

The Ponderosa Plan: Naropa’s Strategic Plan for Transformation

Fire-Activated Renewal

February 20, 2026 – Approved by Board of Trustees

THE CHARGE:

Mobilize and grow the impact of Naropa’s mission by rapidly expanding hybrid and online learning and working, accelerating curricular regeneration and new program development, evolving a sustainable business model, and building agile infrastructure, practices, and reciprocal partnerships to move quickly in alignment with our values and purpose.

Naropa’s Ponderosa Plan reflects how periods of change involve both challenge and possibility. Our world faces growing fires today – ecological, economic, social – in our wildlands, in our communities, and in higher education. The ponderosa pine has evolved to live with fire. Like the ponderosa whose seeds are released through heat and pressure, Naropa is entering a period of necessary change in just the moment the world needs the healing power of contemplative education more than ever. We are called to let go of some past growth to make room for new sprouts, buds and bloom. But like the ponderosa forest after a fire, the emergence and re-growth that follows will be stronger, more resilient, and still deeply rooted in our values.

Through the pillars that follow, we commit to stewarding Naropa’s legacy with care, expanding affordability and access, strengthening the conditions for learning and work, sustaining the institution for the long term, and tending to the community and partnerships that make this work possible. Together, these commitments will guide Naropa through change toward renewal, resilience, and new growth. Ultimately, these sparks at Naropa will become a beacon, lighting the path for higher education towards a more just and regenerative world.

The Ponderosa Pine Regeneration Process

Preparedness – Seeds held in readiness
Catalyst – Fire creates necessary conditions
Release – What is held is opened
Emergence – New growth takes root
Endurance – Strength built over time

The Five Pillars

- 1. Rooting in Our Values, Adapting for the Future**
- 2. Expanding Access to Contemplative Education**
- 3. Ensuring 450 More Years: Financial and Operational Resilience**
- 4. Scaling Up through Solidarity & Partnerships**
- 5. Investing in a Community of Belonging and Care**

1. Rooting in Our Values, Adapting for the Future

Advance Naropa as a catalyst for radical inclusion and ecological regeneration—empowering creative leaders to shape a just, connected, and life-sustaining future.

- Strengthen Naropa’s culture and operations with commitment to radical inclusivity, justice, accountability, and regeneration.
- Be the training ground where contemplative pedagogy forms socially responsive artists, healers and leaders who cultivate community-based problem-solving and resilience.
- Expand mission-oriented programs and projects like pop-up festivals, mutual aid initiatives, interfaith dialogues, and community service.
- Bolster Naropa’s capacity to act with ecological responsibility, reciprocity, and care for people, community partners, and place.
- Distinguish contemplative education by defining Naropa’s pedagogical values and integrating in all programming.
- Respond with courageous clarity to the crises of our time, serving as a refuge and catalyst for creative resistance and collective healing.

2. Expanding Access to Contemplative Education

Expand Naropa’s impact by offering programs that make contemplative, compassion-centered education accessible to learners around the globe.

- Serve students with greater care by eliminating barriers to enrollment, improving affordability, and providing flexible delivery options combining the best of in-person, limited-residency, and online learning.
- Evolve academics with a new array of mission-centered and market-responsive programs to lead the future of just, regenerative work in new areas of study and profession.
- Develop new hybrid, online, and low-residency degree-completion and graduate programs that provide deep community, intensive practice, and integrative learning.
- Expand extended studies offerings with new stackable micro-credentials, certificates, and short courses.
- Create inclusive pathways including partnerships with schools, community colleges, universities and other aligned organizations, credit for prior learning, simplified transfer of credit, and accelerated pathways.
- Support student career pathways through integrated career services and robust experiential learning opportunities with community partners.

3. Ensuring 450 More Years: Financial and Operational Resilience

Strengthen Naropa’s financial foundation to ensure institutional vitality for generations to come.

- Build financial practices and a resilient resource base to sustain Naropa for 450 years.

- Evolve academic program design and approach to tuition and pricing for affordability and financial viability.
- Adjust staffing to meet current enrollment needs while preparing for thoughtful, sustainable growth.
- Leverage technology to integrate systems and improve processes to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and data-informed decisions.
- Build a culture of philanthropy and fundraising campaigns to advance strategy.
- Generate consistent annual surpluses that can be reinvested in Naropa’s people, student services, programs, and mission.
- Diversify sources of revenue.

4. Scaling Up Through Solidarity and Partnerships

Cultivate a new educational model that extends contemplative education and influence across multiple sites, modalities, and communities.

- Create a larger university system to share online courses and programs, to improve back-end services, and to secure financial aid for students.
- Forge reciprocal partnerships with community colleges and universities that share Naropa’s values.
- Build capacity for collaboration, deep partnerships, and resource sharing both internally across programs, deliveries and degree-levels, as well as with other communities and organizations.
- Activate our alumnx network as collaborators, mentors, and ambassadors to extend Naropa’s impact and support enrollment and fundraising.
- Develop partnerships with contemplatively aligned spiritual or faith-based organizations and businesses.
- Host community gatherings that bring students, faculty, staff, alumnx, partners, and friends together across regions to connect, collaborate, and share rituals.

5. Investing in a Community of Belonging and Care

Build the conditions for students, faculty, and staff to thrive—by nurturing connection, honoring difference, and creating systems that support meaningful learning and sustainable work.

- Center student wellbeing by expanding learning resources and support for the specific needs of our students (e.g. veterans and others)
- Develop Nalanda campus as an ecological learning environment for residency gatherings, hybrid learning, contemplative practice, performances and other events.
- Design for belonging to build inclusive online environments and curricula that are community-based and solution-oriented.
- Create socially conscious curricula, learning, and support services that center diverse community perspectives.
- Improve salary, benefits, and resources for employees that support joyful and sustainable work.
- Strengthen employee onboarding, professional growth, and development.