

## The Mission of Woolf

Woolf exists to promote academic excellence, broaden access to higher education, and guard values that are humane, democratic, and international. Above all, Woolf values freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry, and freedom of expression.

Woolf is committed to increasing access to high-quality higher education by connecting students and quality academics from across the world.

Through Woolf's world-class software platform and programs, students gain exposure to new ideas, new ways of understanding, and new ways of learning. By uniting exceptional faculty with energized and galvanized students, Woolf is able to build an outstanding academic community leading to journeys of intellectual transformation. From this, we hope that students will share their academic, intellectual, and other talents in serving the communities in which they live.

Woolf is guided by the following tenets:

**Background.** Talent may be evenly distributed, but opportunity is not – we are working to widen the horizon of opportunity by connecting students and teachers from across the world.

**Education.** Woolf prioritizes an education that will serve its students both in the short and the long term. Woolf seeks to provide a relevant, personalized education. In all fields, Woolf aims to instill values of curiosity, intellectual discipline, and clarity of expression.

**Research.** Woolf prioritizes research-driven teaching that uses the latest academic scholarship, and Woolf encourages its students to engage in groundbreaking research.

**Technology.** To the extent that existing or new technologies can improve the educational outcomes for students, widen access to education at Woolf, improve the career experience of academics, better secure credible governance, lower the costs of institutional management, and generally support the mission of Woolf – these are embraced.

**Excellence.** In all things, Woolf values excellence and measures itself against the highest international standards. Woolf seeks to raise those standards further.

## The Market of Woolf

Higher education continues to be increasingly important as labor markets shift towards higher skill requirements, but the cost of higher education has risen faster than inflation. The global number of students seeking post-secondary education is expected to grow from 207 million

to more than 350 million over the next ten years.<sup>1</sup> To put that growth into perspective, that's 25,000 more students every day for the next decade.

If we are going to make high-quality higher education accessible to the next generation of students, then we need to develop and administer excellent, affordable educational opportunities. As employment opportunities continue to evolve, we will need thousands of new courses to train millions of new students for jobs that don't exist.

Starting high-quality, innovative new degree programs is expensive and difficult. The organizational quality assurance checks are complex and administratively costly; from proposing new degrees to checking the quality of their curriculum to monitoring their compliance and academic effectiveness – administering quality courses has too often led to institutional bloat and rising administrative costs paid directly by students.

At Woolf, we use technology to reduce administrative costs without cutting corners on quality assurance. Woolf's unique, proprietary software is designed to provide our quality assurance committee, faculty, students, and regulators with confidence in every program and its learning outcomes. Woolf continues to develop and enhance its software platform, which can connect students from all over the country, and indeed the world, with highly qualified faculty through courses that have educational outcomes that are designed around competencies, skills, and knowledge. Woolf prioritizes an education that will serve its students both in the short and the long term, developing foundational academic skills, first-principles reasoning, and actionable skills with employment-focused outcomes.

These objective and actionable learning outcomes increase student expertise and preparedness as they enter the workplace after graduation.

Woolf's technology allows us to serve better those unrepresented students that, for reasons of geography or personal circumstances, are not practicable to travel to and from institutions several times a week. Rural students face transportation challenges. Employed students face scheduling challenges. Many more have responsibilities to dependents which makes traditional learning inaccessible to them. Other Americans are engaged in military service overseas or live as expatriates for work. All of those populations are frequently left behind by traditional institutions. Online programs tend to rely heavily on pre-recorded lectures and quizzes and lack a personalized experience. For students seeking an institution that can meet them in their current circumstances, in the time and manner they need, Woolf offers a more flexible model without sacrificing the personalized cohorts of instruction that support and encourage student success.

The United States continues to be a leader in educating the world, promoting values of free speech, free inquiry, and rational deliberation. Nevertheless, domestic growth in student numbers at traditional institutions is relatively flat, between 0 and 3%. With 54,664 Ph.D. graduates per year in the United States, most face a challenging job market if they wish to pursue an academic career teaching at a traditional institution.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, more than half

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<sup>1</sup> Total student population enrolled in post-secondary education was 100m in 2000 and 207m 2014 – [UNESCO](#). Global post-secondary enrollment is expected to increase by 2030 to 377.4m (Calderon - moderate pathway) or 350m (IIASA SSP2 - moderate pathway) – [Calderon 1](#), [Calderon 2](#), [IIASA](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/builder/sed>

of all academics work on adjunct contracts.<sup>3</sup> Using Woolf software provides a unique opportunity to lower the costs of delivering education in small class sizes (which require more academic teachers), ensuring quality in high-growth non-traditional class settings, and reaching an international audience – where demand growth is very high as the newly middle-class population of many countries rapidly grows.

Woolf software benchmarks, enforces, and monitors quality assurance standards at the level of course lessons, degree programs, and institutional practices and policies. This requires much more than a traditional learning management system, embracing a system of segregated quality assurance checks and auditable record keeping.

Woolf's first offering is a Master in Business Administration with a flexible curriculum designed to ensure students can meet the current and future demands of the business world. MBA degrees are a flexible and valued postgraduate degree, helping graduates to:

- Accelerate their careers
- Provide the tools and skills to launch their own business
- Build a business network
- Pursue a job in a new/different career

Woolf's platform connects qualified faculty with energized students and has the potential to lead to exceptional opportunities and outcomes for students.

## **Wisconsin Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats** **SWOT requirement**

### **Strengths**

- Woolf offers unparalleled access to education through a proprietary platform that offers accessibility, flexibility, and choice in education.
  - We evaluate our courses after each cohort through surveys and endeavor to use committees to review and improve the quality of our platform and offerings at least bi-annually.
- Woolf can directly connect qualified instructors with students in a platform that measures key compliance, regulatory, and quality assurance metrics to ensure quality curriculum and learning outcomes. This is above and beyond what would be found in any traditional “on-campus” classroom or program or any existing learning management system.
- Woolf's software platform reduces the cost of administrative management, particularly related to quality assurance; the software facilitates small cohort-based classes and instructional designs that focus on real-world applications. The result is an exceptional educational opportunity at an affordable cost due to the reduced administrative overhead.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/10112018%20Data%20Snapshot%20Tenure.pdf>

- Woolf's platform allows for key metric measurement, key compliance, and legal oversight and ensures an educational outcome that is stronger than traditional classrooms.

## **Weaknesses**

- Woolf is young, and while our educational model is tried and tested, and our faculty members are highly regarded, Woolf is new in the United States. We do not have the track record of many traditional brick-and-mortar institutions.
- Innovation is not always well-received, and we need to show that we are differentiated beneficially.
- Woolf does not currently advertise or market their programs widely.

## **Opportunities**

High-quality higher education costs have risen faster than inflation for decades. Core administrative processes for higher educational institutions have not been fully digitized, and these administrative costs are ultimately passed on to students and instructors. There is an opportunity for technology to be used to support modern teaching methods and outcomes aligned with student needs while improving institutional effectiveness and quality.

- Woolf uses technology to increase accessibility to high-quality education offered to students grouped in cohorts. We provide students flexibility in education and instruction that ensures their maximum opportunity for engagement.
- By connecting qualified faculty directly to cohorts of students, we help to ensure students receive high-quality instruction, social accountability, and collegiate attention, which is different from many online colleges.
- By empowering students to engage in courses with specific learning outcomes for competencies, knowledge, and skills, we believe we are enabling them to develop both foundational academic skills and real-world skills to maximize their educational opportunities

We believe that only when instructors and students engage in an environment that promotes and protects academic excellence, can students fully realize the benefits of earning an accredited degree – and we believe Woolf can help make that goal a reality.

## **Threats**

As a small but growing institution, Woolf has many growth opportunities, but it remains paramount that Woolf stays focused on optimizing its core administrative and learning functions, enhancing our processes and technology platform to support the highest quality learning opportunities for students, especially those which reflect the latest realities of academic research, employment requirements, or emerging technologies. Woolf must remain diligent and focused on student outcomes, so as not to be left with programs that are not interesting or useful to students.

Woolf's overall educational offering must meet student needs. As the market becomes noisier with confusing offerings (such as one-week or extremely low commitment "MBAs," or

confusingly named certificate programs, etc.), Woolf must ensure that students understand the substantial difference between those programs and a Woolf degree, with its substantial workload and learning outcomes. Our success is dependent on the student's success, and Woolf will need to continue to invest in the quality of its programs.

## **The Future Vision of Woolf**

Woolf is committed to making high-quality higher education available to students and ensuring the long-term value of that education for students. Our vision is to support thoughtful innovation for our academics and students in Wisconsin and beyond; Woolf does this by supporting the creation of innovative, high-quality programs that prepare students for a changing world.

Our approach is unique: we focus on the root causes of increasing costs for students and delays in curriculum development; we identified university administration as a major factor in rising costs and slower cycle times for curriculum updates. Relying on insights from academic leaders from top-ranking universities, we built software to help automate administrative processes in a university, improve cycle times on key approvals, and track ongoing compliance – without cutting corners on quality assurance.

The Woolf software platform focuses specifically on quality assurance and accreditation compliance management, aiming to improve the economic efficiency of university administration in this area, while increasing the quality of education. Consequently, quality is in our organizational DNA. The result is threefold:

1. High-quality programs
2. Low costs to students
3. Fast cycles of curriculum innovation and approval

We believe this valuable combination of quality, cost, and innovation will serve students in Wisconsin well. Indeed, Wisconsin is a natural home for high-quality innovation, not only because it is home to some of the world's great universities, but also because of its ongoing focus on innovation and entrepreneurship through such fora as the Wisconsin Technology Council and the Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest. Woolf's students gain exposure to the innovation economy through programs like our MBA, where they can experience starting a company or working in a start-up environment.

It is critical to our mission that students receive the recognition they deserve for their achievements when completing a Woolf course, and regulatory recognition is at the foundation of that recognition.

Over the next five years, it is our aim to grow and expand Woolf offerings in the State of Wisconsin, and to ensure those offerings are compliant with quality standards in the State of Wisconsin, as well as in other states and countries.

We will continue to seek to provide social support for students by organizing social units of academic encouragement within the Woolf ecosystem, including student cohorts, composed of research clusters, and interdisciplinary academic social groups – what we call “colleges.” These provide support and academic encouragement for students while enabling diverse options, competition for quality, and loyalty for their members. Naturally, the quality assurance standards are applied equally to all Woolf courses and members.

Woolf’s focus on technological tools for quality assurance and administrative efficiency has led to lower fixed operating costs than traditional institutions, and lower marginal costs for supporting faculty and student growth. These benefits are directly passed on to students. In addition to financially sustainable operating margins, Woolf has been the beneficiary of generous grants, and with respect to the technology it employs to maintain quality assurance, has raised over \$7m in venture capital from leading investors in Silicon Valley.

As an organization founded by academics, with quality assurance at the center of its operations, Woolf values excellence and measures itself against the highest standards. Woolf seeks to raise those standards further. Most importantly, Woolf prioritizes an education that will serve its students in the short term (with employment opportunities) and the long term (with decision-making grounded in ethical values and first principles). Woolf seeks to provide a high-quality, flexible education supporting innovation combined with traditional forms of learning. In all fields, Woolf seeks to instill values of curiosity, intellectual discipline, and clarity of expression.

If Woolf is successful in Wisconsin, then the institution may also provide a collaborative example to other institutions both within the state and internationally.

**SPS 411.03 Standards for distance learning programs.** A private, postsecondary school delivering distance learning programs shall meet the following standards:

- (1) The program shall be consistent with the school's mission.

Woolf's program's are consistent with Woolf's mission to promote academic excellence, broaden access to higher education, and guard values that are humane, democratic, and international. The program's focuses on the real-world application of concepts utilizing technology and quality instruction.

- (2) The learning outcomes promised to students shall be achievable with the technology used.

The learning outcomes for courses are designed to be achievable and tied to the technology used. As a distance education higher education institution, technology is a core tenet of our mission and what we believe makes education possible. Woolf uses existing and new technologies to improve educational outcomes for students and designs our courses and curriculum to meet the needs of students through the use of technology.

- (3) The school shall use appropriate and effective instructional materials and teaching methods to ensure active student involvement.

Woolf prioritizes research-driven teaching, and using the latest technology is part of our mission. All courses and programs are designed around modern instructional materials and teaching methods. Woolf continually uses methods to evaluate and update all courses to ensure that students are actively involved and have materials, learning outcomes, and results that align with a meaningful educational outcome. Woolf promotes the use of open educational resources to encourage pedagogical innovation and to improve affordability for students. All courses contain all required learning materials by default. However, where courses require the purchase of outside texts, this is explicitly marked on the course profile and visible to students before enrollment.

- (4) The program shall be developed by qualified faculty, administrators and technologists.

Woolf outlines all faculty requirements and requirements for instructional content publicly online, and these standards are stated within the academic and programmatic handbooks. All personnel are well-qualified and have verified and proven credentials (Woolf conducts identity verifications and educational background confirmations on all staff members). An Academic Board of highly qualified faculty approves the curriculum. Each faculty member or other teaching staff member is also provided instruction on teaching utilizing the Woolf platform.

- (5) Accepted students shall have the background, knowledge and technical skills needed to complete the program.

Woolf's website publicly outlines all admission and academic requirements for each program. Students must have a specific academic background and the requisite skills to be admitted into the program. In addition, all students have their identity and educational background confirmed. Woolf takes the success of its students seriously and ensures that we only accept students capable of completing the rigorous program.

- (6)** The school shall provide for assessment and documentation of student achievement during the program and at its completion.

The Woolf platform documents student assessments, outcomes, and grades to monitor student progress and performance. Students can track their progress for any program in real-time on the Woolf platform. Upon completing the program, students can access their full course transcript.

- (7)** The school shall ensure appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Woolf's courses are designed specifically with learning materials that are openly available and widely sourced. All courses have a published reading list and trained faculty to ensure that adequate learning outcomes outlined in the course are met.

Additionally, Woolf features an online library all students can access, which may supplement course readings.

- (8)** The school shall provide adequate support services for students.

Students have a myriad of support options available to them within the program. Each student is assigned a faculty advisor, who serves as the first point of contact for non-technical academic issues related to the student's progress. For technical issues, there is a help website and support email staffed by designated support members who can help resolve any technical issues a student may have.

Finally, all course-specific information is published within the platform, which allows students to understand which learning resources are available and required to complete each course.

- (9)** The school shall demonstrate it has adequate financial resources to support the program.

Woolf has provided financial documents to showcase our viability to support current and future students. We take our finances seriously, as inadequate resources would jeopardize our mission and educational goals. Please review the documents to understand a more complete picture of our financial health, and we welcome any questions about our financial viability.



- (10) The school shall demonstrate the educational effectiveness of its programs including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, student completion, and student and employer satisfaction, where relevant.

Woolf has created a committee responsible for monitoring and improving quality across the institution, the Quality Assurance, Enhancement, and Technology Alignment Committee (QAETAC).

QAETAC is tasked with promoting a culture of excellence that reflects the operation of Woolf's policies in line with the Woolf Mission Statement and is responsible for ensuring that these policies will lead to higher quality outcomes for students and faculty members across all levels of the institution. QAETAC reviews student feedback gathered through ongoing monitoring and periodic surveys elicited at the end of all courses. QAETAC also elicits faculty feedback twice per year. Surveys provide both students and faculty members the opportunity to make recommendations beyond the survey questions.

Issues related to student learning outcomes, retention, program completion, or satisfaction are brought before the committee by means of surveys and the red flag procedure. The committee meets regularly and works continually to monitor and improve program effectiveness, and, most importantly, student outcomes.