out plans for Woodbury University in the event that unfavorable scenarios prevent the integration of the two institutions; student support areas where there is low institutional capacity but high student need; systematic assessment and

program review; and regular conversations between campus constituents and the governing board to ensure shared understanding of campus priorities.

#### B. Description of Team's Review Process

The team's review was centered on evaluating institutional capacity and effectiveness in leadership and decision-making, financial sustainability, strategic enrollment planning, faculty sufficiency, and communication strategies, among other critical areas. The team met remotely in January 2025 to review materials submitted by both institutions. Additional documents related to assessment, enrollment, finances, and staffing were requested from both universities as a result of this meeting.

As part of the onsite visit, the visiting team spent one day at each institution to meet with and learn from individuals and groups who were best positioned to provide updates and answer questions to the key issues identified in the Commission's action letter. Meetings took place with:

- The University of Redlands Board of Trustees Members
- The University of Redlands President
- The Woodbury University Interim President and Senior Academic Officer
- The University of Redlands Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- The University of Redlands Vice President for Finance and Administration
- The Woodbury University Interim Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer
- The University General Counsel
- The Vice President of Enrollment
- The Vice President of Student Life
- The University of Redlands President's Cabinet
- Deans of the College and Schools of both institutions

- The Accreditation Liaisons Officers at both institutions
- The Director of the Office of Disabilities and Accessibilities Services
- The General Education Coordinator
- The Instructional Technology Staff
- Woodbury University's admissions leadership team
- Faculty at both institutions
- Faculty shared governance leaders
- Staff shared governance leaders
- Students at both institutions

The team also examined a large number of documents, including:

- Both institutions' assessment and program review report examples
- Both institutions' enrollment data, enrollment plans and enrollment funnel reports
- Both institutions' most recent financial statements
- Both institutions' special visit reports
- Bulldog Civic Engagement and MLK Planning documents
- Communications submitted to the confidential email accounts
- Leadership and Decision-making Processes and Organization Chart
- University of Redlands Belongingness Examples
- University of Redlands faculty staffing data
- University of Redlands Strategic Enrollment Plan
- Woodbury Merger Transition Plan
- Woodbury Program Change of Status
- Woodbury Redlands Budget Projections with Restoration Plan

- Woodbury Teach-Out Agreement
- Woodbury University Contract Savings

#### C. Institution's Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The report was well-organized and comprehensive, covering all major areas identified in the Commission's previous recommendations. It provided a structured account of institutional actions, including strategic plans, financial sustainability measures, governance restructuring, and student support improvements. Sufficient supporting evidence was also provided, including organizational charts, budget projections, and strategic planning documents, and the discussion of these documents was well integrated throughout the report.

While the report demonstrated the institutions' rigorous self-evaluation with institutional data and stakeholder feedback to assess effectiveness, the depth of the analysis varied across sections. In some sections of the report (e.g., faculty workload, faculty morale, student assessment), there was robust detail describing the actions that the institutions have taken over the course of the past two years. In other cases (strategic enrollment planning), the information that was provided was dated and did not reflect the current enrollment situation. To their credit, both institutions provided current enrollment data and future projections when asked. Overall, the Special Visit team found the quality of the report to be robust with sufficient supporting evidence.

## SECTION II – TEAMS'S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

#### A. Leadership and decision-making processes to support and sustain capacity and effectiveness

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University have identified effective leadership and clarity in decision-making as essential to ensuring institutional capacity and sustainability during the integration process (CFR 3.7, 3.8, 3.9).

## Evidence Reviewed

- Organizational charts outlining leadership structures at both institutions
- Meeting minutes from governance bodies, including Woodbury Cabinet, Academic Leadership Council, and University of Redlands' President's Direct Reports
- Reports detailing decision-making frameworks and role clarity for interim leaders at Woodbury
- Interviews with senior leadership, deans, and faculty regarding governance processes
- Shared services agreement documentation

The leadership structure at Woodbury University, post-integration, has been clarified with the Interim President and Senior Academic Officer (SAO) reporting to both Woodbury's Board of Trustees and the University of Redlands' leadership. Weekly leadership meetings ensure alignment between Woodbury and Redlands, with additional touchpoints between the SAO and Redlands' Provost and President.

Woodbury has retained decision-making authority over academic affairs, including:

- Admissions criteria and faculty selection
- Curriculum development and program reviews
- Assessment of student learning outcomes
- Degree awards and academic record-keeping

However, key operational functions such as budgeting, facilities, human resources, and marketing are ultimately managed at the University of Redlands level, ensuring fiscal oversight (CFR 3.9).

The Merger Integration Director has been instrumental in tracking the implementation of decision-making frameworks and ensuring seamless collaboration across institutional units. A structured 100-day and 200-day integration plan has been followed, mapping leadership responsibilities across both institutions. The leadership transition plan provides clear lines of responsibility, ensuring continuity in



governance. Regular meetings between leadership teams have facilitated a smooth decision-making process (CFR 3.11).

Concerted efforts have been made to bring further clarity to faculty governance roles and long-term decision-making autonomy within Woodbury's academic units and also for both institutions post-merger. There is general consensus that leaders at Woodbury University and the University of Redlands are working within pre-defined decision-making processes and with faculty engagement as a priority (CFR 3.11). There is also recognition of the work ahead for the faculty from both institutions to integrate academic programs fully. It will be important to continue refining governance structures to ensure alignment between the faculty while maintaining Woodbury's academic autonomy (CFR 4.6).

#### B. Financial sustainability with multi-year budget, reserves planning, and strategic plan funding

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University have begun to operationalize financial and fiscal consolidation of institutional budgets and financial planning to execute the merger of the two institutions. Upon completion of the merger transition, the institutions and campuses will operate as the University of Redlands although the exact name-branding of campuses, schools, and programs have not yet been formally determined.

Prior to the merger both institutions had separately identified areas of elevated financial or fiscal risk. Student enrollments have declined significantly, which has impacted revenue (CFR 3.4). Additionally, both institutions were addressing areas where faculty, staff, and personnel levels were not filled to levels considered optimal for strategically growing their programs (CFR 3.1).

Woodbury University had sought the merger and transition to provide opportunities to improve its financial position with regard to outstanding loans and overall debt service obligations. The merger was also planned provide additional investment and resources from University of Redlands that would help to close fiscal gaps in personnel, facility operations, and academic programs for long term sustainability (CFR 3.5).

The University of Redlands viewed the merger as a strategic acquisition that could catalyze growth and evolution, broadening the institution's reach. Prior to the merger, the University of Redlands' multi-year budget forecast reflected the institution's belief that its operational revenues would exceed its projected expenditures, with growth in strategic investments driven by enrollment growth and corresponding student revenues. The transaction to acquire and merge with Woodbury University was in alignment with this strategy. As identified in previous WSCUC reports, the University of Redlands had also been adjusting and improving areas of financial management for the institution. University of Redlands leadership were focused on building reserves and more robust governance with budgeting and multi-year financial planning simultaneous with the merger (CFR 3.5).

The two institutions have consolidated human resources and payroll processes into the University of Redlands. All employees are formally considered University of Redlands employees on the University of Redlands payroll. Relatedly, administration of human resources is also consolidated under the auspices of the University of Redlands. The University of Redlands administration is currently evaluating employee handbooks for each institution and is reportedly in the process of synchronizing handbook provisions.

The budgets and budget construction processes have been arranged to enable a structure that consolidates budget planning and deliberation towards a single entity (CFR 3.4). For FY25, the Woodbury University budget was constructed individually, but the planning process included discussions at the broader institutional level, enabling the University of Redlands to deliberate the contribution of resources or the re-allocation of budgets in conjunction with the University of Redlands own campus' budget. An area that achieved cross-institution savings was the administration's creation of a single procurement office to cover both institutions. Although neither university had a specialized procurement office, the creation of one served to identify areas of combined economies of scale, with the consolidation of separate expenses or contracts, and sharing of certain costs. The administration estimated that first year savings from this effort alone could be as much as \$785K (CFR 3.4).

Fiscal progress for FY25 indicated that the University of Redlands was progressing as budgeted and forecasted through the first half of the fiscal year. Through the end of 2024 calendar year, total revenues were \$56.7 million, which was about 51% of the anticipated (budgeted) revenues. Student revenues constituted more than \$44.7 millions of total revenues for that period (approximately 79% of total revenues). Expenses for the period tracked similarly. With half of the fiscal year completed, expenses were \$54.9 million or 49% of the forecasted budget (\$111.1) for the fiscal year. Based on the budget-to-actual progress, University of Redlands could be on pace to finish the fiscal year with a surplus or net revenue position.

Separately, the financial progress for Woodbury University suggests that current revenues are sufficient to meet current expenditures. As mentioned above, both institutions have consolidated budgets into the University of Redlands. A multi-year Budget Projections and Restoration Plan through FY29, forecasts net surpluses for each institution, each year, beginning with the upcoming fiscal year (FY26).

The Restoration Plan effectively aggregates the fiscal planning and forecasts for the individual institutions into a consolidated model (CFR 3.5).

There are two areas of attention for University of Redlands leadership for the near-term through transition which could have import for the institution's longer-term goals. The first area is related to liquidity of reserves. In conjunction with the merger, Woodbury University was able to amend and restate a pre-existing loan with the assistance or cooperation of the University of Redlands. However, the re-financing terms provided by the lending institution have placed financial requirements on the University of Redlands to maintain a level of liquidity of cash reserves. While the University of Redlands administration indicated the liquidity requirements were not different from requirements their financial institution placed on their letters of credit, the institution also acknowledged that the totality of the reserves must account for the liquidity requirement. As such, the University of Redlands must maintain a level of reserve liquidity to satisfy the requirements of the lender, but that is less than the total amount of reserves available. Excess liquidity above the maintenance requirement (\$30 million) is estimated at \$15 million.

Reserve fund balances are important because the institution had identified a plan to replenish and grow its reserves. WSCUC's 2023 reaffirmation CAL required that the University of Redlands focus on building reserves. The merger provided opportunities for both institutions to find savings due to economies of scale and by consolidating some expenses. However, for the University of Redlands, it was also clear that the merger increased certain one-time operational expenses necessary to complete the merger with Woodbury University.

The second area of attention relates to the totality of resources available for the institutions' execution on the Strategic Enrollment Plan. The University of Redlands has created a comprehensive plan comprised of 5 organizational goals, each with multiple strategies for success and targeted metrics to measure progress. The plan focuses on increasing enrollment. The merger may facilitate overall enrollment growth, but there are also components of student enrollment that the institution will need to focus on (CFR 3.4).

### C. Strategic enrollment planning for all programs and campuses

Enrollment peaked at the University of Redlands prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–20 at 4,300 students. Since the pandemic, enrollment fell below peak levels, and the university focused on efforts to regrow enrollment numbers. The acquisition of Presidio Graduate School in 2023 was framed as a strategic acquisition to augment the University of Redlands academic programs and spur growth. The merger with Woodbury University was expected to further expand the University of Redlands' enrollment market by establishing additional campuses under the University of Redlands name.

Enrollment for the past full academic year was estimated at 3,200 students, including approximately 1,100 students as graduate students. The Strategic Enrollment Plan has key performance indicators (KPIs) targeting enrollment growth components. The plan considers improving retention statistics in addition to new student enrollments for first year, transfer students, and international students.

Enrollment components include growing first-year student enrollment from 480 to 600 students and increasing new transfer students from 200 to 235 students by 2029. The KPIs are reasonable metrics to judge the progress of enrollment growth, and there is sufficient horizon (five years) to monitor this progress. The university has identified industry headwinds facing higher education. Declining population demographics and lower consumer confidence in the value of a college degree will increase competition

for students. Additionally, the larger University of California System has also struggled to grow enrollment over the past decade.

The enrollment plan is organized with goals, each with multiple strategies and specific tactics for each strategy.

- Goal 1: Invest in geographic markets and student segments to increase and diversify enrollment across undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Goal 2: Develop academic and co-curricular programs that are market responsive to students' interests, societal needs, and the future of work.
- Goal 3: Enhance the reputation and awareness of Redlands throughout California and in key out-of-state markets.
- Goal 4: Cultivate a culture where all staff and faculty are recruitment and retention ambassadors to drive student success.
- Goal 5: Continue to make Redlands affordable and attainable while positioning the university for greater structural financial health.

The Strategic Enrollment Plan should be recognized for its organization and its broad view with a comprehensive approach toward affecting enrollment. The university views the growth of program offerings and improving the quality of its current outreach as key to growing enrollment. Enabling this growth will require capital investment and the strategic deployment of its reserves (CFR 3.5).

#### D. Strategies to address morale and workload pressures of faculty and staff

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University were asked to provide updates on their efforts to enhance faculty and staff morale, foster a sense of belonging, and address workload concerns (CFR 3.2).

As part of its Special Visit report, both institutions provided a detailed summary of their initiatives to tackle these challenges.

Faculty and staff morale remains a key concern at Redlands, with persistent challenges related to compensation, staffing, administrative support, and organizational restructuring. To address these concerns, the university has implemented several initiatives, including a campus climate survey and a shared governance task force. As a result, Redlands has taken steps to improve working conditions, such as:

- Compensation Adjustments: Eliminating university-wide salary reductions and reinstating a modest 1.5% retirement contribution.
- Enhanced Support: Expanding Human Resources staffing, developing an employee handbook, and increasing research and professional development opportunities.
- Community Engagement: Hosting faculty mixers with the Board of Trustees to strengthen relationships and transparency.

Despite these efforts, faculty feedback during the open forums indicated that morale remained low. Concerns about compensation, retirement benefits, and faculty workload persist. Additionally, there is apprehension about Redlands assuming financial and operational responsibilities for Woodbury while managing its own economic challenges. Moving forward, Redlands must take further action to improve faculty morale by addressing compensation, retirement contributions, and staffing to ensure it meets its institutional objectives (CFR 3.2).

At Woodbury, morale has improved since the merger, largely due to leadership of the University of Redlands hosting over eight town halls and open office hours on the Woodbury campus. Faculty and staff indicated they appreciated the open and transparent communication which fostered a sense of trust

and inclusion. At the same time, however, challenges remain at Woodbury. Faculty and staff voiced frustration with administrative transitions, particularly regarding payroll processing, healthcare, and IRS documentation. As Redlands took over these responsibilities, implementation issues and slow communication caused disruptions. Faculty in departments facing potential consolidation or closure also expressed concerns about decision-making transparency. However, university leadership provided documentation demonstrating ongoing community engagement in these discussions (CFR 3.2).

Both the University of Redlands and Woodbury University continue to navigate complex challenges related to faculty staffing, governance, and morale. While Redlands has developed a structured process for faculty hiring, improvements in communication and collaboration between faculty and senior leadership would enhance its effectiveness. Addressing faculty concerns regarding compensation, staffing, and workload remains critical to fostering a supportive academic environment. Woodbury, meanwhile, has made strides in engagement and transparency, though operational challenges related to the merger still need to be resolved. Moving forward, both institutions must prioritize meaningful dialogue, strategic decision-making, and faculty well-being to sustain a thriving academic community.

#### E. Faculty sufficiency for both institutions

Redlands has undertaken faculty reductions to align with declines in enrollment. Since 2014, overall enrollment has dropped by 42%, prompting the university to reduce its full-time faculty by 12% over the same period. While this restructuring aims to stabilize resources, it has been a significant concern for faculty, impacting curricular support. During faculty forums, participants noted that some departments now rely heavily on adjunct instructors, with only one or two tenure-track faculty members in place (CFR 3.1).



To address faculty sufficiency, Redlands has implemented a structured governance process for reviewing faculty hiring requests. Each academic unit submits requests for new or replacement tenure-track positions to curriculum committees, which then forward recommendations to the Committee on Academic Planning and Standards (CAPS). CAPS ranks these requests and submits them to the provost, who collaborates with the Deans to make final decisions based on funding availability, student-to-faculty ratios, general education needs, and strategic program development.

In 2023-24, this process led to the approval of ten faculty positions—three tenure-track hires and seven visiting faculty appointments. Currently, five faculty searches are underway, and for the 2025-26 academic year, the provost is evaluating 14 position requests.

Woodbury has faced similar enrollment declines and faculty reductions. In the 2023-24 academic year, nine full-time faculty members either retired or resigned, and two additional positions were eliminated. However, Woodbury believes its current faculty levels are sufficient to meet student needs. Moving forward, Woodbury plans to adopt a process similar to Redlands' for evaluating new faculty hires.

While the Redland process is well-defined, challenges remain (CFR 3.1). Some deans reported that faculty committees submit hiring requests without prior consultation, limiting opportunities to align these requests with strategic priorities and enrollment trends. Additionally, faculty expressed frustration that the recommendations are not always followed. While it was clear that Redlands has worked to enhance its process for the approval of new and replacement faculty lines, the institution could benefit from enhanced communication and more robust collaboration between the senior academic leaders and the faculty to ensure the institution “employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in scale, professional qualifications, and background to achieve the institution’s educational and student success objectives” (CFR 3.1).

#### F. Funding for Woodbury operations during integration

As University of Redlands and Woodbury University execute their merger transition, Redlands is funding a \$10 million budget for the transition utilizing their existing line of credit (LOC) and an existing equipment lease. Debt service coverage ratio was a previous issue for Woodbury, but the institution is expected to be within the 1.0 to 1.1 range based solely on Woodbury financials for the current fiscal year (2024-25). This is a narrow margin to satisfy creditors, so Redlands is agreeing to contribute funds to meet debt service should that be necessary. During the transition, Redlands will maintain \$30 million as liquid reserve which is consistent with requirements of their lines of credit to secure Woodbury debt refinancing.

Woodbury had a \$22 million loan prior to the merger. Coinciding with the merger, the loan was continued at the same attractive rate with the assistance of the University of Redlands. Woodbury still remains the primary party on the loan, with the loan secured by real assets and property of Woodbury, but the loan also includes a Redlands unsecured guaranty to the bank of \$30 million. The guaranty has not diminished the reserves of the University of Redlands. Additionally, the merger has made Redlands the sole member of its corporate organization. Woodbury has continued to make its debt service payments as part of its fiscal budget. (CFR 3.5).

Woodbury has also agreed to implement a number of operational revisions which should result in reduced operating expenses. The shared services arrangement with Redlands will move some operating expenses to Redlands sparing Woodbury from fiscal responsibility in these areas, but also achieving savings that the institutions believe will benefit both institutions. Both institutions have already begun consolidating operating budgets as a single institution – the University of Redlands. The reduction of non-faculty staffing as well as sharing of faculty and programs between the two institutions will help

during the transition to reduce Woodbury fiscal need, while broadening the programmatic reach of Redlands.

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University have organized a shared services agreement to identify services or expenses that could be consolidated for savings. Administration estimated first year savings from the shared services and enhance procurement practices as approximately \$785K. The institution forecasts that future savings could exceed \$1.1 million per year. The shared services arrangement has also facilitated the creation of a centralized procurement office. Administration management of procurement for services and contracts has also contributed to expenditure reductions.

In July 2023 and again in February 2025, Woodbury University was informed by the US Department of Education (US ED) that the institution was being placed on provisional certification. This decision was prompted following US ED review of Woodbury University financial balance sheets and determination that the institution had insufficient assets to meet an acid test review of its financial statements. The US ED has offered the institution a provisional certification alternative, which could have implications for Woodbury University, and because of the merger, potential financial impacts for University of Redlands. The provisional certification alternative proposed by the US ED would require Woodbury University to provide \$1.2 million in “financial protection” to the US ED. This amount equates to approximately 10% of the federal student aid funds received by Woodbury University in FY22. The university would also be required to make any disbursements to students and parents and pay any credits before requesting disbursements from the US ED in conformance with Heightened Cash Monitoring 1 Payment Methods (HCM1) of the Higher Education Act.

The implication with both these requirements is to increase the stress on available finances, and to wit, liquidity of funds. Woodbury University administration reported that it provided \$1.5 million to the US ED as surety. Woodbury University has also initiated an appeal of the determination. The institutions indicated that communication exchanges with the US ED through March 2025, suggested optimism of agency reconsideration. Until the provisional certification status is lifted, an area of attention for the institution would be maintaining sufficient financial funds to support the timing of federal student aid payments to students before any reimbursements from US ED to the institution. Given the levels of available reserves (approximately \$15 million), management of reserves is critical.

#### **G. Faculty-led review process to address academic program quality, viability, and staffing**

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University have begun to implement a faculty-led process to guide various academic programs on quality, viability, and faculty staffing needs during their institutional integration. In alignment with WSCUC Standards 2 and 3, the institutions have started to establish inclusive and transparent governance structures to evaluate all academic programs at each institution, in particular those programs that overlap in curricular content and/or degrees.

#### ***Faculty-Led Governance***

Faculty-led groups are playing a central role in the integration process, drawing on lessons learned from previous mergers of the University of Redlands with the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) and Presidio Graduate School. This historical perspective will help inform both the structure and strategy of current efforts, emphasizing intentional design and avoidance of any past missteps.

In alignment with CFR 3.10, the University of Redlands and Woodbury University are engaging faculty in leading the academic integration process, including aligning degree requirements, academic policies,

and faculty evaluation protocols across the merged institution. Highlights of the faculty governance bodies currently engaged in the process include:

- The Committee on Academic Planning and Standards (CAPS), working closely with the Educational Planning and Curriculum Committee to review and align academic policies, programs, and standards across institutions.
- The Personnel Policies Committee (PPC), in collaboration with Woodbury's leadership, overseeing the integration of Faculty Handbook sections related to appointment types, faculty evaluation, and shared governance norms.
- The Business Curriculum Working Group, comprising four subgroups, which met throughout fall 2024 to identify curricular synergies and distinctions, with the goal of developing integrated undergraduate and graduate business programs.

Another prime example of this faculty-led process in action was the work surrounding Woodbury's School of Architecture, a signature program with NAAB accreditation and a strong industry reputation. The school's faculty, supported by institutional research offices, conducted a review of five years of enrollment data, graduate placement outcomes, and studio capacity. It is noted that shared governance has been an ongoing project since fall 2023, with town halls, internal surveys, and the establishment of the Shared Governance Task Force, which includes university leadership and is also being facilitated by an external consultant.

While some groups are primarily focused on policy and curriculum alignment, the integration teams are also being encouraged to incorporate assessment data and program review findings into their planning. Academic leaders are continuing to explore ways to preserve tenure lines, and ensure fair treatment of non-tenure-track faculty through continuity agreements and joint professional development funds

where possible. It is important that all recommendations from these groups be vetted through faculty governance channels, and be formally reviewed by the respective Faculty Senates and academic leadership, and be consistent with published governance documents and the Redlands and Woodbury Faculty Handbooks.

### *Staffing, Viability and Faculty Engagement*

A multi-year approach to the integration process will allow faculty leadership to play a key role in ensuring that academic quality, mission fit, and sustainable staffing are considered throughout. In addressing staffing during this approach, faculty input has been sought to ensure continuity of instruction, academic advising, and student support. Efforts have been made to prioritize full-time faculty engagement, consider tenure and rank implications, and support professional development in anticipation of revised curricula and delivery models. Continued engagement of faculty in implementing program changes, staffing, monitoring student outcomes, and sustaining accreditation standards will be vital as the merger moves from planning to execution.

In compliance with CFR 4.6, the institutions are beginning to embed evidence-informed practices into their merger planning. Some joint academic teams are using program review findings, assessment data, and institutional research to inform curriculum design, staffing models, and student success initiatives. For instance, the media and design curriculum working group is preparing to launch in Spring 2025, Redlands' Studio Arts and Media & Communication programs, and Woodbury's Media, Culture & Design programs, with the engagement of faculty from both institutions. It is important that any curricular collaborations and integration planning recommended by the joint faculty for Media and Design programs involve comparative analysis of student learning outcomes, course sequencing, and graduation rates across both institutions (CFRs 2.3, 2.9, and 2.10).

Faculty also play a key role in reviewing instructional staffing and viability issues, particularly where duplication or structural changes might arise. A thorough consultation process may consider including mechanisms such as college-wide forums, unit-level retreats, faculty-led surveys, and staffing projections.

The review team recommends that the institutions continue to strengthen and align assessment and program review processes across the merged academic structure, with particular attention to staffing and integrating co-curricular assessment, ensuring consistency of learning outcomes assessment across disciplines, and using program review findings to inform resource allocation, viability, and strategic priorities (CFRs 2.4, 2.9, 2.14, and 4.6). Cross-institutional faculty workgroups may allow for peer-to-peer dialogue, transparent deliberation, and the development of criteria to guide program continuation, consolidation, or phase-out. These governance mechanisms must maintain regular communication with academic leadership and ensure that recommendations reflect both institutional priorities and discipline-specific expertise.

Overall, the institutions must continue to foster a transparent and consultative approach to academic decision-making during this transitional period. Continued attention to open communication, timely faculty consultation, and student impact will be essential in all stages of academic integration, particularly as the institutions move toward implementation of merged curricula and shared academic policies (CFRs 1.7, 2.5, and 2.9).

#### H. Shared services agreement during integration

As part of the proposed merger, Woodbury University and the University of Redlands entered into a shared services agreement to facilitate future integration and manage associated costs. This agreement

outlines specific integration actions and objectives for each functional area, to be completed within 100 days, 200 days, and one year after the legal merger.

To track progress, the University of Redlands' Merger Integration Director developed a comprehensive 50-page chart detailing anticipated actions, deadlines, dependencies, and required resources. This plan is regularly updated and reviewed monthly by a collaborative team of divisional leaders from both institutions, including the President, chief academic officers, and chief financial officers.

Key integration achievements to date include:

- Redlands' Audit and Risk Management Committee serves as Woodbury's audit committee.
- The 100-day integration plan has been completed, and the 200-day and one-year plans are actively monitored.
- Woodbury employees have successfully transitioned to the University of Redlands' human resources systems.
- The Offices of Global Education and International Students and Scholars have been integrated.
- Redlands' reporting lines have been established for employees based at Woodbury.
- Woodbury's leadership now serve on the University of Redlands' President's Cabinet.
- Woodbury's lender compliance reporting is now integrated with Redlands' Finance team.
- The University of Redlands President's direct reports visit the Woodbury campus weekly, with the President visiting at least once a month.
- Woodbury is now insured through Redlands, resulting in significant cost savings.
- Procurement at Redlands is now sourcing for both institutions, developing policies and best practices for spending management, leading to the elimination of duplicate costs.



The shared services agreement has generated substantial savings, including \$785K in FY25 and a projected \$1.2M in FY26. These efforts have contributed to Woodbury achieving a balanced budget for FY25 and a projected surplus for FY26 (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5).

Evidence from the report and recent site visits suggests that the shared services agreement has been effective in conserving resources, with the integration proceeding as planned. Conversations with campus leaders, faculty, and staff revealed that while the integration of core services has been successful in some areas, challenges remain in others. For example, the integration of information technology has gone smoothly, with the successful rollout of the learning management system being a key milestone. However, the integration of human resources processes has faced challenges.

The University of Redlands indicated they are actively addressing these integration challenges. Overall, it was evident that both institutions are committed to ensuring compliance with CFR 3.6, which mandates the provision of adequate resources—physical, technological, informational, and other types—to support the work of faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

#### I. [Woodbury University teach-out plans and resources in the event of delays in integration](#)

Woodbury University submitted an acceptable teach-out plan that was formulated in spring 2024 and contained a thorough discussion of the circumstances that led to the proposed merger with the University of Redlands. The plan provided data on the numbers of students enrolled as of spring 2024 who were in each major at Woodbury University as well as information about their class levels and expected completion dates. As of spring 2024, the total headcount enrollment of Woodbury University was 856.

The teach-out plan also contained information about the number of faculty including adjuncts (96) and full-time (58), the number of staff (99), and the number of administrators (12), for a total employee count of 265.

Because the teach-out plan was written in spring 2024 prior to WSCUC approval of the change of control to the University of Redlands, the plan specified communications, transfer institutions, and processes in the event that the change of control was not approved. The change of control to the University of Redlands was approved by WSCUC in April 2024 (see WSCUC Commission Action Letter dated April 24, 2024).

#### J. Student support areas with high demand, particularly for Woodbury neurodivergent students

Woodbury University's Office of Disabilities and Accessibility Services works to support their neurodivergent students in a variety of ways. They have found that some of their programs have more students who need support than others. To address this, they created their Student Assistants for Success Program. This program is an embedded peer model in which the student assistants receive training that is focused on assisting neurodiverse learners. They have targeted foundational courses for this intervention in order to support students early in their college career.

The Office of Disability and Accessibility Services has also partnered with other offices to serve this student population. For example, they have partnered with the Career Services office to provide programming specifically for students with disabilities. It is entitled Career Services for Students with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers, Building Careers. There is also 1:1 career coaching offered. There has also been increased collaboration with the academic advising team and tutoring support services. They have seen success in encouraging students with disabilities to seek Writing Center and Tutoring Center

appointments. Finally, there has been increased collaboration with Student Affairs around providing counseling and general well-being support and programming.

In the student forum, there were no concerns raised by students regarding support for those who are neurodivergent. In general, Woodbury University faculty and staff seem to be committed to supporting their students. The institutional report describes the efforts summarized above, but doesn't include any assessment for the effectiveness of these interventions. As they move forward, we encourage Woodbury to assess how successful their variety of interventions have been (CFR 2.14).

#### K. [Embed assessment and program review into the institutional culture](#)

Woodbury and Redlands are actively working to deepen a culture of continuous improvement through systematic assessment and program review, even during the structural complexities of institutional merger. The merging institutions have made progress in embedding assessment and program review into their institutional cultures. Faculty and academic leaders appear to embrace a shared commitment to continuous improvement by aligning learning outcomes, integrating assessment results into strategic and curricular planning, and fostering a culture of evidence-informed decision-making (CFRs 2.7, 2.9, 3.10, and 4.5).

Since the announcement of the merger in spring 2024, joint working groups composed of faculty, assessment coordinators, and institutional research staff have convened to align learning outcomes, assessment rubrics, and review timelines across academic programs. These efforts aim to ensure continuity and comparability of academic quality across the merged institution, and to sustain

compliance with CFRs 2.6 and 4.1–4.3, which call for meaningful use of assessment results for improvement and resource planning.

Faculty and academic leaders spoke consistently with the review team about a growing sense of ownership over assessment, noting that the integration process has presented an opportunity to make assessment a key foundation in all of the academic programs. The integration process needs to utilize data-informed analysis, including program enrollment history, graduation and retention rates, labor market demand, and faculty workload. Departments must be encouraged to submit self-assessments, and deans to facilitate structured conversations on the strategic alignment of academic offerings with the integrated institution's mission and vision.

In late 2024 both Redlands and Woodbury convened integration assessment retreats to examine data on student achievement, retention, and course-level outcomes. The resulting action items were shared with academic departments and incorporated into some program revision plans. The institutions have begun to show progress, and continue to:

- Implement faculty-led assessment committees in each academic unit to guide the use of student learning data;
- Integrate program review findings into budgeting and strategic planning at both the school and university levels;
- Provide training and peer consultation through Assessment Institutes and Learning Outcome roundtables;
- Develop shared tools for curriculum mapping and outcome tracking using platforms such as Watermark.

- Encourage reflection and use of assessment data in faculty retreat discussions, new program proposals, and course redesigns.

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University are demonstrating good initial progress in their intentional and collaborative efforts to embed assessment and program review into the fabric of a new institutional culture. The work underway by faculty leadership, integrated planning structures, and alignment of assessment practices across both institutions demonstrated a shared commitment to continuous improvement, student learning, and academic quality—particularly during a period of organizational transformation. While further coordination will be required as integration deepens, the groundwork laid by joint faculty committees and institutional research teams reflects a strong foundation for meaningful assessment practices within the unified institution (CFR 2.9).

#### L. Create and sustain regular communication between campus and governing board

Communication has been a focal point in addressing concerns raised in previous WSCUC reviews (CFRs 1.3 and 1.7). The institutions have focused on establishing effective communication strategies to ensure transparency, engagement, and trust among their various stakeholders, particularly regarding the merger process. Regular updates from the President’s Office, President Open Office hours, and Town Hall meetings have been implemented to continuously inform the community about ongoing institutional changes.

The review team reviewed the following types of evidence of communication efforts:

- Institutional updates and leadership communications to faculty and staff
- University-wide town hall recordings and faculty senate minutes
- Communications regarding the Woodbury integration and shared services model
- Feedback from faculty and staff regarding communication effectiveness
- Institutional survey data on internal communication effectiveness

Key communication improvements include:

- Monthly university-wide updates on the merger and institutional operations.
- Dedicated leadership visits to the Woodbury campus to hold open-office hours for faculty and staff feedback.
- Faculty Senate and governance body participation in discussions on academic affairs and institutional policies.
- Enhanced use of digital platforms, including SharePoint and Teams, to provide a centralized repository for institutional updates and documents.

The University of Redlands Staff Assembly (URSA) has played a pivotal role in facilitating communication between leadership and staff, organizing events and forums where employees can voice concerns and receive updates on key university initiatives (CFR 1.7).

Despite these improvements, some concerns were voiced to the review team regarding communication gaps in the decision-making process, particularly related to faculty hiring, program transitions, and operational restructuring. It was clear that leaders from both institutions recognized there were areas for continued improvement and, despite best efforts, communication did not always reach every constituent. The leaders indicated they are committed to continued communications in as robust a manner as possible and to address gaps when brought to their attention (CFR 1.7).

The University of Redlands Board of Trustees has demonstrated strategic engagement throughout the merger process with Woodbury University. They reported being actively and thoughtfully engaged by the President and were clearly knowledgeable about the strategic, operational, and community relations progress made to date. Board members indicated they are diligently engaged in upholding financial integrity and firmly committed to the long-term success and sustainability of both institutions (CFR 3.7).

### SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE

The team did not identify any additional issues requiring investigation.

### SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW

The University of Redlands and Woodbury University are to be commended for:

1. A proactive and mission-driven approach to pursue a strategic merger to ensure long-term institutional sustainability.
2. Progress made in integrating key operations and processes that foster greater institutional alignment and financial efficiency.
3. Demonstrating a strong commitment to academic assessment as a means of ensuring continuous improvement and student success.

The team recommends that University of Redlands and Woodbury University:

1. Adopt a realistic and data-driven strategic enrollment plan that results in improved reserves, ensures sufficient liquidity, and provides for financial sustainability. (CFR 3.4)
2. Continue identifying areas for operational efficiencies. (CFR 3.4)
3. Implement mechanisms that foster a shared culture grounded in mission alignment, inclusive communication, and mutual respect across merging institutions. (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, and 1.7)
4. Provide clear, transparent, and timely communication with regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback. (CFR 1.7)
5. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to assess and improve faculty morale and sufficiency. (CFR 3.2)
6. Ensure that student support services are comprehensive, accessible, and aligned with the diverse needs of its student population, especially during this period of institutional merger. (CFRs 2.13 and 2.14)