



NAROPA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Community Letter from President Stuart Lord

July 24, 2009

Dear Friends,

My participation in commencement, my first event as President Elect of Naropa University, was a great pleasure. It was inspiring to watch students receive their degrees, knowing that it took the effort of the entire Naropa community for these students to reach the finish line of their studies and take their wisdom and compassion out into the world.

Dr. Thomas Coburn set a wonderful example and guided our university on the path to great success. Now, as we seek to implement the strategic plan “Deliver Distinction with Excellence,” we are encountering new challenges. Engaging our donor base in a time of economic downturn, seeking to compensate our faculty and staff adequately, growing enrollments, and enhancing the student experience at Naropa are just some of the key strategies as we move forward.

But the story of Naropa is not one of donation, administration or compensation. The story of our university is told through the experiences of the students who live and learn here, who have sought an education that is enriched by practice. Through the distinctive educational philosophy of contemplative education, Naropa students have dedicated themselves to academic study joined with a disciplined inner exploration. They have become reflective and thoughtful change makers who seek to go beyond the status quo of learning to embrace a deeper model of education.

Consider Jordan Hill (INTD '09), the Master of Arts student speaker at commencement who created an online directory of all graduate Interdisciplinary Programs in the United States. This directory is available on the Association for Integrative Studies (AIS) website (<http://www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg/Masters/mastersdirectory.shtml>). He spoke at the 2008 AIS conference and has been accepted into a doctoral program at Virginia Tech with a full scholarship and a monthly stipend. In addition to his academic work, Jordan has been engaged in the community as a peace activist. He participated in a protest march for Myanmar and helped organize teach-ins for protestors at the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

There is also the account of Marissa Perel (BA Writing & Literature '08), who participated in Freedom of Information 2008—an endurance piece performed across the

United States on New Year's Eve. She was blindfolded and ear-plugged in her apartment for 24 hours as an act of solidarity for refugees who have been displaced by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and others who are experiencing the strife of continuous movement without rest or comfort. Individuals in thirty-two states performed this piece simultaneously until midnight of New Year's Day 2009. It was organized by internationally renowned choreographer Miguel Gutierrez. To read the *New York Times* article on the Freedom of Information performance, please see: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/30/arts/dance/30prot.html>.

We acknowledge the great success of our students and recognize that it is only through our community of donors, faculty, staff and alumni/ae that these students have enjoyed the opportunity to receive such a distinctive education. Thanks to our donors, we have experienced a record fundraising year in terms of total dollars given due in large part to a \$1 million anonymous bequest that was made to the university. Bequest payments are used to support priorities in the strategic plan. The gracious generosity of our donors and grantors has also enabled the university to construct the new William D. Jones Community Greenhouse, a model of campus sustainability.

The task before us is to make that educational experience sustainable for future generations. We are challenged to invest in our infrastructure in order to be competitive and at the forefront of advances in technology. We are further challenged to increase classroom size and academic rigor while preserving both the contemplative nature of Naropa's educational experience and its academic integrity. As we meet these challenges, we will continue to build a more diverse community and broaden the undergraduate and graduate curricula to meet the needs of our students and prepare them for the demands of the 21st century.

Accepting these challenges is just the first step. Accomplishment of our objectives is a high priority in the days ahead and it cannot be just one person who will rise up to achieve these very lofty goals. It will take a community of diverse and distinctive constituencies working together. It will require faculty and administration, staff and students, those who have graduated and those who will enter our institution this fall, all working in concert to make the dreams of Naropa happen. I believe that these goals are attainable. I believe that the challenges are surmountable. I believe that a united community is possible. Above all, I believe that a contemplative education is invaluable.

While I was in Boulder in late June, in order to better understand what makes Naropa distinctive, I spoke to the low residency MA Transpersonal Psychology students, had lunch with the low residency MA Contemplative Education students, visited a Printshop class and attended a Summer Writing Program faculty reading. I have also had the opportunity over the last two months to meet one-on-one with staff and faculty members to hear their stories and aspirations for this institution. It is my hope that together, we will turn these dreams into reality.

As your new president, I will spend this first year calling upon you, in your role as a Naropa community member, to stand with me first to understand the challenges that we face and then to work together to maximize our resources to meet those challenges. Yet

we have more than just challenges before us. The upcoming academic year is filled with amazing opportunities, including an October Peace Studies event featuring Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

The Roman poet Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) in *Satires* said, “Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant.” We have the resources and a community with sufficient talent to overcome the challenges before us. These challenges will raise our talents to the surface and demand our very best, individually and institutionally.

I eagerly await the opportunity to welcome the incoming class and to hear the life stories of our new students. I am looking forward to knowing the Naropa community in a more personal way and discovering how each member’s talents can help us advance our mission. Naropa University will deliver distinction with excellence as we build a collaborative community that will educate the leaders of the next generation. It is time for us to focus on the task at hand. We must ensure that Naropa provides the best contemplative educational environment possible for its students, faculty and staff. We cannot be distracted from this purpose. Let us now work together to sustain Naropa's legacy and to exceed our ambitions.

In the spirit of service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stuart C. Lord". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Stuart C. Lord
President