

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

NAROPA UNIVERSITY
Boulder, Colorado

March 8-10, 2010

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The visit to Naropa University on March 8-10, 2010, was for continued accreditation at the baccalaureate and master's degree granting level.

B. Organizational Context

Naropa University received initial accreditation by the North Central Association in 1974. Several continuing accreditation reviews were received since then with the most recent being 2000. Since the continuing accreditation review in 2000, there was a focused visit in 2004 as a follow-up to the comprehensive visit and in 2007 a focused visit was conducted to address a request from Naropa for authorization to grant an additional degree. Within the past few years diligent work has been focused on the development of a self study report that has been distributed to the visiting team. Naropa University, a Buddhist inspired institution focused on providing contemplative higher education is in the continuing accreditation review cycle having submitted their *Self Study* and hosted the visiting team from the Higher Learning Commission.

Naropa offers eleven baccalaureate degrees, six certificates and thirteen master degrees to a student population of 428 full-time and 36 part-time undergraduates and 406 full-time and 186 part-time graduates.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

None

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

The HLC team visited the campus in Boulder, Colorado. While the administrative functions and much of the teaching takes place on the (central Boulder) Arapahoe degree site, the team also toured the two additional facilities known as the Paramita and Nalanda (referred to as campuses by Naropa) degree sites. The Paramita degree site is located in northeast Boulder and houses the Graduate School of Psychology. The Nalanda degree site located in east Boulder houses the performing and visual arts, and offices and events of the School of Extended Studies, Naropa community events, the Office of Marketing and Communication. All other programs take place at the Arapahoe degree site which includes classrooms, faculty and staff offices, large auditorium, performing arts center, meditation hall, book store, cafeteria, computer laboratory, student lounge and library. A part of the Arapahoe site is a residence hall located two blocks away.

The fact that the Naropa educational experience takes place at three locations is a challenge that creates financial, communication, as well as transportation obstacles that need to be met.

While all three degree sites are easily accessible via public transportation, the distance from each location creates challenges for the students as well as the faculty and staff .

E. Distance Education Reviewed

Naropa had utilized distance education in two modes. First, technology has been integrated into the on-campus experience with the formation of hybrid courses using options such as chat rooms, bulletin boards, and posting of lecture notes.

The second mode of distance education is supervised by the Office of Distance Education and technical support and tutorial services provided through a contract with Pearson eCollege. Currently, three low-residency graduate programs have incorporated the use of online learning technologies as well as the offering of a limited number of nondegree and noncredit courses. Each low residency program has between one third and one fourth of its credits in face to face instruction and the remainder on line. Naropa offers a combined total of around 40 courses through the eCollege format of which most are for three graduate programs, Contemplative Education, Transpersonal Counseling, and Transpersonal Psychology (including the Ecopsychology concentration) and Creative Writing.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

Executive, Administration and Staff

1. Board of Trustees (5)
2. Chair of the Board of Trustees
3. President
4. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
5. Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer
6. Vice President for Advancement
7. Senior Vice President for Finance and Business Administration
8. Vice President for Business and Finance (out-going)
9. Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
10. Executive Officer for Operations
11. Chief Administrative Officer
12. Dean of Students
13. Dean of Admissions
14. Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education
15. Director of Online Curriculum Development
16. Director of Human Resources
17. Director of Facilities
18. Library Director
19. Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Communications
20. Assistant Dean for Curriculum and Instruction
21. Assistant Dean for Program Development and Strategic Initiatives

22. Assistant Dean for Business and Academic Support
23. Assistant Director for Technical Services
24. Alumni Relations Officer
25. Career Services Coordinator
26. Director of Naropa Writing Center
27. Registrar
28. Financial Analyst
29. Director of Undergraduate Advising
30. Advisor (2)
31. Retention Coordinator
32. Senior Admissions Counselor
33. Self-Study Coordinator
34. Self-Study Research Assistant

Students

1. Student Open Forum (6)
2. Conversations with students (15)

Faculty

1. Open faculty meeting (21)

Staff

1. Open staff meeting (49)

Community

1. Open community meeting (6)

Committees and staff meetings

1. Self-Study Steering Committee (8)
2. Academic Affairs Team (7)
3. Academic Plan team (4)
4. Cauldron (8)
5. Chairs Council (10)
6. Graduate Chairs (4)
7. Graduate Curriculum Committee (6)
8. Faculty Affairs Committee (4)
9. Library and technology Committee and Technology Advisor Group (5)
10. University Budget Committee and Budget Review Committee (10)
11. Strategic Planning Team (7)
12. Expanded Enrollment Management Team (5)
13. Undergraduate Science Task Force (2)
14. Undergraduate Oversight Committee (10)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Academic Plan - Part I
Assessment Data before 2003
Assessment Data 2003-2004
Assessment Data 2005-2006
Assessment review tables 2007-2008 2009-07-21
Assessment review tables 2008-2009 2009-07-21
Academic Dept Comparative Resource Analysis Oct 2009
Major Strategic Directions for Academic Affairs
New Program Process 2009-4-22
Ranked to Adjunct credit production
Chairs Council Working Groups for Academic Plan
Fall 2008 Syllabi folder
Spring 2009 Syllabi folder
Extended Studies Comprehensive Business Plan
Extended Studies Fall 2008 Announcement
Extended Studies Revenue-Expense Multi-year Comparison
Prague Spring 2006 final income expense 7 05
Prague Enrollment Breakdown Data 2005-2007
Faculty Handbook Committee Minutes 10/14/2009
Faculty Development Diversity Announcement
Academic Plan - Part II Enrollment Management
Faculty Development Survey Spring 2007
Diversity brochure
Syllabus Instructions FA 09
Syllabus Instructions SP 10
Eduventures online summer program research proposal
Implementation of Strategic & Academic Plans by Academic Affairs
Intro to Oversight Committee-Minutes FIRST MEETING
Ranked Faculty 2009-2010
Ranked Faculty 2000-2001
Academic Support Program Summary Report Spring 2009
Adjunct faculty & Staff who teach 09-10 as of SP 10
Sigman Benally HLC NCA presentation
Stuart_Sigman_Address_to_New_Students_8_19_2008
Chairs Council Policy Work
Fac Dev Survey 2009
Gerontology CTO Analysis
Study-Abroad Risk Management Handbook (Sikkim 06)
Contemplative Education Publications
Course evaluation policy
GWS minor proposal as approved
Sunset Provisions
Extended Studies Resource-Exp Analysis (Multi-year)
Contract Templates (folder)
Pre-DSR Assessments
Course Catalog (2009-2010)

Diversity at Naropa University (2007)
Naropa University Program sheets: Environmental Studies & Peace Studies (BA)
Academic Affairs Budget Reduction Hypotheses
Faculty Policy Handbook (2006)
Faculty Handbook (2010) (partial approved)
2009-2010 IPEDS

ADMISSIONS

Admissions Strategic Plan 2008-2011
Ad Hoc Retention Report, part 1
Ad Hoc Retention Report, part 2
Retention-grad graduation data 1991-2007
Retention-undergrad by class
Graduate 1 year retention rates by department
Naropa University Undergraduate Education (Recruitment material 9/09)
Naropa Undergraduate Application
Fall 2009 New Undergraduate Student Statistics

ADVANCEMENT

2008-2009 Advancement Action Plan
2008-2010 Strategic Plan 08-09

LIBRARY

Library data 2009-01-21
Library Plan 2008-09
Archives_NU_retention_schedule
Library Plan 2005

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

HLC Financial Composite
Budget Process
Faculty Development budget
Ratios staff faculty students
2008 Naropa Univ audited financial stmt
2009 Naropa Univ audited financial stmt
Budget Reduction Initiative 8/3/2010 memo
Budget Reduction Initiative binder
Community Meeting Transcript
FAQs
Suggestions from the Naropa Community
President's remarks including the PowerPoint "Naropa University Budget Initiative
Budget Message from the President to the Naropa Community

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

Cont Pract Cmte Final Report SPR 2009

ComPractDaysp09
Interreligious Exploration Chronicle
MEDITATION INSTRUCTOR SURVEY RESULTS
Practice Day Schedule 3-6-07
Practice Day Speaker Chronicle
Boulder Contemplative Practice Spring 2010 Flyer
Meditation Instruction FA09

DISTANCE LEARNING

Dist Lng Student Evals Report
Best Practices in Online Contemplative Education
Dist Lng Classes Report
Online fac dev proposal
Approaches to designing online courses at NU
Analysis of Online Student Evaluations
Formalizing Online Council as a Faculty Committee: A Proposal Endorsed by Cauldron

DEPARTMENT SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS (DSRs)

2008 folder
2009 folder-in progress (see also DSR 5 Fall 2009 Assessment Mtg Rpt)
Diversity Learning Outcomes by Dept Rev12.23.09
INTD Goals and Learning Outcomes
Revised MARS Goals & Obj FA08

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

American Art Therapy Assn. approval
American Dance Therapy Assn approval
Current Student & Parent of Student Complaints 2007-10

HANDBOOKS AND CATALOGS

Naropa Student Handbook 2009-10
Naropa Employee Handbook 2008_7-1
Naropa Faculty Handbook 9.06
Naropa Policies and Procedures Handbook 2008
Naropa Course Catalog 09-10
Curriculum and Pgm Approval Process from New Fac Hdbk

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR dept org chrt and duties
HR Mission Statement
Romantic & Dual Relationships Policies
Selected EE policies
New emp Orient I (genl)
New Emp Orient III, IV, V
Hiring Process for Faculty Staff

Naropa Univ Org Chart Sept 2009
Exit Interview responses 2007
Exit interview response 2009

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology DSR
academic technology survey summary 5-3-05
Technology Advisory Committee proposal Dec 2009
2004 Staff & Faculty Technology Survey
Technology Advisory Committee Report
Department Systematic Review IT (December 2008)
Benchmarking Naropa University's Information Technology Resources (November 2008)

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

News Items by Topic 12.8.09
NYTimes 2007-11-04

MISSION DOCUMENTS

Naropa University Mission Statement
Mission addition from Strat Plan
Statement of Distinctiveness May09
Mission docs various offices & cmtes 2009-03-05
Draft Mission Version 19
Mission Statement revision email
Notes of Mission v 12
Mission Survey data 2009 April
Mission Perception study students NSSE08

OPERATIONS

Campus Master Plan Report Dober et al)
Campus Master Plan Notes & Comments (Dober et al)

OTHER /MISCELLANEOUS

University Code of Conduct
Contemplative Educ book abstracts
Taxonomy of Contempl Ed at Naropa (Burggraf)
Contemplative Modes Of Inquiry In Libl Arts Ed (Burggraf)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

POST-BOARD MEMOS (folder)
Board Cmte Missions
Stuart Lord Inaugural Address
Board Contemplative Ed
Board Facts
Board FAQs
Board Giving

Board People

President's budget reduction announcement 12-7-09
Board of Trustee Minutes (2006 -2009)
Draft of Board of Trustee Minutes (Feb. 17-20, 2010)

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Student Affairs Goals and Outcomes 2009
Student Affairs Brochure Revision08
Diversity Goals Student Affairs - updated 11 12 07
Guidelines Students in Distress
Career Services Year End Report FINAL 08-09
Undergrad Orientation Sched Spring2010
Grad Orientation Sched Spring2010
NLINK Cocurricular Transcript Overview
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES via NaropaLINK
Student Affairs Draft Assessment Plan FA09
Complaints policies procedures
Student Handbook (2009-2010)

STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

IPEDS data 2008
5-Year Grad Comparison
5-Year Undergrad Comparison
Retention-undergrad by class
The Freshman Survey_2008_PROFILE
NSSE08 Benchmark Comparisons Report (Naropa)

STRATEGIC PLAN

2008 strategic plan and accreditation concerns
NOTES ON SALARIES 12-13-07 (Action Grp A)
First round JUMPSTART funding 5-22-09

SELF-STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE

Naropa & HLC correspondence 2000-2009
Accreditation Self-Study Naropa University Library and Archives (January, 2009)
Naropa University 2009-2010 Self Study
Naropa University 2009-2010 Accreditation Self-Study Brochure
Institution Snap Shot
Third party comments (1)

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Active_Student_Groups SP09
Examples of active Student Groups
Naropa Fest 2009 brochure
Student Participation on Faculty Committees 09-10

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS since January 2010
 Addendum to the Self-Study February 16, 2010
 Guide for locating Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Materials
 Senior Management Reorganization/Division Restructure (table)
 Academic Department Comparative Resource Analysis (updated)
 Graduate Retention Statistics (updated)
 Faculty Handbook 2010 (Draft)
 MA INTD Teach-out notification to HLC and confirmation from HLC
 IPEDS data (updated)
 Reorganization and Restructuring Binder
 Formation of Online Council (a standing faculty committee)
 NSSE 2008 Data (binder)
 Academic Plan Resources (binder)
 Faculty Salary Resources (binder)

ACADEMIC PLAN RESOURCES
 Academic Plan 2009-2014, Part I

FACULTY SALARY RESOURCES

Faculty Salary Benchmarks
 Excerpt on Faculty Salary Benchmarks: Naropa University Self-Study Report (2010)
 Naropa Mean Salary Comparison with Carnegie Classification
 Faculty Salary Equity Model
 Salary Increase Distribution Model (Mercer Presentation to Naropa University, February 2010)
 Strategic Plan
 Human Resources Bi-Annual Plan to Audit Faculty and Staff Salaries
 Strategic Plan Action Committee A: Compensation Goals, Philosophy and Objectives
 Strategic Plan Action Committee A: Background on Naropa's Compensation Philosophies

REORGANIZATION & RESTRUCTURING

Documents submitted to the Higher Learning Commission (2-16-10)
 President's letter to Visit Team Chair
 Addendum Report of the 2009-2010 Naropa University Accreditation Self Study
 Naropa University Reorganization Plan
 Correspondence re: Reorganization to Naropa Community
 Naropa University Reorganization Plan (www.naropa.edu)
 President's Presentation on Reorganization to Naropa Community
 Senior Management Reorganization/Division Restructure
 Rationale for Reorganization Naropa University 2010

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The *Self Study* reflects the broad range of strategic reviews and planning activities that have occurred across campus. The Self-Study Steering Committee was staffed by a cross-section of faculty and administration with faculty participation throughout the development of the report. During the development stages of the *Self Study* Naropa welcomed a new president. This transition impacted the formation of the final document and led to an addendum that was provided several weeks before the visit took place. In addition, with work accomplished since the formation of the *Self Study* it was clear that Naropa University is engaged in a process of continual improvement.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The Self-Study appears to have provided a basis for Naropa University to reflect on its development and to continue to plan for its future. From inception, the Self-Study process has involved leadership and participation from faculty and staff. The level of participation in the development of the report is truly reflective of the significant emphasis on shared governance on campus. However, there were weaknesses in the document. There was a lack of organization that was accentuated by a lack of details. Material should have been better documented and easier to find. In many cases, more space was given to explaining what was planned instead of given details of what had taken place in the past ten years. Furthermore, the Self-Study was complicated with the submission of the addendum on leadership and organization of the administration.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The institution has made significant progress in its handling of many challenges identified by the previous comprehensive visiting team and focused visit teams. In the past ten years, work has been accomplished in the area of assessment, hiring of additional faculty, and strategic planning. At the same time, many of the challenges previously cited remain: there is need to complete the assessment loop, address library space, enhance communication processes, and increase faculty compensation.

The team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be inadequate. The need to enhance communications, the lack of a culture of institutional assessment, the need for library space, and a failure to increase faculty compensations will be addressed in the coverage of Criterion I, III and IV.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

Requirement was fulfilled.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint

information. Specific items will be addressed in the Federal Compliance Addendum.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. Naropa University has clearly articulated its mission that governs its internal decision making and informs its external constituencies. The mission is clearly stated and published in governance document such as the Course Catalog, Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbook, Strategic Plan, and is visibly posted on the four campus sites. While rooted in the original mission statements in 1974, the current statement was revised in 2007 by the administration and faculty and approved by the Board of Trustees. Furthermore, the mission is addressed by faculty, staff and student orientations and individual points where these enter the institution. In addition, the mission and related mission document information can be found in the college's external communication pieces. It is externally accessible for all related constituencies via the web site. Finally, it unmistakably conveys the expectation that drives the primary focus of the institution to apply "educate the whole person, cultivating academic excellence and contemplative insight in order to infuse knowledge with wisdom."
- b. It is apparent the mission is understood and that it drives the administrative and curricular operations. A survey taken in 2009 indicated that faculty, staff and trustees understand the mission and that they are aware of its contemplative educational distinctive. Orientation sessions are conducted three times a year in which the mission is explained. Faculty and staff are given opportunity and encouraged to participate in contemplative exercises and experiences provided on campus. Recent planning initiatives such as the strategic plan have been developed based on the mission as the driving forces.
- c. While the mission is quite large and wordy, interviews, group meetings and casual conversations consistently revealed a passionate understanding and support of the mission. Faculty, while not being able to recite the mission verbatim, were able to provide details and explain how they individually and as a faculty were embodying the content of the mission. In addition, the whole institution is known by the special character that resounds from the mission. It is apparent that mission not only conveys the commitment to contemplative education but also reflects it in the size and structure.
- d. Naropa University seeks to uphold and protect its integrity by offering a form of education shaped by its mission and Buddhist heritage. It provides a unique

learning experience for its students, an evolving governance system, and operates in accordance with local, state and federal regulations. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities are structured as means to accomplish the mission. The mission and expectations of students are communicated in the recruiting publications and the Course Catalog. The governance system (while currently being revised) and related policies are stated in the Faculty Handbook, Staff Handbook, and Student Handbook. Included in these publications are due processes for students, faculty, and staff. Annual procedures such as the financial audit have been completed to assure honesty and integrity in its financial transactions. In addition, the institution has met incorporation reporting requirements of local and state and federal laws.

- e. The issue of diversity is promoted as a highly desired characteristic with human resources and publications provided to enhance the diverse nature of the Naropa experience. The Senior Diversity Officer is charged with ensuring the fulfillment of diversity initiatives across the campus and within the curriculum. Furthermore, at the student level, the Student Life Diversity Coordinator and the Assistant Dean of Students have been charged with augmenting diversity within student life. Diversity is seen as a high priority, insisting that it be a strong characteristic of all internal constituencies – trustees, faculty, staff, and students. In documents such as the Statement of Distinctiveness, and Strategic Plan the importance of diversity is emphasized. Therefore the evidence indicates that there are significant resources and policies in place to promote and emphasize diversity – and others in development to indicate that diversity is a priority that the institution seeks to enhance.
- f. The mission of Naropa reflects its Buddhist heritage and also provides for the inclusion of ecumenical and nonsectarian views and seeks dialogue with other religious groups. The mission and related documents articulate a desire to provide contemplative education to the broader community inclusive of all persons.
- g. The governance model that has been utilized for the past years is a traditional model with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Under the leadership of the new President and the direction of the Board of Trustees, a new governance model is being developed and implemented. The new model is intended to “facilitate greater institutionalization and consistency of goals, objectives, and priorities by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the executive team” (President). Since the transition to the new model has just started, it is not clear whether these objectives will be accomplished or how effective the model will be; however, the move to streamline the executive team should provide a reduction in administrative human resource costs.
- h. The Board of Trustees members have a clear understanding of their role and need to continue to develop as the decision making body for Naropa. Meetings with the Board as well as interviews with members of the Board indicated a deep commitment to the institution that was also apparent in the required financial

commitment made by each member. Board development is an on-going process in which a record of utilizing national experts such as consultants from AGB.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

- a. **Core Component 1d:** The administrative and faculty leadership of Naropa have had difficulty making decisions. A cultural aspect of Naropa is to be inclusive and provide a voice to all who are impacted by a decision, however, this characteristic has become a dominate aspect resulting in the lack of confidence to make decisions and the ability to make timely decisions. In interviews with staff and faculty, the style of inclusive decision making is highly valued but the lack of decisive actions was also communicated. Furthermore, this was an issue raised by in the 2000 Comprehensive Visit Report in which “balance had not been achieved between consensus building and the prerogative of management.”
- b. **Core Component 1d:** It is apparent that the current modes of communication on campus are not effective. The current financial status and the transitions aspects of having a new president have revealed the need to develop a more effective means of informing members of the university community. A prime example of the need for improved communication is the number of faculty members who responded with different and confused responses to the nature and means of accessing the \$140,000 faculty development funds. In addition, a number of interviews indicated the difficulty that exists with the current communication across campuses. Finally, this is an issue that was addressed in the 2000 Comprehensive Visit report in which concern was raised regarding the ability to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.
- c. **Core Component 1d:** The size of the administrative staff is significantly larger than peer institutions and the institution will want to consider the financial implications. The 2008 IPED’s report clearly indicates that Naropa employs 68 executive/administrative/managerial staff while the comparison group had a median of 28. (The administration at Naropa has clarified that this number was inaccurately reported and includes positions that should not be counted in this manner.) As indicated in the president’s document “The Rationale for Reorganization Naropa University 2010,” a new organizational structure would “enhance its ability to make substantial and sustained progress” in reaching its strategic plan. The current transition within the administration has only reached the President’s Cabinet and the restructuring that is envisioned for the rest of the administration has yet to be defined. A review of the number of administrative

staff over the past ten years indicates that the administration has grown in the life of Naropa to meet new initiative without any significant adjustments in removing anyone. The number of persons involved in the administration is far beyond the efficient needs of an institution the size of Naropa.

- d. **Core Component 1d:** The review of the self-study and the results of staff interviews have indicated the need for enhanced accountability of staff positions. Over the years, positions were developed and staffed to address concerns or new initiative without accountability procedures in place. It is imperative that administrative positions be reviewed and accountability procedures be implemented.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion has been met; however, Commission follow-up is recommended.

Focused visit in spring 2012 to review progress made in restructuring and the implementation of accountability procedures.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. **Evidence that Core Components are met**
 - a. Adequate facilities support the academic enterprise. Although some deferred maintenance is apparent, especially as related to curb appeal, Naropa meets the necessary requirements for facilities.
 - b. Over the past several years Naropa has engaged in strategic planning utilizing two separate outside consulting organizations. The recent presidential transition preserved the essence of the strategic plan of 2008, "Deliver Distinction with Excellence." The planning process, which included a remarkably high percentage of the institution's constituency, seems to have strong ownership and buy in; and is guiding the institution's actions.

- c. In order to balance year-end budgets over the past several years, funds were utilized from previously sold real estate, retirement benefits have been cut, and salaries have been frozen to balance the budget overall. These actions give evidence of difficult budget decision making and have resulted in the institution not defaulting on bond payments, nor borrowing or using endowments for operational needs.
- d. The efforts of the new President have been exemplary as he has confronted the financial challenges in the current environment. He has been particularly collaborative while seeking campus involvement in budgetary concerns. He has held “Listening Circles” engaging more than 450 individuals, and has shared the realities of budget challenges during meetings with the greater campus community.
- e. The presidential establishment of two key budget advisory committees, the University Budget Committee and the Budget Resource Group demonstrate a desire to involve and engage the campus in the budgeting process.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- a. Although the process to make board mandated reductions in the operating budget for the 2010-11 year dominates campus conversations, much work has yet to be done to prepare a budget that will achieve the desired outcome to align expenses and revenues. Because a budget has not been prepared for 2010-2011, many stakeholders cannot plan adequately for next year---this includes any significant changes to facilities, staffing, and technology upgrades.
- b. Naropa needs to give particular attention to technology upgrades, library resources, and a variety of facility enhancements that will advance their academic effectiveness and ability to market the institution. For example, better technology, library resources and the space for additional library material would provide additional institutional strength and the institution would be more marketable. While decisions are being made to address immediate needs in some of these areas, Naropa would be better served to strategically consider the ways in which enhancements are made to strengthen the total educational experience.
- c. Greater clarity needs to be achieved for the process for distribution of

resources as part of “jumpstart” initiatives, with special attention to faculty allocations. Campus-wide uncertainty regarding these important resources was reported.

- d. It is apparent that the President has considerable aptitude for engaging Naropa’s wide range of constituencies. Therefore, it is important that he readily complete the alignment and restructuring of people and processes to free him to engage in fundraising and relationship building. It was evident that staff were not being held accountable and that they were not being empowered to make decision within their own areas. By empowerment of the staff and holding them accountable, the President would be freed to focus his attention on other issues.

In addition, it is apparent that faculty are very committed to Naropa but that low faculty salaries and the comprise of pensions have started to erode the morale. Careful consideration needs to be given to the long term impact that low salaries and compensation will have on the faculty.

Furthermore, as the President continues his process of realignment, consideration should be given to the benefits and wisdom of having students located on three different sites. While Naropa continues to address the communication and other obstacles related to the three sites it would certainly produce more unity and provide for cost efficiencies by having less sites.

3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

- a. **Core Component 2b:** The plan to reduce at least \$1.4M in the coming 2010-11 budget will prepare Naropa to present a balanced budget to the board in its May 2010 meeting. During the Team’s visit, the campus community had just completed recommendations for the first round of reductions. It is important that commission follow-up occurs to assure difficult decisions occur as planned.
- b. **Core Component 2b:** The institution must more effectively anticipate budget shortfalls and environmental changes than have occurred in recent budget planning processes. A focus visit should occur in the spring of 2012 to assure budgets match revenue and expenses. Over the past several years the budget prepared each year appears not to have contingency plans or designated

reserves needed to adapt and recover from the unexpected or failure to achieve enrollment goals.

It is the team's conclusion that although Naropa has engaged in planning with best intentions year-after-year, a disconnect between planning and action exists. The institution needs to "demonstrated they can make the difficult decisions to achieve financial sustainability and has discovered and implemented efficiencies in operations" as the President stated they should during a Budget Initiative Community Meeting on December 7, 2009.

It is evident that the Naropa administration understands the shortfalls of the past. What is yet to be formulated and executed are the steps to effect the necessary change to reverse their financial condition.

- c. **Core Component 2b:** Since 2004 and for 6 consecutive years, the disturbing trend of expenses exceeded the revenues has persisted. As reported in a campus-wide meeting on February of 2010 just prior to the Team's arrival, the President declared the need to "align our expenses and revenues to create a more stable economic environment for the foreseeable future." The President revealed the following facts. In 2004-05 the institution failed to implement plans to eliminate 5 positions, and only reduced two, thus they had to tap into the operating reserve. In 2005-06 and in 206-07 the profits from a real estate sale covered the budget. Additionally, hiring freezes were implemented, employee retirement adjusted, health insurance was reduced, one-time-only gift funds were used for expenses, and most recently, retirement contributions were suspended and salaries were frozen all in response to budgetary exigency. The pattern of budget deficits has plagued Naropa for the majority of years since the last HLC visit in 2000. Each year the utilization of assets or a reduction of benefits has resulted in showing a "balanced" overall budget. (As illustrated in the presidential presentation at Budget Initiative Community Meeting, December 7, 2009 – graph showing past 9 years) However, this has masked the reality that expected and appropriate streams of revenue that were expected to cover expenses were not realized. Only through extreme measure were year-end budgets balanced. Alternative reserve capacity or various cost cutting strategies utilized in previous years are either unavailable or highly inadvisable.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; however, Commission follow-up is recommended.

Focused visit by Spring 2012 to address the following criteria:

Naropa should show evidence of balanced budgets in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 academic years. A reduction in administrative overhead is measured in part by IPED's data should be made. Naropa should also demonstrate that data has driven all curricular and budgetary planning decisions. Additionally, faculty loading and student/faculty ratios should be brought more in line with budget limitations for a primarily tuition-driven institution.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. Faculty at Naropa are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating strategies for achieving those outcomes as evidenced by each Department Systematic Review and the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment for each program.
- b. Student learning facilities at Naropa provide an environment for an emphasis on contemplative education and individual meditation for students, staff, faculty and community as evidenced by a tour of all three campus sites and a review of the Contemplative Practice documents.
- c. Naropa University offers purposeful, designed co-curricular activities that are aligned with both curricular and co-curricular goals. These activities fit in well with the institution's mission to promote reflective thinking in all aspects of the students' education. Documenting co-curricular involvement by students through NaropaLink (a co-curricular transcript) allows students to reinforce the link between in-class and out-of-class learning in their total educational experience.

- d. Faculty and administrators have routinely reviewed the effectiveness and uses of student learning outcomes from both graduate and undergraduate major programs through a meta-analysis and summative reports of each departmental assessment activity for the last two years. Review of Assessment Review Tables for 2007-2009, Department Systematic Reviews, Academic Department Comparative Resource Assessment Analysis and discussions with the Academic Affairs team members show that Naropa has come a long way in their assessment of student learning.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- a. Many programs at Naropa have begun to close the loop on assessment of specific programs as evidenced by their annual reports and assessment reviews. However, discussions with the Academic Affairs Team, Cauldron, Academic Oversight Committee, and review of documents such as the Strategic Plan and Academic Plan indicates that a culture of assessment where data drives all decisions has not yet been achieved. A direct alignment between assessment of curriculum, review of instructional resources and the budget requests needs to be established.
- b. During the reorganization of people and resources at Naropa, careful attention needs to be made to openness and transparency with faculty of all levels as to changes in personnel and budgets. We applaud Naropa for setting up a budgetary line item within the Academic Affairs budget of \$140,000 for professional development of faculty, which we understand is to be continued in subsequent years; however, faculty members in the Faculty Affairs Committee and Academic Council meetings with us were unclear as to how these funds are distributed and who controls distribution. Communication needs to be clear on what funds are available for what uses and why.
- c. The Strategic Plan, Academic Plan, and 2010 Faculty Handbook emphasize a desire to have a student learning environment based on the “contemplative education” approach. After discussions with the Academic Affairs team and the Academic Oversight Committee, there seems to be a need for a clear process of how contemplative education will be integrated into core and program pedagogy along with how the curricular learning arc will relate to that integration. In addition, assessment of students at the beginning,

intermediate and advanced levels of mastery of the six goals of the curricular learning arc need to be established to give students a sense that contemplative education is a theme emphasized throughout their education.

- d. Because of Naropa's financial situation, the institution has not addressed the 2004 prioritized list of technology needs; the 2005 recommendations on technology needs from the Library Needs Assessment Report.; or the 2009 Library and Technology Task Force report showing a lack of technology to support instructional delivery. In the Fall of 2009, a campus-wide Technology Working Group was charged with overseeing that Naropa's computer-based technologies are aligned with the Strategic Plan. Action must be taken toward addressing both the technology needs and informational literacy needs since lack of support for both areas is impacting the ability of faculty to provide effective learning environments.
- e. The HLC team report from the 2007 Focus Visit stated that the team was "concerned about what appears to be a retreat from the use of portfolios for assessment in the core." This concern is still apparent in that a review of the Core Program Assessment report indicates that the assessment measures appear not to have changed from that report. This may have been the result of the Academic Plan and the discussions on adding more science, math and language to the Core Program. However, Naropa needs to define what general education courses fit its mission and develop a process for bringing the general education program quickly to the level of assessment that other programs have achieved.
- f. Naropa's self-study Steering Committee members as well as the Academic Affairs staff have identified a crucial need for the centralization of institutional data that would allow for more efficient and effective use of data for decision making across campus.
- g. Members of the Graduate Chairs and the Academic Council at Naropa have expressed a need for a formalized new faculty mentoring program that would orient faculty to the culture, organizational structure. and policies and processes of the institution. Expectations on what constitutes good teaching and what scholarship activities in which faculty should participate, along with a formal schedule for systematic performance reviews, should be clarified in the 2010 Faculty Handbook, which in the process of being approved.

- h. While Naropa University has a process for program review and they provided a report called Academic Department Comparative Resource Analysis, there was no evidence showing a link between these two or other program data and how institutional decisions are made as to which programs should be given additional resources or which programs should be phased out.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion has been met; no Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. Naropa supports contemplative education in all facets of its organization as indicated in its mission statement, Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, and syllabi. By its nature, contemplative education values life-long education, and, in adopting a model of contemplative education, Naropa illustrates a commitment to life-long learning.
- b. Naropa's Academic Plan v. 3 Section 5 describes the institution's goal and process of better linking curricular and co-curricular activities. The piloting of NaropaLink, a co-curricular transcript, allows students to identify to outside constituencies their ability to integrate academic work into non-academic

activities. Represented by the clear linking of Student Affairs Goals and Student Learning Outcomes and Academic Affairs Student Learning Outcomes cross-listing in the development of NaropaLink, the university is cultivating a culture of integrating all parts of student development in its institutional offerings. As NaropaLink evolves, the ability to represent the alignment among curricular and co-curricular activities will reinforce the development of a student across multiple campus departments.

- c. Naropa University provides clear expectations of ethical behavior for its faculty (ranked and adjunct), staff, and students as evidenced by the institutions' staff, faculty, and student handbooks in relation to responsible use of knowledge. Additionally, the "View of Right Action" (Naropa University Policies and Procedures 2006) and the "Student Responsibility Statement" (Student Handbook 2009) clearly illustrate the university's commitment to engaging the internal community and external world in responsible and ethical ways.
- d. In alignment with its mission and initiatives regarding diversity, the university's core curriculum offers Core 150 (Diversity Seminar) to all students as a means to ensure a curricular opportunity for students to develop their ability to live and work in a diverse society. While there is a need ensure some measure of uniformity in this course, Naropa, through this offering, attempts to prepare its students to live in a global society. Additionally, Naropa provides a physical resource, El Centro De La Gente (diversity resource room), supports a number of student groups such as Allies in Action, International Student Group, LGBTQIA Group, A Tono, and Students of Color for diversity issues, and has funded a senior administrative position to deal with diversity.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- e. While the Core Curriculum's 33 hours cover a number of important areas germane to acquiring a breadth of knowledge and skills, there is a clear lack of curricular coverage of language(s), technology literacy, math, and physical sciences. The void of these disciplines from the undergraduate program negatively impacts the students' opportunity to acquire a breadth of knowledge and skills especially in terms of preparing educated citizens of the 21st century. Naropa University's Strategic Plan (2009) and Academic Plan v.3 both address the need to "broaden the curriculum by adding courses in areas not currently

represented in the university's offerings." Also, this same issue was identified by the HLC accreditation visit in 2000. By closely examining the current Core Curriculum, the university can address outcomes of the Core Curriculum as they relate to providing students both more breadth and depth in its curricular experience for students around areas of language, technology literacy, math, and physical science.

- f. As identified in the Department Systematic Review for Information Technology (December 2008) and verified in the meeting with the Library and Technology Committee and Technology Advisory Group, Naropa University is compromised in its ability to offer students an educational experience consistent with using technology in both the academic and professional realm. Specifically, Naropa does not have the infrastructure in classrooms to allow the majority of faculty to use multimedia in classrooms, nor the ability to train faculty, staff, and/or students (i.e. no training room or staff to engage in training) in best-practices in integrating technology into the classroom, and no curricular connection for students to technology literacy.
- g. While the Strategic and Academic Plans identify the need to increase faculty professional development funds, there is dissonance in how those funds are to be disbursed in terms of existing governance structure. The Faculty Affairs Committee carries the charge of awarding professional development funds through faculty proposals; however, Academic Affairs established a budget line of 140,000 in 2009 to support professional development. The Faculty Affairs Committee is unclear in how to access those funds for research or development needs. Naropa University needs to either utilize existing faculty governance or develop faculty governance structures in order to clearly delineate how these funds are disbursed for faculty use in professional development.
- h. As noted in its Academic Plan, Naropa recognizes a need to align the core curriculum and major curriculum so that students understand how each curriculum relates and supports the other in the acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. Both student and faculty groups indicated that they perceived a disconnect between the core curriculum and program curriculum. Students remarked that the Core Curriculum was valuable, but it did not relate to their program. Faculty who taught only program-specific undergraduate courses spoke to the fact that they did not understand how the core-curriculum related to their specific program. Further research by Naropa is needed to drill-

down to the root of this perception of disconnection.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion has been met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. Various programs engage the community for student placements of many types. Internal data as well as the 2009 NSSE results report high levels of student internships and community volunteer hours. On the basis of program chairs, faculty, members of the community, the placement of students in internship positions within the community is seen as a major asset and strength. The community representatives who were interviewed highly supported many benefits the student placements provide.
- b. In discussions with key community leaders including the present and past mayors of Boulder, it was expressed that the presence and involvement of Naropa faculty, staff, and students enriched the community.
- c. Leaders in career services have begun to network with area stakeholders to develop additional internships and placement opportunities for undergraduate students.
- d. There is considerable evidence that the President has been well received and is

making strong ties with the Boulder community. At the meeting with the community, both the current and former mayor attended with strong supportive comments both the Naropa in general and the President in particular. Comments provided by members of the community as well as third party correspondence indicate a healthy and supportive relationship exists between the institution and the Boulder community.

- e. Naropa conducts various events that invite the public in an attempt to engage and involve the community. The community is invited to participate in programs such as the Summer Writing Program, the Wilderness Therapy Symposium, and the guest programs funded through the Frederick P. Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism Grant Program. Furthermore, various programs that are held throughout the year are open to the public, such as a two-day workshop series called “The Promise and Poignancy of Diversity in the 21st Century.”

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- a. Naropa could be more engaged in areas that are not related to student internships and appointments. Currently, much of the involvement of students off-campus is through required structures within the curriculum. As Naropa seeks to enhance its relationship with the community, additional extra-curricular experiences should be developed such as events that bring the community and students together in service or social situations.
- b. Naropa needs to discover ways to infuse the unique world view into the appropriate service learning opportunities and organizations within the community. Based on comments from the community leadership and local trustees, it is evident that the unique education provided by Naropa is very welcomed. It is also apparent from their comments that this unique world view needs to be share more effectively with the community in ways that model the contemplative education model.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion has been met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No Change

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change

2. Degrees awarded

No Change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree sites

No change

3. Approval of distance education degree

No change

4. Reports required

None required

5. Other visits scheduled

Focused visit in the spring of 2012 to address progress that has been made toward financial stability, efficient and effective administrative structure, and effective execution of the strategic and enrollment plans – due spring, 2012.

Rationale and Expectations:

Financial status: Naropa needs to provide evidence that it has addressed financial instability by

- i. Balanced budgets for 2010-11 and 2011-12
- ii. Discovery of efficiencies in facilities operation
- iii. Consideration of a higher faculty/student ratio and faculty loading more in line with best practices for highly tuition dependent institutions. Yearly faculty teaching loads of 18 credit hours without advising, and ratio of 10 to 1 or 12 to 1 student/faculty at a predominately tuition driven institution seem untenable.
- iv. Reduction of administrative overhead as measured in part by the IPEDs data.
- v. Evidence that data links and drives all curricular and budgetary planning decisions.

Governance restructuring: The institution needs to provide evidence by the time of the focused visit that clear step have been implemented to accomplish a more effective and efficient governance model throughout the institution – encompassing all administrative staff.

If the Commission does not receive evidence through the focused visit that the financial status of the institution has improved to a point of financial sustainability, the team recommends that consideration be given to a form of sanction.

6. Organization change request

None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

E. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit academic year – 2014-2015

The team believes that Naropa fulfills the criteria for accreditation. While there are several issues that the institution needs to address and needs to report on in the focused visit, the team believes that Naropa University has the capacity and commitment to successfully address these issues. The institution shows evidence (with the new President, the completion of planning documents and determination to take necessary steps) that the issues mentioned will be addressed. As an institution focused on providing contemplative higher education within the context of the Buddhist tradition, Naropa is fulfilling an important and valid educational mission.

VI. Additional Comments and Explanations

None

Federal Compliance Requirements

INSTITUTIONAL MATERIALS RELATED TO FEDERAL COMPLIANCE REVIEWED BY THE TEAM:

Dale R. Brougher, Professor of Religion, The University of Findlay, Findlay, Ohio, 45840 (Team Chair)

Sherry McCarthy, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Williams Woods University, Fulton, Missouri, 65251

Henry L. Smith, President, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana, 469534974

Matthew Joseph Smith, Director of General Education, University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46808

EVALUATION OF FEDERAL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- 1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition:** *The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).*

The governance of Naropa involves an active Board of Trustees, the president, the vice presidents and the program directors. While a strong emphasis exists for shared governance, decision making responsibility and accountability are documented. The approval of courses and programs are governed by the Curriculum Committees at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Proposals are then advanced to the Cauldron, the highest faculty decision making body.

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Based on the information provided in the interviews with members of the administrative staff as well as the Self-Study and the Naropa University's publications such as the annual course catalogs, credit hours the length of programs and tuition were found to be in the range of good practice.

- Semesters run for sixteen weeks with a basis of fifteen contact hours per semester credit hour;
- Undergraduate students are required to complete 120 hours for graduation;
- Depending on the program, graduate students complete 36-78 credit hours;
- Tuition is competitive with similar accredited institutions and is set by the Board of Trustees.

2. Student Complaints: *The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Policies and procedures are developed and communicated to the students via the annual course catalog as well as the student handbook. Files and logs of student complaints were reviewed and found to be in order.

3. Transfer Policies: *The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Transfer policies are communicated openly to Naropa's various constituencies through its website and annual course catalogs. The policies are regularly reviewed by the Office of Admissions and the Office of Student Administrative Services. Policies exist for the transfer of credit at both the undergraduate and graduate levels with appropriate guidelines to ensure consistence and quality. Furthermore, policies are in place to ensure the integrity of a Naropa degree by limiting the number of credits that may apply toward completion of a degree.

4. Verification of Student Identity: *The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Procedures and policies are in place that require password and student identification to enter the online program and classes. Naropa is currently working with E-College to develop an affordable system to enhance verification.

5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities: *The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program. The team has reviewed these materials and has found no cause for concern regarding the institution's administration or oversight of its Title IV responsibilities.*

- **General Program Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*
- **Financial Responsibility Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*
- **Default Rates, Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies:** *The institution has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*

- **Contractual Relationships:** *The institution has presented evidence of its contracts with non-accredited third party providers of 25-50% of the academic content of any degree or certificate programs.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and recommends the ongoing approval of such contracts.

Comments:

- The University is in compliance with all general program requirements of the Department of Education in relation to Title IV.
- While Naropa has had balance budgets the financial ratios are low and are of concern. The issue of financial responsibility has been addressed in Criteria II.
- Based on a review of the campus Crime information and disclosure processes, it is evident that this requirement is fulfilled.
- Satisfactory academic progress and attendance policies are in place, well communicated, and clearly provide direction for the student.
- Naropa currently has one contractual relationship in which 50% of the curriculum is provided by London International School of Performing Arts (LISPA). Naropa has provided the director and a member of the faculty for this program along with the oversight of the curriculum. This relationship and program with the LISPA will conclude in the summer of 2010.

6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials: *The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Naropa has accurately represented its accreditation status with the exception of using outdated titles for the Higher Learning Commission. An audit has been done of all publications and changes are being made to two current publications for the next publication. Furthermore, other agencies with which it is associated are fairly represented and accurately described.

7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards: *The institution has documented that it discloses its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence. Note that if the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is currently under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor in the past five years, the team must address this in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report and provide its rationale for recommending Commission status in light of this information.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Naropa has two graduate programs that are accredited by other accrediting agencies. Positive reaffirmation of accreditation has been received from both agencies (American Art Therapy Association and American Dance Therapy Association). Located in Colorado as a private institution of higher education, Naropa does not have any reporting responsibilities to the state.

8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment: *The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments. Note that if the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comment relate to the team's review of the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Appropriate effort was made to inform the public and provide opportunity for third-party comments. Announcement of the opportunity was placed on the website and in the local newspaper. One positive letter from a third-party contractor was received and reviewed. In addition, an open forum for the community to address the visiting team was provided with six persons in attendance.

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Naropa University
Boulder, Colorado

March 8 – 10, 2010

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dale R. Brougher, Professor of Religion, The University of Findlay, Findlay, Ohio, 45840 (Team Chair)

Sherry McCarthy, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Williams Woods University, Fulton, Missouri, 65251

Henry L. Smith, President, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana, 469534974

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The evaluation team found that Naropa fulfills its mission by providing a Buddhist tradition based form of contemplative education intended to prepare “its graduates both to meet the world as it is and to change it for the better.” In the past ten years, Naropa has enhanced its foundation to provide contemplative education as a result of several specific initiatives and the recent hiring of a new president. The development of a strategic plan has provided a tool that is being used increasingly to make institutional, budget and curricular decisions. The passionately committed faculty, staff, and administration have enabled the institution to meet the needs of their students during a financially stressful time. In addition, significant progress has taken place in areas such as assessment, hiring of additional faculty and diversity though much is still needed in many of these areas.

The team also found that the institution is at an opportunistic position to address the chronic financial instability and other basic issues that have kept it from resolving concerns cited in previous accreditation reports. It was apparent to the team that the new president brings strong leadership and vision that are necessary to significantly advance Naropa in areas such as stable budget and financial practices, realignment of staff, internal communication, completion of the assessment loop, library space and faculty compensation.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. Financial Issues

The team believes that the central issue and continuing challenge of budget and finances, which currently exists and has persisted at Naropa since the last comprehensive visit, must dominate the efforts of Naropa in the coming months and years. As the president has noted, without financial solutions the University may not survive.

The team urges the institution to consider the following solutions, many of which can be implemented soon in the months ahead.

1. Low enrollment programs: We recommend that Naropa review its low enrolled programs to determine the validity of each program. While there may be some programs that are unique to the mission of Naropa, consideration should be given to whether all of these programs are needed and valid.

2. Student/faculty ratio: We recommend that a review be done of the student/faculty ratio that would focus on enabling the institution to accomplish its strategic plan. A review of peer institutions similar to Naropa who are highly tuition dependent should be completed. The current 10:1 or even 12:1 ratio is low for a tuition-driven institution. A higher ratio would provide for a more sustainable.

3. Lower the number and percentage of administrators. The IPEDS clearly identify this problem. The current practice of load reductions for department chairs seems to be overly generous for institutions of Naropa's scope and complexity. Although the president's cabinet has been streamlined with some reductions, for a university the size of Naropa, the cabinet might be further reduced. The team urges that bold and realistic goals be set and reached following an aggressive timeline.
4. Additional and increased revenue streams are desperately needed. It appears that the team in university advancement has not generated sufficient revenue to pay for themselves. Setting specific goals regarding the annual fund that exceed the expense of the office is imperative. The president should receive weekly reports on donors visited and other activities.
5. Consideration should be given to the low faculty teaching loads. Based on the expertise of the visiting team faculty loads appear to be quite low for a highly tuition dependent university such as Naropa. The team believes that moving from the current load of approximately 18 credit hours per academic year to a standard such as a full-time load of 24 hours of teaching including advising expectations should be strongly considered. Even if this change results in increased faculty salaries, the overall saving of staffing should result in positive financial savings.
6. Naropa should consider combining academic units. There are a number of small departments that could be combined. This change has been discussed in the past, but given the present financial situation, the need to consolidate resources is paramount.

Some of these solutions will take courage and be very painful for the institution. However, it has been the team's observation that reductions in force and rightsizing have been accomplished at other institutions with good results. Frankly, many elements of the economic model at Naropa are broken and must be repaired and reconstituted.

B. Jumpstart Initiatives

The model, which has resulted in clarity through campus conversations and consistency of message, set by the president regarding the financial situation should be emulated by the academic affairs leadership. The message of jumpstart money is potentially a hope stimulating and energizing initiative. It must be implemented and communicated clearly and in a manner that mobilizes rather than confuses the general faculty population. Despite the feeling by the academic administration that the faculty should know and understand, we found uniformly that this was not the case. Therefore, better methods must be devised and followed to make this a positive for the faculty.

The team concludes that as Naropa formulates and implements ways to distribute the Jumpstart funds, the amount of resources available and the potential for distribution should be realistic. Further, the funds should be directed clearly to areas that will have

the most impact. Naropa should consider giving priority to funds that have the high likelihood of generating more revenue.

C. Continued Realignment of Personnel

The team commends the establishment of a chief administrative officer (or what is often called a “chief of staff”) to the president. We are particularly hopeful that this costly personnel allocation will result in freeing the president to engage in needed fundraising and external engagement. It is our impression that the president’s choice for the individual for this position is a good one. However, clarity of empowerment and assignment both for the chief of administration, the other cabinet members, and for the campus as a whole is critical.

We observed two full-time assistants and a chief of administration in the president’s office, which seemed excessive based on the financial concerns. Obviously, it is imperative that the office of the president model the staffing cost-cutting initiative imposed on the entire Naropa community

D. Assessment

With the history of slow acceptance in implementing assessment of student learning, Naropa needs to continue its momentum in getting all programs on board with several years of student-learning data collected and utilized to improve programs. Students may need more transparency in how courses fit into the whole program. Programs objectives need to be clearly apparent to students in several ways. Stating what objectives are being covered in the course syllabi might be helpful in informing students how courses fit into the whole program. The institution itself needs to evaluate its processes and non-academic programs as part of the culture of evidence that these are carrying out the institutional mission.

Naropa has a good start in meshing “contemplative education” with core competencies using the curricular learning arc’s six goals. Carrying this out so the institution can give evidence that this philosophy is emphasized throughout the curriculum will be a challenge. Rubrics designed to measure different levels could be developed to assess assignments within a set of identified courses to ensure students are exposed to this concept. Because of the need to market this philosophy as the unique educational experience that this institution can provide, identifying the core curriculum and assessing contemplative education needs to happen within the next year.

Space is at a premium on Naropa’s campus, and the library is in desperate need of expansion. With the downsizing of administration and staff, careful consideration of how both office and academic space might be used more effectively to enhance student learning should be analyzed. In addition, promoting informational literacy for students is

necessary for Naropa graduates to be competitive in today's world market. Upgrading instructional technology and institutional technology in such areas as digital imaging, smart classrooms, and better usage of the Jenzabar system for advising, data collection and enrollment management may require an initial outlay of money but could provide a long-term savings in personnel, supplies and duplicating expenses.

In the reorganization of the campus, the need for a centralized office for collecting and storing data should be kept in mind. Quick access to relevant, valid data to make good decisions is essential on any campus. While an Institutional Research person does that job on many campuses, Naropa may want to make a simple reassignment of duties to an existing position to cover this need. This change in duties could include developing a "dashboard" of data that is relevant across campus constituencies. While Naropa does make good use of NSSE, incorporating some additional national measures for instructional units may allow the institution to benchmark itself against peer and aspirant institutions.

Because of the need to find ways to find ways to cut expenses while addressing the faculty salaries, Naropa may have to rethink the current model for faculty load, especially on the undergraduate level. At many campuses of this institution's size, faculty members teach 12-hour loads each semester, advise 15-20 students and perform reviews and assessments of programs themselves. With the savings that would come from the additional course load and responsibilities, increases in salaries may be possible so that faculty are not having to take on second jobs demanding the time that should be spent on curriculum review and design. If changes are made, communication with faculty as to what changes are occurring and the rationale is essential to keep morale from dropping further. It would also be essential to communicate how an increase in workload could translate into higher salaries.

E. Communication

The need to enhance communication is often cited by constituencies of an institution when other problems confront them. This may also be true of Naropa, but there is also strong evidence that indicates a lack of effective communication that has resulted in miscommunication. A prime example of this issue is the lack of understanding among the faculty regarding available faculty development funds. Furthermore, Naropa is in the midst of significant change that has been triggered by the initiatives of a new president, the need to make budget cuts. All of this indicates that it is essential to make sure effective communication takes place.

There are several directions Naropa should consider to enhance communication. First,

there is the need to ensure the completion of the communication loop. When a message is communicated through channels, it is imperative to confirm that the message has been received and is correctly understood. Second, there is need to provide multiple means of communication. Effective communication may involve the relaying of information via the leadership structure, but to ensure that the message has been understood, additional forms need to be used, whether it internal email messages, memos, or full faculty and or staff forums. Third, Naropa should consider utilizing its experts. The institution has significant talent in personnel in the area of communication who understand the culture and current communication network. By empowering these experts, the communication will be enhanced, thus strengthening both the university and the individuals.

The ability to make the changes needed in Naropa will be greatly enhanced with less negative impact if attention is given to the development of more effective systems of communication.

F. General Education

Naropa realizes that there is a disconnect between its core curriculum and programmatic offerings. The need to develop both a scaffolding of the core and better alignment with majors can focus the “Naropa experience” more fully. The institution’s recognizes these issues and has sent administrators and faculty to the various conferences and professional development activities. However, the institution needs to direct its energy to taking the knowledge gleaned from these activities and creating curricular change.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

A. Mission-driven institution

Naropa is to be commended for the extent to which the internal constituents know and make decisions based on the mission. Even though the mission is large and extensive, it is understood and is well integrated into the life of the institution. In fact, the mission statement appears to be a direct result of the contemplative approach that Naropa espouses.

B. Passionate, committed faculty and staff

The staff and faculty are to be commended for their commitment and passion to provide the Naropa style of education. In recent years this commitment has been tested with the

need to sacrifice in difficult financial circumstances; however, the passion continues to shine. In dialogue with students, it is not just the type of education that makes Naropa a special place; it is the people, faculty, staff and administration.

C. Presidential leadership

The selection of Naropa's new president by the board followed a thoughtfully conceived and well executed process. The national search was extensive and appears to have resulted in a fine leadership choice for the years ahead. In our interaction with the president we observed a leader of resolve, integrity, creativity and decisiveness. We were also impressed with his willingness to listen and his composure during stressful situations. He has demonstrated patience to first understand the institution and its constituencies before taking the important and controversial necessary actions. The ability to accurately evaluate the capacity of his leadership team and make wise choices and decisions bodes well for the future of Naropa. The team concludes that the financial exigency of Naropa called for the timely and wise to selection an outside financial specialist who could bring perspective and a high level of expertise to the University's needs. With the full support and direction of the president and board, the difficult financial decisions confronting Naropa may best be implemented with this arrangement.

D. Focus on diversity

Diversity has always been a critical aspect of Naropa's mission; however, in recent years, it has become a priority in its planning, hiring, and curriculum. While the implementation of these initiatives is rather recent, these are essential steps that should provide significant results in the future.

E. Linking curricular and co-curricular activities.

The piloting of Naropa Link illustrates the university's commitment to educating the whole student. The university is integrating both "sides of the house" well and should continue to develop the relationship between curricular and co-curricular activities.

F. Supportive community

The willingness of the former and current Mayor of Boulder to attend the open community forum was very impressive. The leadership of Naropa has cultivated good relationship and networked effectively through within the community. It is also commendable that the students have a supportive and positive reputation regarding the service provided in the community.

*Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

INSTITUTION and STATE: Naropa University, CO

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):

DATES OF REVIEW: 3/8/10 - 3/10/10

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Private NFP

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

DEGREES AWARDED: B, M

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: Program offered in London, England, is limited to the Master of Fine Arts Theater program at the London International School of the Performing Arts. The University will not offer any additional baccalaureate or master's programs in Colorado or out of state without prior Commission approval.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: Prior Commission Approval Required

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: nc

OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Focused Visit in Spring 2012 on financial stability, administrative structure, strategic and enrollment plans

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 1999 - 2000

YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2009 - 2010

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2014-15

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: Naropa University, CO

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation _x_ No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs

		Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate	Associate	0	
	Bachelors	11	
Programs leading to Graduate	Masters	15	
	Specialist	0	
	First		
	Professional		
	Doctoral	0	

Off-Campus Activities

In-State:	Present Activity:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	Boulder (Paramita Campus)	
Course Locations:	None	
Out-of-State:	Present Wording:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	None	
Course Locations:	None	
Out-of-USA:	Present Wording:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	London, United Kingdom (London Campus)	
Course Locations:	None	

Distance Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

Master - 13.01 Education, General offered via Internet; Master - 23.05 Creative Writing offered via Internet; Master - 42.01 Psychology, General offered via Internet

Recommended Change:

(+ or -)

Correspondence Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

None