



NAROPA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

interoffice memorandum

to: Naropa Community

from: President Stuart C. Lord

subject: Post-Board Meeting Highlights—October 28-29, 2009

date: December 23, 2009

Prior to my inauguration in October, the Board of Trustees held its fall meeting on campus. It was an exciting time; Naropa engaged the greater Boulder community in our Day of Service, hosted a pre-inaugural dinner and celebrated the Inauguration ceremony itself. It is my pleasure to share with you some of the highlights of the Board of Trustees' discussions throughout the six plenary sessions.

In **Plenary Session I**, I reported to the Board of Trustees the highlights from my first 100 days in office. They included:

- The establishment of the Norwood Street Dialogue dinners, where faculty members joined together over a meal and participated in a robust exchange of ideas and dialogue at my home.
- The engagement of a respected consultant to help assess Naropa's Institutional Advancement office and provide suggestions for enhancing its efforts.
- The establishment of Listening Circles with over 325 faculty, students, staff and alumni participating.
- The celebration of the recent commitments of donors that total \$81,000.
- My invitation to the Board to join me and the campus community, in considering how we might change our University's calendar to better inculcate Naropa's distinctive contemplative focus.

Plenary Session II yielded significant discussions regarding the strategic plan, and allowed members of the senior staff to address basic operational issues as well as larger issues surrounding the furtherance of the mission of Naropa. As we considered the implementation of the strategic plan, both the Board and senior staff noted the achievement of our long-term goals begins with increasing enrollment. The adoption of the academic plan designed by Dr. Stuart Sigman, Vice President for Academic Affairs, is central to this goal. The plan calls for a well-rounded and rigorous academic

experience for Naropa students, thereby promoting a sustainable increase in tuition.

Highlights of the dialogue between the Board and the senior staff included the following:

- Dr. Stuart Sigman reported that through a 10 percent increase in efficiency, Naropa saved \$140,000, which was invested in faculty development within the academic plan's budget.
- Mr. Bob Cillo, Dean of Students, discussed the residential life program, and the development of a strong peer mentorship program.
- Ms. Susan Boyle, Dean of Admissions, discussed enrollment and the need to consider what strategies will be implemented to attract new students and then retain them through an enriched student experience. She also discussed the necessity for developing strong branding approaches through public relations as we consider guidelines for which academic students will thrive in the Naropa environment.
- Mr. Sandy Goldman, Vice President of Operations, indicated that a study was underway to consider adding a Breezeway to enhance the student center.
- Ms. Barbara Schmid, Assistant Vice President of Marketing and Communications, reported that website traffic had increased by 10,000 unique visitors and stressed the importance of Naropa's website as a focal point for marketing efforts.
- Mr. Chris Dwyer, Vice President of Advancement, shared with the Board that the \$1.25 million fundraising goal last year had been revised due to the downturn in the economy and yet the goals were still met, resulting in Naropa's best fundraising year. Though this was encouraging news, the concern still exists that even with the generosity of large gifts or grants, the base of support in the annual fund is simply not enough to sustain the university on a yearly basis.

These presentations provided Trustees and senior staff with a common ground for collaboration regarding recruitment philosophy and the best uses of our resources. The myriad view points created stimulating discussion about strategic approaches to our work.

The Board committees reported back during **Plenary Session III**. Below are their reports:

Budget and Finance Committee. The initial discussion of the Budget and Finance Committee focused on the issue of health insurance for staff and faculty. The rising costs of the Great West plan, combined with concerns about the sustainability of that plan, led the Board to reject the proposal that was presented by senior staff, which was to retain the services of Great West. This discussion was one which allowed for positive yet candid discussion as the staff and the Board sought to determine which plan was sustainable to the institution, supportive and respectful of our employees, and provided the best long-term option for Naropa's faculty and staff. One of the important considerations of the Board was the reduction of costs to the employees of Naropa. The Board requested that a Board liaison be invited to be part of the benefits committee so that that person can provide regular updates to the Budget and Finance Committee.

Academic Affairs, Student Journey and Enrollment Management Committee. These committees met in a collaborative effort to determine a strategy to move forward with the academic and enrollment plans. Some of the items discussed in committee included:

- An examination of the curricular arc and how to infuse our view of contemplative education into that curriculum.
- Discussion of the student journey in particular improving coherence in students' experiences and understanding of the purpose of a Naropa education.
- Solutions to the high attrition rate and how faculty may invest in professional development opportunities and the sharing of best practices with the community.
- However, there are many tactical challenges to resolving these issues. One of the ongoing discussions between staff and the Board relates to the approach that we as an institution must take regarding enrollment. We all believe it is imperative that we develop a clear picture of the kind of student we wish to recruit. Clarity on this will help target the efforts of our marketing and advertising office in increasing enrollment.

Trusteeship Committee. The Naropa University Board unanimously and enthusiastically voted Jerry Colonna onto the Board of Trustees. Jerry has deep experience as an entrepreneur, a for-profit business executive, a member of multiple for-profit and not-for-profit boards, a consultant, and an executive coach and counselor. The Board expressed delight to have successfully recruited such a compassionate and highly capable individual to assist the Board in its oversight of Naropa University, and I echo their enthusiasm in working with Jerry.

Plenary Session IV included reports from the Faculty and the Student Board members. Faculty Trustee Report. Andrew Schelling highlighted recent faculty accomplishments including the 10 percent efficiency plan which cuts and consolidates course sections. He noted that some adjunct positions have been dropped due to the consolidation of course sections. Overall, the changes to course sections have been successful resulting in full classrooms and increased morale.

The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics is one of the sponsors at the upcoming Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference. Naropa is capitalizing on the conference being in Denver for 2009. We will have a prominent position on the AWP website and Bombay Gin will be heavily promoted at the conference.

Student Trustee Report. Phil Battos presented the students' perspective. In response to our students' request for a community space for meetings, studying and gathering, a campus planning consultant has been retained to examine renovation of the current Student Center. Listening circles with Dr. Lord were well attended by students and the opportunity to express concerns directly to the President was greatly appreciated. He noted that thirty-one students are involved in student government this year. Two new student life coordinator positions have been created to organize events at Paramita and Nalanda, and Student Life programming is working to build community on all campuses.

Student concerns on the following were reported: tuition increases; the shrinking job market on campus and in Boulder; redundancy in textbooks; and accessibility issues on

the Arapahoe campus and at Snow Lion. Student government developed a resolution to address the accessibility issue and presented it to the President and select members of the senior staff.

Student Affairs is developing software to create a co-curricular transcript that will document learning outside the classroom. Advanced programs are increasingly accepting this transcript, which would allow students to take learning outcomes and demonstrate how they can track and fulfill those obligations. In addition, Naropa's commitment to student engagement would be highlighted. Jenevieve Glemming and Daniel Cook gave a brief demonstration of Collegiate Link, a centralized site where students can learn about campus events and opportunities outside the classroom.

Following these reports, the Board paid tribute to Lucien Wulsin, founding Trustee who passed away in September at the age of 92. It was agreed that a date will be set for the University to commemorate Mr. Wulsin for his service and philanthropy. Members of the Board and senior staff will work collaboratively to determine a suitable manner for honoring Lucien who is a significant part Naropa's history. Although this was my first meeting as President, I have keenly felt the absence of this dear friend of the University and I believe that it is important that Naropa honor him appropriately.

Plenary Session V focused on the Self-Study accreditation update. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an association of the North Central Accreditation (NCA), and works with accreditation at the university level. Accreditation is a process whereby an institution can prove (typically every 10 years) it is living up to its obligations and standards. Suzanne Benally, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, presented a history of Naropa's accreditation process, comprehensive evaluations and focused visits. We are currently preparing for a comprehensive site visit, which will take place in March 2010.

Associate Vice President Benally also reported that John Davis has led the self-study team for the past year, gathering data and analysis from across the campus community. This will culminate in a series of reports to be presented to the community for review. I am appreciative of the hard work that our administration and faculty members have invested in this comprehensive process, requiring a great deal of time, effort and commitment.

Following the executive session, the Board of Trustees adopted the academic plan unanimously. Highlights of the plan include: building a stronger model of the students' development (both personal and academic); providing students with a clear sense of the outcomes and methods associated with contemplative pedagogy, so that they can develop a higher-order view; and building integration across courses in general education, the major, extra-curricular programming, etc. as students work toward fulfilling the overarching goals of their Naropa education.

Plenary Session VI featured a report from Barbara Schmid, Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Communications, who presented an overview of the branding plan in the strategic initiative.

In this, my first meeting as President at Naropa University, I noted the compassion and transparency of the Board of Trustees and the manner in which they discussed sensitive and potentially volatile topics. I was left with a sense of gratitude for a concerned and invested Board, who genuinely care about the future of this noble institution.