



NAROPA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

President's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

At Naropa University, we recognize the importance and value of every human being. But recognition is only one aspect of diversity—we must also live our differences. We must *live* diversity. When we share the experiences of another, we begin to understand each other. This in my mind is the true meaning of diversity. And as president, I endeavor to live diversity.

Naropa stresses the importance of educating the whole person, but this is not an easy task. This past September, I had the experience of sharing the holy month of Ramadan with a close friend. I fasted, I prayed and I lived the spiritual significance of the holy month. The experience was beautiful. It was taxing, difficult, yet beautiful nonetheless. I learned many things during this month of physical and spiritual cleansing. Most importantly, I learned that diversity is powerful, so powerful that my perspective on sustenance and sacrifice has permanently been enhanced.

I offer this anecdote, as my way of sharing the value of diversity with the Naropa community. As I have learned, it is through self-understanding that we gain the ability to appreciate the value of another's experience. Further, our model of education seeks not only to cultivate academic excellence, but a deeper contemplative insight, so that what we learn actually means something. Living diversity means something. Living diversity is the realization of the value of our contemplative education. It offers each of us a chance to grow ourselves, an opportunity to put our wisdom into practice, and a moment to learn to love the differences of each other.

The sharpening of insight and an appreciation of the world's diversity and richness is our practice. From this self-understanding comes an ability to appreciate the value of another's experience. More specifically, the value of contemplative education is measured in students' ability to put their wisdom and insight into practice through creative, helpful and effective action.

Valuing diversity and inclusion benefits all of us. As people we learn more about ourselves when we share the experiences of another. It benefits our employees by creating a stronger work environment that draws on various points of view. And it benefits our students by enriching their learning experience and better preparing them to function as effective citizens. Employers and graduate and professional schools are

seeking people who are culturally competent and have the skills to function in a global society. We all have the opportunity to gain these experiences and skills at Naropa.

Our goal is to equip students with the tools necessary to make a significant contribution wherever their career may take them. It is in this vein that we encourage all members of the community to take full advantage of the many opportunities—inside and outside of the classroom—to learn about the diverse society in which we live. Through cultural activities, academic course work, organizations and social events, we can all learn to appreciate and enhance the diversity of our community.

Remember: diversity is more than just a word. Live it. Make it mean something to you. After all, our collective strength comes from the bonds that tie us to each another. Strengthen those bonds, build our community and embrace the beauty of our differences.

In the spirit of service,
President Stuart C. Lord