

Naropa University Convocation 2011  
President Stuart C. Lord

Welcome!

Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff, Trustees, Alumni, Online Friends and Members of the Local Community; Welcome to the beginning of the 2011 – 2012 Academic Year!

Today is a wonderful day, marking a new beginning for our Students – that is, you're beginning at Naropa University.

You all represent many walks of life, but today you sit together as journey-ing Naropians, bonded by the prospect of a bright and refreshing future.

Throughout your years together, you will all grow closer in friendship, sharper in intellect and deeper in wisdom. For Naropa will nourish you, empowering you to meet the great challenges of our world with a union of both heart and intellect.

However, despite our planning and thirst for this bright future, never lose sight of the present moment for: Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost. Therefore each of us should strive to awaken, awaken to our full potential in the present moment!

In this Spirit, I would like to Touch Upon the Following five Points Today:

One; Being bold and passionate, Two; Taking risks, Three; Acting Always with the Spirit of Service, Four; Naropa Delivers Excellence with Distinction And Six; That Naropa is a Place of Miracles!

Number 1; Be Bold and Passionate

This is not the time in your life to be passive. Don't let a single moment pass in your journey without taking hold of every opportunity that you find.

Naropa offers countless opportunities to get involved, meet new people and impact the world, make the most of this, boldly.

For those us you who are students, do not forget that you are a student; this is the time in your life to think wildly and apply the full force of your intellect to your studies.

At your disposal are faculty with years of experience and knowledge. It is incumbent upon you to garner all the wisdom they possess, and then demand even more!

As you will eventually realize, your college years are far shorter than you think; so be bold in what you do and do everything with passion.

Write your professors with ideas for collaborative research. Study abroad. Start a student group or organization. Design your own major! Do what you've always wanted to do. And do it well!

## Number 2; Take Risks

Without great risk, there is seldom-great reward. Do not be afraid to take risks. Take the chance, make the leap, trust in yourself, and be great. Remember: When nothing is ventured, nothing is gained.

Test the bounds of your mind and achieve new heights. Learning is a challenging and fun process; take full advantage of what Naropa has to offer. During your time here you will be gifted a type of education that is entirely unique and special; very much like each of you.

Thus you should, and must, make full use of the social and personal liberties that are afforded to you as a student. This opportunity is short, and very special. Don't squander your time!

Take a class that you know nothing about it. Join an organization that is out of your comfort zone.

If you want to challenge an injustice, do it! If you want to start a business, do it! If you want to travel abroad, do it!

Life it about the actions we take, so be unafraid in striving for greatness!

## Number 3; Act with the Spirit of Service

Gandhi famously said the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. Live his advice.

We take compassion, kindness and justice seriously here at Naropa. Live those values by doing more than advancing yourself academically; strive to improve the lives of others.

Enroll in a course that challenges you to venture to Nicaragua or the U.S. Mexican border. Raise money to help build an orphanage. Volunteer at the Boulder County Jail. Help grow organic vegetables for inner city youth in Denver.

Whatever you do, just make sure you do something for the benefit of all. Find yourself, your true self, in the service of others.

## Number 4; Delivering Excellence with Distinction

In the light of this sense of service I now want to share with you some of Naropa's exciting enhancements and learning opportunities that have developed over the past few months.

1. Work is underway to pioneer a new model for Student Faculty Collaborative Research; a program designed to support projects which give students a meaningful research experience.
2. I'm happy to announce the 'Take a Faculty to Lunch' program, providing students an opportunity to talk, connect and share with faculty in a more individual and personal setting.
3. We are very excited to open our New Center for Student Success which houses all of our Student Resources in one place to holistically assist students in their educational career.
4. Grounded in our religious and spiritual diversity at Naropa, we will be launching the Spiritual Life Council, allowing students to deepen in both interfaith studies and their own personal spiritual traditions.
  - a. It is our hope that this program will enable students to truly connect their own personal religious traditions to the contemplative environment that is Naropa.
5. Recently Naropa University was selected by the White House to join 250 other schools to collaborate on a program around inner faith issues and service.
  - a. This was a wonderful opportunity for Naropa, as the only contemplative school present, to strengthen the connection between contemplative practice, inner faith dialogue, environmental issues and service.
  - b. The program we are developing with Susan Burggraf and the Environmental Studies Program will be unveiled later this year.
6. Due to challenges to the economy, the Chronicle of Higher Education states that there was no pay increase in public higher education institutions this past year;
  - a. where private institutions, like Naropa, only received an average of 2%.
  - b. Naropa, however, gave its faculty an unprecedented 12% wage increase effective this July;
  - c. 10% over the institutional average.
    - i. Again I say, GO NAROPA!
7. Alongside these successes, our Development team continues to reach out to people and organizations across the world to raise money for Naropa and contemplative education.

- a. However, we cannot expect others to give when we, ourselves, do not.
  - b. When major donors, corporations and foundations evaluate if they want to financially invest in, and donate to, our community, they ask us what the giving participation percentage is among those closest to the University.
  - c. Many of those closest to Naropa are standing here today. In light of this we need your help: I'm asking 100% of our faculty, staff and alumni to give, according to your means, to Naropa's Annual Fund.
  - d. Whether its \$5 or \$50, your gift, regardless of its size, counts and truly is essential to our future as an institution.
8. Naropa has been going through some exciting evolutions in the past months, but I want to remind everyone that this dance is set to the beat of the very inspirational music of our Strategic Plan, as set forth by the Board of Trustees. Keep an eye out for more exciting developments and opportunities for dialogue;
- a. for we will need your help and input as we all move forward together!

## Number 6; Naropa, a Place of Miracles

As you all know Naropa is a magical place, a place of miracles: Thich Nhat Hanh said it this way:

"People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on the earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child -- our own two eyes. All, is a miracle."

Contemplative Education holds the compassionate key to embodying this Zen Master's words. However, it is your personal meditation practice which will lead you to the door of this understanding.

You can only find this door for yourself, no one can bring you to it, not your professors, not Thich Nhat Hanh, not me; it is only you who can find this place, for it a place deep within yourself.

Your time here, your professors, your friends and your passions will point to this door within you; but it is only you who can find it, walking through to stand on the miracle that is our beautiful earth.

## In Conclusion

In all my years I never have gotten passed how beautiful days such as this are; You are standing on a very magical threshold.

My advice to you, in summary, is to make the most of your time here. Don't sell yourself short and don't shy away from all that awaits you. Being here is a wonderful opportunity and you should cherish and utilize it fully.

Today you have become a part of Naropa, and Naropa forevermore will be a part of you. You will never be the same. But, you should know that by your very presence here, Naropa itself will be changed, too.

Take on this responsibility with confidence and joy. And also, please embrace with me a profound sense of gratitude for the privilege we all share as being members of this special learning community.

As Thich Nhat Hanh said: Walk our campus, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that you walk on the wondrous earth. For in such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality.

Please remember that your dreams and aspirations are confined only by the capacity of your will and passion. So be boundless in your boldness!

We have much work to do, you and I -- and it is time to begin!

Welcome to Naropa University...

Welcome Home!