



Convocation Speech by President Stuart Lord August 25, 2010

New and Returning Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff, Trustees, Alumni, Online Friends and Members of the Local Community—Welcome to the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year!

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. The Buddha said it this way: “When the mind is purer, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.”

As we begin this new academic year, some of you are beginning a lifelong quest to discover who you are and what your role in life will be. Others of you have clarity regarding where you are headed, and are actively pursuing an education with your sight focused on achieving your goals. Others are still somewhere in between, having a sense of what difference you want to make in the world, but not quite sure what path will take you there.

However, among all of our uniqueness every person in this room has one thing in common—together we are embarking on a sacred journey; a journey to discover ourselves and uncover our passion, a journey to look inside in order to help understand who we are, where we are going, and what we are meant to do.

As we have just heard, our lives will be shaped by our thoughts. Shaping this kind of journey, both individual and collective, requires that we do more than just observe ourselves—we must be active learners, committed to Participation, Engagement, and Transformation. We must fully embrace the educational process, professors making their own practice a priority, fully able to teach from a deeply informed place. And students, students must learn to connect with the content of their academics, finding excellence in application, embodiment through study and contemplation through meditation. Together, faculty and students can unite in their learning, both truly owning

the open hearted educational process, transforming themselves affording palpable change in the world around them.

What will be required of us to build a truly contemplative community? As we walk this path of transformation together, nothing more than everything is asked of us. If we are truly on this journey to Participate, Engage, and Transform, unity is the bedrock from which this profound growth is possible. As we continue this inquiry it is important to honor the specificity of clear seeing and clear action. The following are five goals I see as important in fulfilling this vision.

Goal One: to Enhance Diversity.

In our reorganization, The Board, the Cabinet, and I have made a cutting-edge decision to move to a model of diversity. First and foremost we must begin thinking about diversity as a university-wide responsibility.

At my previous university I was often met with hesitancy and reluctance when I began to speak about the necessity of diversity. But this internal cringe was only a product of ignorance, ignorance in understanding the heart of diversity and the benediction it brings to the community which practices it.

Diversity speaks to the inherent goodness of every person, and the necessity to witness this goodness in every member of our global family. We must all ask ourselves, how far do the bounds of our familial inclusion spread? This questioning is a responsibility of the entire community, yet starts with the individual. I want Naropa to lead the way in the integration of diversity, inclusiveness and community, setting an example for other colleges and universities, setting an example for the world.

Here are some of the tangible ways in which we are implementing this model:

1. As we hire new staff, we will ensure those individuals have the skills and commitment to help us move forward with our diversity initiatives, and are able to provide mentoring and guidance to students.
2. Our Student Affairs Office is preparing a Diversity Resource Guide that will enable students to find and access resources for their needs, both across campus and in the wider Boulder community.
3. Academic Affairs has initiated a grant program to support faculty development and inclusion of diversity issues in undergraduate and graduate courses.

4. We are committed to revising job descriptions and establishing performance evaluations that include actual progress in diversity as a measurement of the effectiveness of each employee.
5. We will be building professional development around diversity at every level of the university, beginning with the Cabinet, in order to build diversity as a value into the fabric of the university.

We want every student, staff member, faculty member, and administrator—no matter who they are and what their background—to be treated in a manner that reflects the Naropa value of the inherent goodness of every individual. Suzanne Benally is wholeheartedly supporting this direction and will be convening a committee this fall to lead efforts to implement this new diversity model.

Would it not be a wonderful to show that Naropa's values are changing the landscape of this global issue in a significant way? From the president to professors, from the cabinet to the custodians, from the groundskeepers to bookkeepers, we must all embody the value of providing a solid foundation of education for not only for our students but faculty and staff as well. By creating space where all backgrounds and traditions are welcomed and accepted, we cultivate a space where every person feels safe.

At Naropa we're not interested in mainlining the status quo regarding diversity—but in fact, it is my goal to move us forward to become a model for diversity, in higher education, and around the world.

Goal two: To enhance service learning through greater opportunities for civic engagement for the student body.

This prioritization will more fully advance our mission of service learning. To this end, we will more closely align the University's academic calendar with our mission and values. We are creating a committee to assess, evaluate, and further enhance our service learning opportunities.

On this past Monday, I had the wonderful opportunity of meeting with more than forty Boulder community partners. In that meeting we deepened our understanding of how Naropa can serve the needs of our local community. These efforts will provide students with the opportunity to move outside the campus, and experience, serve and learn from the world in which they live, thus providing practical application to their academic endeavors.

My vision is that every student before he or she graduates from Naropa University has the opportunity to live, learn, and serve in a global community; that a Naropa education is a passport to the world.

Goal three: To nourish dialogue on issues of Sustainability and Social Justice.

I want to engage the collective intellect and wisdom of the community and consider how we can make different decisions that will positively impact the world around us. We all need to ask ourselves, how can we meet the need of a world desperate for love?

I desire that Naropa be a champion for the values it espouses. Stuart Sigman, the Provost and I will be working together to find ways to have conversations on these and many other topics as we move forward.

Tonight I look forward to beginning the first round of these engaging dialogues with all new students at the 'Presidents Annual Snow Lion Sleepover.'

Goal Four: To responsibly manage the resources of the university.

I wish to advance strong institutional priorities including:

1. Providing a living wage to every employee,
2. Recognizing the value of the amazing staff we have,
3. And making strategic investments in, and for Naropa.

We have made great strides in this area already, despite the hardships we have faced and we have positioned Naropa to have a more sustainable budget and to be responsible in the way we deal with our finances. We want to continue to manage our human and financial resources well, embodying the values of the Naropa community while ensuring the universities longevity and ultimate success.

This year we are making the following strategic investments to increase the overall educational experience.

1. Enrolment management
2. Information technology
3. Institutional research
4. Development
5. Reinstatement of the 403(b) retirement match

Goal Five: to make Contemplative Practice a priority in how we function in every area of Naropa’s operations.

One way I hope to accomplish this is through the Academic Calendar Task Force, which is being guided by our Registrar, Jayme Peta. We must be deliberate when we consider the length of classes, and how the class schedule supports our vision of Community and Contemplative Practice. We must strive as faculty, staff, and administration to foster the goals and values articulated in our model of ‘Contemplative Administration.’

We need to evaluate where service can occur and how we begin the practice of transforming ourselves so that we develop skills needed to transform the world. Our society needs people who are committed to more than just intellectual attainment, people, who have cultivated their own practice connecting intellectual knowledge with the deep intuition of the heart. The world needs a community of people who understand the necessity of engaging every part of the human experience, because fundamentally we are all deeply connected. In essence, this world needs people who are the product of a contemplative education.

For us to establish this model in the world, we must do better in establishing and fostering such a community right here on our own campus. This will be accomplished by making contemplative community more than just talk at Naropa, by establishing it as a high institutional priority.

To me, it is an exciting truth that these goals are not just lofty ambitions that cannot be accomplished—these are specific objectives that we can and will, make progress on—this year.

I believe that by establishing the five outlined priorities, we will create a truly contemplative learning community.

If you attended the presentation entitled “What is Contemplative Education?”—you may have heard me speak about the importance of blending, uniting, and integrating intellect and intuition. Embracing this model, however, does require something of a culture shift.

We as a community must ask ourselves, how can we empower each member of the community to use both their inherent and learned skills and abilities, making Naropa a place where contemplative education yields transformation. This empowerment of the individual at all levels of the organization ultimately allows for every voice to be heard, every heart to be felt, and every decision maker held accountable for their actions.

I know this may sound purely philosophical, but I assure you, it is not.

We need to build a community through the understanding that we meet our vision if everyone joins in making it a reality. This is not a cacophony of individual efforts, each meeting its own objectives; this is an orchestrated symphony where every gift works in harmony with every other person, so we all yield something beautiful and transcendent.

Will you be MY partner in the process of meeting these goals?

It is my commitment to deepen my contemplative awareness practice, and then in turn, use that growth to provide greater leadership to Naropa.

What do YOU plan to do to transform Naropa?

What can you do to make Naropa a place where we all create something exciting, innovative and creative? Tomorrow is not the time to start. Our day is not in three hundred years, although you know I have lofty goals for that day.

Our time is NOW. Our vision can be realized in this academic year.

To quote that old song...

Let there be Peace on Earth,
And Let it Begin —
With Me

Go Naropa!