

State of the University Talk

February 8, 2017

Thanks to all of you for joining together this afternoon. I appreciate your taking the time to connect together as members of our remarkable community and to allow me the chance to make some remarks about Naropa-our present and our future.

Like last year, I can offer information and perspective, informed I hope by the countless encounters I have every day with faculty, students and staff. I hope that my remarks will give rise to questions and suggestions and again, as we did last year we will have informal opportunities to come together for further dialogue.

To me, personally, and I imagine to many of us, looking at Naropa, measuring our impact and planning our future, means place this 43 year young institution into a larger context in the world.

Whatever one's political views may be, I think it safe to say that we are embarking on a social journey that carries more uncertainty and potential for turmoil than most of us have ever experienced. The uncertainty is fueled by the fact that it is unfolding before us. If you ever were in a bad accident or had a serious illness or suffered great loss of any kind, you can appreciate the difference between your experience when you were in the middle of the event and the echo of that experience when you inevitably re-live the situation later on.

Well, the news of the day is that we are all in the middle of it. As individuals, alone and in community, embodying Dr. King's declaration of the Fierce Urgency of Now is a moral responsibility in a world which is suffering injustice and aggression. There are many ways to engage-through service, political activism, and social action to reject injustice, by fostering community building, doing meditation retreats, and acting as compassionate human beings, and so on.

Naropa as an institution also has opportunities for enhanced relevance. First I am grateful for the many voices reminding and urging us to speak about justice, equity, and inclusion and to act on those. It is also important for us to take a long view, much like Trungpa Rinpoche's proclamation of the 500 year Naropa project as we opened our doors in 1974. That view means that we do everything possible to educate and support students, now and in the future, who will become a new generation of leadership in all our social sectors-effective actors, speaking truth to power-and in fact being the power- and becoming the true world transformers we declare they can be.

For a university that is so small relative to our counterparts, we are and always have been a very complex place. To be part of this community means holding two challenging realities; one reality that is uplifted by inspiration, appreciation, vision and commitment, and the other which is grounded in financial challenges, leaky pipes, unmet goals and insecurity. Both of these are true (or neither is true if you prefer)

But in any case my work, and that of my faculty and staff colleagues, is to live in the soup that blends it all together. I appreciate the effort and energy, and, in spite of or maybe because of, the daily drama, continue to feel blessed to have the chance to serve Naropa.

I want to share some information with you and invite you to consider your questions and comments for more discussion over the next few months.

Last year I noted that our 2008 strategic plan, which has served us pretty well, was in need of refreshing. I am grateful that our Provost, Dr. Janet Cramer, agreed to lead a new planning process, inviting staff, faculty and students to spend this academic year working on the plan. The Board of Trustees has also done planning work. There is harmony between the work of both groups and a plan is emerging for presentation to the community later in the spring. I express my gratitude to the dozens of people who volunteered to do this important work.

I also noted last year that enrollment was a challenge. While we maintained our enrollment numbers in the fall of 2016, we did not succeed in breaking through what has been a challenging few years. Naropa is structured to serve more students than we have now and we remain a mainly tuition funded institution, as is the case for so many small colleges. Given our size, the difference of a few hundred students is the difference between holding tight or having the resources to invest in programs, facilities and enhanced services. Again this year we held tuition very close to where it has been. We also have increased financial aid from an average of 33%, meaning that we return 33% of each tuition dollar as financial aid, to 37% this year, acknowledging the real affordability gap. Further increases to scholarship support are being created now, and the details will be announced in the next few weeks.

We cannot solve our problems by tuition increases or reduced aid. Our success needs to be in both attracting more students, and diversifying our revenue.

Spring enrollment, which is limited because of program timing, showed promising signs. And importantly, fall 2017 numbers are quite encouraging. For example, as of January 30 last year, we had 325 applications for our graduate programs. Last week on the same date we were processing 573 applications. Undergraduate applications are also up, although not as significantly yet.

The enrollment challenge has impacted our current budget and the academic and administrative divisions have been diligent in finding expense savings, including deferring some new hiring and carefully managing limited resources. We continue to look at ways to increase, non-tuition revenue, which I will speak a little about later.

We took a very close look at the way we are organized to do our work together and, as most of you know, took some fairly significant steps to re-align the academic and administrative divisions. We believe this re-structuring will be of benefit both to Naropa's overall success and will allow faculty and staff to collaborate more closely without the unintentional barriers that are sometimes created. I am happy to discuss those changes in detail at other gatherings. But generally, we moved the Enrollment Management and Student Services areas to allow for more close collaboration with

their natural partners. Admission, Marketing, the Dean of Students and the other student services team are working within Academic Affairs, directed by the Provost. This is an increasing best practice at other smaller schools, and, for us, tightly linking faculty to admissions and student services seemed a valuable step. We know that the faculty have great influence at all stages of a student's journey with Naropa, from the first inquiry to graduation, and finding ways for that connection to be nurtured was the point of the move. The business side of Student Services, especially financial aid, is now working within the Finance and Business Affairs division. That is led by Tyler Kelsch, the Vice President for Operations, who joined us some months ago. Tyler is here today and if you haven't met him, please do so. Change is always complicated, and I want thank my colleagues across all the divisions whose commitment to Naropa hasn't wavered. It is early in the process, but I have felt good about the various cross department meetings I have been able to attend and to experience the creativity arising from them.

A very significant benefit of this reorganization is that Cheryl Barbour moved from her position as Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services into the president's office as a special advisor. We have many opportunities for innovation which would benefit Naropa greatly, but we constantly come up against a lack of capacity to assess the ideas, decide which are worth exploring and implementing and which aren't, and then to create a clear and rigorous plan to move forward. For example many of you recall that Naropa acquired the curriculum and other assets of the former Boulder College of Massage Therapy, a nationally respected institution which closed for avoidable reasons. Many of us believe that a quality Massage Therapy school fits into an emerging health and wellness platform, offers a career path for our students and new revenue for Naropa. We have been trying to find the time over the last couple of years to move this idea to fruition and it is a perfect example of what Cheryl will be able to do. I don't know anyone at Naropa who holds a more visionary view combined with an analytical ability. I also asked Cheryl and Mari Dark, who hold much of our Institutional Research capacity, to move that function into the president's office. Clear data and quality research is essential to making good decisions and holding that function in the president's office ensures the work will support all the divisions. Personally, and I'm sure on behalf of us all, I am so grateful to Cheryl for her 24 years at Naropa and her willingness to take on this new challenge.

One important way to increase enrollment is to continue to find ways to attract non-traditional students who want flexibility as they connect with a university. Much is happening in that regard. In the Naropa College the faculty have worked very hard in several areas. We are increasing a commitment to study abroad and service learning opportunities. We're negotiating ways to even more closely engage with LeapYear, the alternative freshman year opportunity as its founders are thinking about succession.

Where There Be Dragons, which offers several study abroad options and is based in Boulder, was recently sold to a new owner who reached out to us to find ways to enhance our work together. We are revising our contract with Dragons to make the programs even more beneficial.

And the Bhutan study abroad program is now in its third year, with real growth opportunities, not just for Naropa students but those from other universities.

The Naropa College is working on an enhanced undergraduate experience, which will include closer alignment between INTD and Peace Studies, with concentrations in Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Arts and Social Change, Intercultural Global Studies and Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

As well, you may know that for some years the undergraduate education faculty, led by Barb Catbagan, Richard Brown, Debbie Young and more recently with our part time consultant Liz Grassi, and a drafted Nataraja Kalliou, have been working on a Teacher Preparation Program. That program, which is now in the approval process with the Colorado Department of Education, will offer a career path to undergraduates interested in teaching. Students can enter this program from a number of undergraduate degree gateways and success will mean readiness for licensing across the country. We should mark the importance of this work. Our program will be the first comprehensive, state licensed, mindful and contemplative Teacher Preparation and BA Contemplative Education program in the country. Students can add teacher licensure to their other undergraduate majors. Right now tens of thousands of working teachers experience great pressure and a large number don't last 5 years in the profession. Many are finding personal and professional enrichment programs teaching personal contemplative practice and classroom mindfulness, such as through the Care for Teachers program that Richard Brown and colleagues from other universities have offered over the years. But our graduates will be teachers who have integrated contemplative pedagogy with academic training from the first day of the first semester. We believe that it offers a career path of great and lasting value and will make our graduates sought after by school districts. If you agree at all with my view that training a new generation of leaders is Naropa's responsibility, then arming our graduates with the tools to educate future generations is a powerful offering.

The relevance and need for this program has been endorsed by education faculty across the country, and it has also resonated with philanthropists who are particularly passionate about the way in which young children are taught in both private and especially in public schools. I am happy to say that on Saturday we received word that Naropa has been offered a lead gift of \$800,000 over three years to support our Teacher Preparation work. This gift is remarkable in a number of ways-of course the amount is very significant for any institution but especially for us. As important is that it comes from a young philanthropist who until 4 months ago hadn't heard of Naropa, and who, after visiting and meeting students and faculty, sent me a note on Monday saying:

I am so inspired by the work you all are doing and excited to see how it evolves and touches people's lives. Naropa is a very special place. I'm amazed I haven't found you all earlier in my life, but I'm grateful to be connected now.

We owe much gratitude to Angela Madura and Erin Farrell in the Development office, each faculty member I named before, Janet Cramer, Tyler Kelsch and our board chair, Jerry Colonna. It took that team to get to this successful result.

The Graduate School of Counseling Psychology has been hard at work as well. Starting this June we will launch a new hybrid program leading to a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, with a concentration in Mindfulness Based Transpersonal Counseling. (I think the acronym MDCMHC-MBTC sings, but others disagree)

This 60 credit program will allow students to complete their degree in two intensive years, with a combination of on-line study and retreats. I'm happy to say that it looks like we will fill the first class completely, adding \$200,000 in new revenue in June and opening to the potential for greater growth. Again gratitude to all of the GSCP faculty, skillfully led by the Dean Deborah Bowman, for moving this vision to reality.

We are also benefitting from the ongoing external reviews of each of our degree programs. The Religious Studies external reviewers presented their findings just an hour ago. Preparing for such reviews asks for much from our faculty, including a comprehensive self-study much like we prepare for the Higher Learning Commission, in advance of an accreditation visit. The self-study process and external perspective are both important ways to assess our programs and progress toward meeting the learning outcomes the faculty have created. That assessment process is very important to the Higher Learning Commission, which noted a need to improve the formality of the work when they re-accredited Naropa for 10 years in 2013. The HLC will return to Naropa in the spring of 2019 to measure our progress in the assessment work.

I would like to note some other internal accomplishments. Over the course of Naropa's history SUN-the Student Union of Naropa-has been more or less visible, more or less active. Without question today, SUN is engaged, energized and actively reaching out to staff and faculty both to collaborate. At SUN's instigation a small group representing our major internal divisions spent an afternoon last week looking at ways to collaborate, by sharing information more effectively and seeking ways to more strategically working together. I most enjoy going to such meetings where I am not expected, or invited, to carry the agenda and I look forward to seeing how this unfolds.

I also appreciated the invitation to share with the Staff Executive Council, which over the past few years has increasingly created a vehicle for the staff voice to be heard. The annual staff survey offers very important information. Some is not easy to read, as it calls out areas in need of improvement. But I always feel that the data sits on a foundation of great care for Naropa. I will offer a public service announcement and remind staff and students that both Staff Executive Council and SUN elections are now underway.

Cauldron, the faculty senate, is a critical part of the shared governance model that is so important in any university where a strong faculty voice is needed. Cauldron is doing good work again this year, both to support the faculty and Naropa broadly. Over the past few years we have moved deliberately to ask Cauldron to take on Academic Affairs budget and resource allocation work, believing that the closer the budget creators are to the programs we support, the more effective the process will be.

I want to call out the significant work being done by Regina Smith and her colleagues in the newly renamed Office for Inclusive Community. As the Director, Regina balances a teaching load with the intensive work of a leader in the areas of diversity and inclusion. She has institutionalized so much in a relatively brief tenure. And, without hesitation or sugar coating, calls out the ways in which Naropa must continue to grow and improve in matters concerning social justice, bias and unskillful action.

Also I want to note the important work that Dennis Kerr, Naropa alum and our Veterans Success Coordinator is doing. Dennis's job is funded by AmeriCorps VISTA. Naropa has had veterans as part of our student body from the beginning. Historically we haven't done a great job in welcoming and supporting those students. Sometimes they have unfairly been expected to bear the burden of foreign policy decisions that many of us have vigorously resisted, and as a result haven't felt at home here. Dennis, himself a veteran, has raised our consciousness around these issues, and I appreciate the efforts.

At the strong urging of our students we also were very pleased to open our cultural center on this campus last spring.

Let me briefly touch on the work of the Centers at Naropa. The Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education, the Center for Bhutan Partnerships, the Joanna Macy Center and the combined Authentic Leadership Center and Extended Studies.

I take responsibility that to some the reason for the existence of one or more of the centers is unclear or possibly using up resources better deployed elsewhere. I am happy to discuss this in more detail at another gathering. But for now let me describe the underlying logic. We know that Naropa holds a mythological place in the world of contemplative education and mindfulness. We say that the so-called Modern Mindfulness movement was born at Naropa, and I believe that is true. I also believe that as we grew our university in Boulder, that we gave up a certain visibility in the world. Of course there are many contrary examples. Most significantly are our alumni who connect their Naropa experience to their work in the world. And many of our faculty are sought after presenters at various conferences and events. But as an Institution, as a University, the light could be shining brighter. That would help our traditional recruitment efforts, support our fundraising work and help with the creation of innovative offerings that are relevant to a world in need, and, to be blunt, generate needed income.

We elected to organize the activities that support that view by the creation of the centers.

CACE has a critical internal function offering the tools and support to all faculty as they evolve their personal expression of contemplative pedagogy in the classroom. And CACE is also working on a multi-media project to capture the core contemplative traditions that formed Naropa. Traditions such as Barbara Dilley's Red Square work, or Lee Worley's Teaching Presence. CACE also faces outward as a partner to other institutions and organizations engaged in such work. Right now that

includes a lead role with the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education organization in planning a major national conference near Santa Cruz later this year. Or closer to home being a lead convener of the Rocky Mountain Dialogue for Mindfulness in Higher Education, with 10 schools represented and now in its 4th year.

The Joanna Macy Center, created to advance Dr. Macy's legacy and create a more resilient world, carries a great responsibility. We are the institutional home of that work which has deeply informed our environmental offerings. As Joanna ages and slows down her work, the importance of Naropa being her university home cannot be overstated. The Center was created with an exceptionally generous lead gift of \$250,000 from Christopher and LuAnne Hormel. That gift continues to offer benefit, including the assurance that any staff, student or faculty member willing to dive deeply into Joanna's Work that Reconnects program next month may do so regardless of ability to pay.

The Center for Bhutan Partnerships was a way to organize the work of the several individual faculty members who have worked in Bhutan or supported visiting faculty from the Royal University of Bhutan to Naropa. The undergraduate study abroad program, led by Professor Anne Parker, is held by the Center. In addition, as a result of the work by faculty from the Graduate School of Counseling Psychology, a Master's and post graduate certificate program in contemplative counseling psychology began at the Royal University last month. More than 60 participants are now enrolled in the first such graduate level work in a country which lacked professional mental health counseling education. Our graduate students will have the opportunity for internship work in Bhutan. Naropa and Trungpa Rinpoche have deep ties to Bhutan and the opportunity to influence the emerging mental health care infrastructure of an entire country is remarkable.

With respect to all those centers, I will admit we don't know how the impact of the work will unfold and we don't know all the ways they will contribute directly to our revenue. We know some things, that non-Naropa students in our study abroad program pay tuition to us that we would not otherwise have. Or that generous donors like the Hormel's allow the Joanna Macy Center to operate, for now, at no additional cost to Naropa. And less measurable, but I believe real, is the impact this kind of work has on prospective students who may not travel to Bhutan or meet Joanna Macy, but who ultimately choose Naropa because we are a place that does that kind of work.

The Authentic Leadership Center and Extended Studies work is a bit different, in that there has been a revenue generating intention from the beginning. I think that many are impatiently waiting for the significant revenue impact. But that view needs to be tempered, I think, by realizing that we are creating a very different and complex set of offerings with limited initial dedicated resources. The Authentic Leadership Center is built around the successful and long standing Certificate Program. From that, Susan Skjei, the director, has been creating a suite of products to offer both in person, by trained teachers, and online, which have considerable potential. For example we have contracted with a large publishing company to offer onsite and online mindfulness at work and leadership training for a fee that will approach \$100,000. Susan is doing similar work the Family Medicine division of the University

of Colorado Medical Center. And this spring we will offer a multi-week online course, the first major offering on the about to launch eNaropa online platform.

Other offerings through extended studies are emerging as the platform and marketing plans are evolving. A few are available, such as two short courses by Frank Berliner and Sharon Salzberg, now on the large Udemy site. We are also hosting a national conference in June called Compassionate Approaches to Living and Dying: Transforming the Paradigm. We have several local and national partners, and, while conferences themselves don't generate a lot of profit, the content will be captured, repackaged and create the basis of several online offerings.

I believe that the leadership and extended studies areas will cover their costs and contribute a bit to our overall budget, but to meet its potential we need to grow that contribution significantly. I am confident in the vision and committed to finding the resources needed to meet the potential.

Last year was a record year for fundraising. We booked about \$2.6 million in gifts to Naropa. Our goal this year is a lower but still ambitious \$1.6 million. We are a bit better than half way there, thanks to the good work of the development office and the continued generosity of our closest supporters, especially the members of the board of trustees. As my colleagues know, I need to continue to focus on fundraising. I can do that with much confidence in the staff and faculty leadership.

We are in the third year of our \$10 million campaign, primarily focused on Scholarship support. Last year at this time we were about 30% of the way to the goal and this year we are a bit over 40%. That is good, but ultimate success involves widening our donor pool to include everyone who cares for Naropa and shares in our importance to the world. People like the parents of graduates from Alaya Preschool, our early childhood lab school who just created an endowment to allow lower income families to benefit from the Alaya experience. Or the Boulder investor Brad Feld who sent a \$10,000 Thanksgiving gift to honor our Board Chair Jerry Colonna, and invited technology industry colleagues to do the same.

It has been almost 5 years since I was offered the chance to return to Boulder and to serve Naropa as president. I haven't once questioned the decision..... and never questioned the vision of our founder. I am increasingly reflecting on what we can do more effectively, with more impact. I spent most of my professional career as a social entrepreneur doing truly meaningful work. I am not immune however to the disease that plagues such entrepreneurs, which is the view that the ultimate success or failure of any venture is their sole responsibility, that they need to be personally competent in everything and that being a hero is an unwritten part of the job description.

Intellectually I see the fallacy of that view. Embodying a different approach is more of a challenge. What I can do is invite us all to offer the ongoing honest feedback, great compassion and bright wisdom that is a hallmark of the Naropa experience. I extend that invitation not just from me, but on behalf of our entire community. A Buddhist takes refuge in the sangha, the community of practitioners or really any community at all that we are part of.

Trungpa Rinpoche described that act of taking refuge as relying on others to be a constant reference point, creating a continual learning process, giving up regarding ourselves as lone wolves, but also not just going along with the crowd. As Rinpoche says, either of those extremes is too secure.

And if we know anything at Naropa, it's that security is overrated.