1. Description

In the decade since Bentley University’s last NEASC reaccreditation, the institution has continued its tradition of innovation, development, and change. At the time of its last reaccreditation in 2002, Bentley had successfully positioned itself as *The Business School for the Information Age*. It leveraged new technologies by infusing information technology throughout the curriculum and by building a constellation of high technology teaching, learning, and research centers. The strategy also closely linked information technology and business to the arts and sciences. This phase successfully established a distinctive identity for Bentley that differentiated it from its traditional regional competitors and from other business schools.

A second phase of this strategy was launched in 2002 with the appointment of a new provost and two new deans. This change in academic structure to more closely resemble that of a university announced the institution’s intention to transform itself into a doctoral granting, business university. Intense efforts to attract leading researchers in key disciplines, along with significant financial support, dramatically enhanced the institution’s research capacity. With this foundation, Bentley successfully applied to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education in 2004 for authority to grant doctoral degrees in accounting and business. The doctoral programs accepted their first students in 2006. This strategy transformed Bentley from a business college into an emergent business university. Indeed, in 2008 the institution successfully petitioned the state to formally change its status to that of *university*. The legal change in status was at once the culmination of an evolution in Bentley’s mission and the beginning of a new phase in its development.

In 2007, Gloria Larson became Bentley’s seventh president. She immediately launched another strategic planning process and initiated a review of Bentley’s mission and vision. A steering committee of fourteen, that included administrators, senior faculty, and staff, drafted a mission statement and summary strategy and solicited feedback from six working groups and subgroups, that included forty additional faculty, administrators, and staff. This engaged process resulted in a strategic plan, entitled *Achieving the Business University: 2009-2013*. The plan reflected the substantial innovation, growth, and change that Bentley experienced over the prior two decades, and its inexorable trajectory as a business university.

The vision developed for Bentley at that time reflected its evolution from a narrower information age identity to its goal of becoming a university that *distinctively integrates business and the liberal arts; is internationally known for the quality and impact of its educational programs and research; and that is a leader in promoting ethical and socially responsible enterprise and the critical role of information and communication technology in achieving sustainable high performance*. This vision was translated into the mission statement:
Standard 1.

As a business university, BENTLEY UNIVERSITY’S mission is to create new knowledge within and across business and the arts and sciences and to educate creative, ethical, and socially responsible organizational leaders.

Under President Larson’s direction, the framework for the second stage of Bentley’s strategic plan, Achieving the Business University: 2013-2017, discussed further in Standard 2, has been developed to meet three important requirements. First, a perception existed among some stakeholders that the increased research focus was overshadowing Bentley’s educational mission rather than complementing or enhancing it. This led to a slight adjustment to the mission statement to highlight the importance of education at the university’s core:

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY’S mission is to educate creative, ethical, and socially responsible organizational leaders by creating and disseminating impactful knowledge within and across business and the arts & sciences.

Second, the vision for the university has been updated to accommodate recent achievements and to provide a rich picture of our aspirations for Bentley’s centennial year. By 2017, the university will be:

- Known nationally and internationally as a business-focused center of learning that operates in an ethical and socially engaged environment.
- Recognized for distinctively integrating business and arts & sciences to produce graduates respected for their professional and societal contributions throughout their lives.
- Identified for promoting principled and transformative enterprise through education and impactful research, building on its historical strengths in accountancy, business ethics and information technology.
- Recognized as an attractive partner for global centers of teaching and research excellence, and as highly sustainable in resources and scale.

Third, the updated formulation of the mission, vision, and strategic plan gives more attention to the need to separate high level strategic goals related to education, student life, research, resources, and positioning from tactical elements. By doing this, the updated 2013-2017 plan will provide more operational direction to support Bentley’s mission than its earlier iteration and it allows all employees to identify more easily the relationships between their individual contributions and the university’s mission and vision for 2017.

2. Appraisal

As the description section illustrates, Bentley University is a mission-driven institution. The current mission statement captures its core values and distinctive characteristics, notably the continued emphasis on teaching excellence, the pursuit of high quality and relevant scholarship, Bentley’s distinctive fusion of business and the arts and sciences, and a commitment to ethics and social responsibility, both in its curriculum and as an institution.

The mission continues to guide strategic and tactical choices made by university leaders, including the Board of Trustees, and Bentley’s programs are developed based on strategic objectives aligned with our mission, supported by faculty and staff expertise, and informed by clearly identified market needs. One example is the recently approved arts and science major in Sustainability Science that students can complete with a complementary
business studies major or minor. This program provides students with a rigorous background in the hard sciences while giving context to timely issues facing businesses in the emerging clean-energy sector.

The doctoral program resulted from a decision to enhance the institution’s international profile through research; it has already proven successful. Twelve students have graduated as of May 2012, with eleven accepting academic positions at such institutions as Northeastern University, Providence College, College of Charleston, Clark University, Suffolk University, and Florida International University. The twelfth student has accepted a position in industry.

Also mission-driven is the new eleven-month Bentley MBA program geared towards mid-career executives that enrolled its first students in 2012. The program engages business and arts and sciences faculty members and focuses on four themes of innovation, value, environments, and leadership.

Supported by resource commitments from the Board of Trustees enabling the university to focus on hiring research active, tenure-track faculty and reducing teaching loads for research oriented faculty, Bentley’s research productivity has increased steadily over the last decade. Full-time faculty members have produced over 2,000 scholarly works in the last three years, of which 391 were articles in international refereed journals. Several leading researchers have been added to the faculty in key disciplines, and the addition of the PhD program has fostered research. Bentley’s origins in accountancy underlie a particularly solid international reputation for research in auditing, control and governance. A 2010 study by Brigham Young and Utah State universities ranked two accountancy department researchers as top scholars in the last six, twelve, and twenty years. A strong indicator of Bentley’s growing global academic reputation came in 2011 with receipt of five-year European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) business accreditation by the European Foundation for Management Development. EQUIS accreditation provides elite international business recognition, with only 130 institutions in the world so accredited; Bentley is one of only two US schools with this distinction.

The university continues to seek and attract external funds for mission-related initiatives. With the assistance of three major gifts, Bentley established a Center for Women and Business (CWB) in 2011, a priority of President Gloria Larson and the Board. The CWB’s goal is to become a preeminent source of research and programming on women’s career issues. The center is led by Betsy Myers, formerly of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, a nationally known thinker and writer on organizational leadership. In December 2011, Bentley received a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The grant will provide $395,000 to build an endowment that will support the university’s Valente Center for the Arts and Sciences. It is extremely rare for an institution that focuses on professional education to receive a challenge grant from the NEH. As of September 2012, the university had already raised over $700,000 towards the $1.2 million in challenge funds required by 2016.

Bentley continues to incorporate ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility throughout its portfolio of programs, and is deeply committed to these as a core institutional value. An important example of this broad institutional commitment is the Bentley Alliance for Ethics & Social Responsibility (BAESR). Since it was founded in 2003, BAESR has become the intellectual locus on the Bentley campus of a wide range of initiatives broadly related to ethics, social responsibility and sustainability. This includes the Service Learning Center that engages hundreds of students in projects aimed at strengthening the community and intensifying their engagement with the subject matter of a specific course. Details on BAESR’s many other programs may be found in Standard 11 and throughout the self-study.
Standard 1.

Bentley’s board of trustees review and endorse the institution’s mission statement and strategic plans as appropriate, and the president and cabinet continually engage board members in discussions related to both. The 2009-2013 strategic plan was presented and discussed with the Board at its October 2009 and February 2010 meetings. As part of its February 2013 and May 2013 meetings, the president and cabinet will review and discuss the updated mission statement and attendant strategic elements with the trustees.

Although the mission and vision for Bentley articulated in the 2013-2017 strategic plan have been adjusted to reflect both the macro environment and the achievements over the last five years, they still reflect an explicit continuation of the direction set by President Larson in her inaugural address in 2007 that resulted in the 2009-2013 strategic plan. Consistent with her vision and approach, the recently updated plan involved an iterative cycle with the cabinet serving as the hub and conduit for discussions with the various university constituencies. This resulted in a formal overview document that the president presented in eight community presentations to faculty and staff in mid-September 2012. Although the updated strategic plan, mission, and vision are intended to represent a seamless enhancement of the prior plan, frequent conversations with all constituencies are important to avoid misinterpretation and to promote continued alignment. In the past, different versions of the mission statement, although not qualitatively different, appeared in some university publications causing confusion and making it more difficult for employees and students to understand and articulate the mission and vision in a consistent manner.

3. Projection

3.1. Community conversations

The profound and rapid transformation that has characterized Bentley over the last decade has meant that some constituencies have imperfectly understood the mission statement and full strategic aspirations of the university. The eight community conversations with staff and faculty begun in Fall 2012 will continue with other constituencies including students, alumni, corporate stakeholders, and advisory boards. **Timeline:** Fall 2012-Fall 2013: President Larson and the Cabinet.

3.2. University publications

All university publications will be consistent in their presentation of the university’s mission and vision statements. **Timeline:** Commencing from Fall 2012: Chief Marketing Officer.

3.3. Enhanced student engagement

To enhance student understanding of Bentley’s evolving mission and identity, the university will promote student awareness of the mission and particularly of its signature fusion of business and A&S in the First Year Seminar and across additional appropriate venues. **Timeline:** Commencing from Fall 2012: Dean of Student Affairs and Associate Dean of First Year Programs.
4. Institutional Effectiveness

Bentley University periodically reviews its mission and purpose as an integral part of its strategic planning process. In doing this, the university builds on its historic strengths while recognizing the dynamics of the higher education landscape and broader marketplace within which it operates. Not surprisingly, Bentley’s core values have remained consistent and they are fully reflected in values section of the strategic plan as well as in the Bentley Beliefs. These beliefs are recited at Convocation by the incoming freshman and are presented and discussed with the incoming graduate classes.

The values, mission, and purpose of the institution enhance the effectiveness of the university by informing its vision, guiding its planning and resource allocation, and directing the actions taken to achieve its operational goals at all levels. As stated earlier, shared ownership results through ongoing discussions among community members, including at divisional and departmental levels. The president’s mandate to the community was that employees’ work together with the cabinet and other university leaders to translate the high-level strategic objectives into division, department, and individual action plans, and through these efforts insure that the mission and purpose of the university is fulfilled.

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<th>Bentley University Values</th>
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<td><strong>Diversity:</strong> Appreciating diversity means that we work in an environment that embraces diversity of opinion and that is free from hostility and intolerance.</td>
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<td><strong>Integrity:</strong> Valuing integrity requires that we hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards. We hold that operating with integrity is essential for a successful professional and private life.</td>
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<td><strong>Responsibility:</strong> Being responsible demands that we listen, respond thoughtfully, and strive to create sustainable outcomes at all times.</td>
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<td><strong>Excellence:</strong> Our commitment to excellence ensures that we have a passion for continuous improvement, for delivering high-quality results, and for going beyond what is expected.</td>
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<td><strong>Courage:</strong> Having courage means that we continually seek new and innovative solutions and we are tolerant of the honest mistakes that are a natural consequence of these endeavors.</td>
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<td><strong>Teamwork:</strong> Our commitment to teamwork acknowledges the importance of collaboration. We are prepared to subordinate our personal interests to the broader interests of our community. We appreciate diversity and work to sustain and further enhance an environment that embraces diversity of opinion and that is free from hostility and intolerance</td>
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