

The birthplace of modern mindfulness



Naropa UNIVERSITY

2025
PRESIDENTIAL
PROFILE



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Naropa University

The Board of Trustees of Naropa University seeks a transformative leader who embodies the University's contemplative mission and innovative spirit.

An Exceptional Opportunity

Founded in 1974, Naropa is a Buddhist-inspired university that has pioneered a unique educational approach integrating rigorous academic scholarship with mindful, compassionate learning.

The next President will chart a visionary course for our institution, leading with integrity, transparency, and a commitment to our core values. They will advance Naropa's distinctive approach to education—one that honors scholarly exploration, contemplative practice, creative expression, and global citizenship.

The University seeks an accomplished leader who is also an effective and selfless team player; someone who will work closely with the Board of Trustees and executive leadership to implement innovative strategies for meeting the moment with a view toward the future.



The Founding of Naropa

Naropa University was founded in 1974 by the Tibetan Buddhist meditation master, scholar, and artist, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. In 1959, he led hundreds of Tibetans, fleeing the Chinese army, through the Himalayas to northern India. In 1963, he received a scholarship from the Spalding Trust to study at Oxford University, where he became fluent in English. In 1970, he began presenting Buddhist teachings in the United States. Until his death in 1987, he taught extensively and founded meditation centers throughout North America and Europe.

With the founding of the Naropa Institute in 1974, Chögyam Trungpa initiated his vision of creating a university that would bring together Eastern contemplative practices, art, and studies with traditional Western scholastic and artistic disciplines.

As an unorthodox teacher, his teachings continue to spark inquiry and debate at Naropa and beyond. He is the author of more than 40 books published in more than 30 languages.



Why Naropa

As the first accredited Buddhist-inspired university in the United States, Naropa brings together Eastern and Western perspectives, and aspires to challenge conventional thinking by joining intellect and intuition. Naropa is a groundbreaking institution rooted in contemplative practices, social justice, personal and collective transformation, artistic exploration, and environmental stewardship. Naropa's vision of an interconnected global community, committed to social and ecological liberation, invites leaders to help shape a future where education serves as a catalyst for meaningful change.

As the birthplace of the modern mindfulness movement, Naropa's influence on the research and study of mindfulness is profound. This legacy continues to shape Naropa's educational model, in which the pursuit of knowledge is inseparable from the pursuit of wisdom, compassion, and skillful action.



Purpose & Mission

Naropa University's purpose is to cultivate compassionate, creative, and critical engagement with an ever-changing world through the discipline of contemplative education.

Naropa's mission is to create a more just and regenerative world by nurturing student insight, knowledge and awareness, courage, and compassion. Through contemplative pedagogy, critical thinking, and active engagement, we offer students the skills they need to authentically engage as effective, mindful leaders.

Presidential leadership at Naropa is about continuous engagement with a community that seeks to achieve its mission and support students in becoming the transformative leaders the world urgently needs.

Commitment to Diversity

Diversity and inclusivity are central to Naropa's mission. Our commitment to diversity aligns with our highest aspirations to apply contemplative inquiry and education to explore and embody the human qualities that will facilitate collaboration—by honoring differences to create common humanity and a just society. In classrooms and programs throughout and beyond campus, we work to recognize, celebrate, and support students, faculty, and staff of diverse identities and lived experiences.

Our vision is to create a welcoming environment that promotes honest, respectful, and provocative intercultural dialogue. Naropa believes that inequalities must be acknowledged at Naropa and in the larger world. We are committed to challenging systems that undermine human dignity and building a culture of belonging.

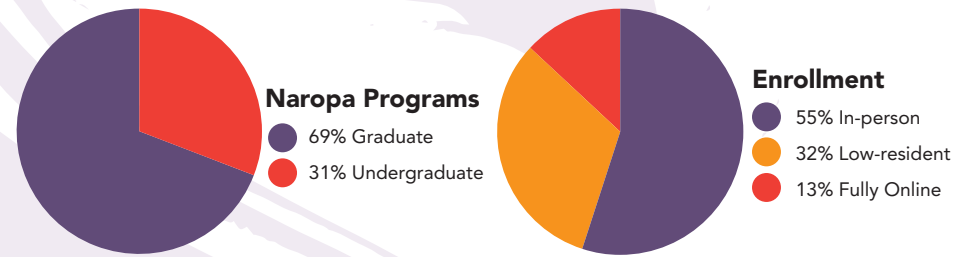


Naropa Students

Naropa University fosters a diverse and inclusive community of learners, including international students, student veterans, student parents, and high-transfer undergraduates. Our post-traditional student body, with an average age of 34, is comprised of undergraduates, graduates, and lifelong learners. Small class sizes and low student-faculty ratio facilitate personalized attention and deep engagement. As of Fall 2024, 69% of our students are enrolled in graduate programs and 31% are enrolled in undergraduate programs. 55% are in-person, 32% are low-residency, and 13% are fully online.

Students at Naropa are leaders in making positive changes including advocating for Naropa to switch to wind power, divest from fossil fuel, and start a bike share program.

Thanks to our students, Naropa became an early signatory of American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment. And in 2016, Naropa students led the change of the April 20th tradition of Earth Day to Earth Justice Day.



DISTINGUISHING PROGRAMS & CENTERS OF NAROPA UNIVERSITY

Through its programs and centers, Naropa continues to define itself as a unique institution, fostering a deep connection to self, others, and the world.

Contemplative Education

Naropa University is a leader in integrating contemplative practices within higher education, offering a distinctive approach to learning that fosters personal growth, intellectual rigor, and social transformation. Rooted in a tradition of mindfulness and compassion, Naropa is distinguished by its commitment to the development of the whole person while preparing students to engage in the challenges of our time.

A variety of contemplative practices are integrated into our programs. Naropa also hosts a Community Practice Day each semester, when our students, staff, and faculty are invited to join together in contemplative practices and teachings—a day when classes are canceled, and meetings are not scheduled.

Innovative Programs

Naropa is distinguished by its unique programs, reflecting a forward-thinking approach to education.

The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics was founded by literary and counterculture icons Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, and Diane di Prima. Offering both an MFA and BA, the Jack Kerouac School continues to serve as a home for creative inquiry. For 50 years, the acclaimed Summer Writing Program has attracted writers, poets, musicians, and artists seeking a space for artistic expression and boundary-pushing ideas. This legacy of creative engagement, blending artistic freedom with contemplative study, is a cornerstone of Naropa's academic identity.

Naropa began offering counseling and therapy programs in 1976. Currently, our Graduate School of Counseling (GSC) is the largest division of the University. The MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is one degree program with six distinct concentrations. We have identified accreditation through CACREP as a necessary priority for this program's growth and sustainability, and initiatives to support movement toward accreditation continue to progress.

Naropa University trains and graduates approximately 20% of Colorado's licensed counselors. Through our rigorous curriculum and commitment to train counselors capable of caring for the whole person, we continue to make important contributions to the counseling field.

The Transpersonal Contemplative Art-Based Counseling program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), upon the recommendation of The Accreditation Council for Art Therapy Education. Similarly, the Dance/Movement Therapy program is one of only seven dance therapy degrees approved by the American Dance Therapy Association.

Naropa was the first U.S. university to offer a BA in Yoga Studies, recognizing yoga not only as a practice but as an academic discipline.





Academic Labs & Centers

Naropa has created the Innovative Teaching and Learning Lab, funded by a Title III grant, to continue the development of online programs and to support innovative uses of technology across all three modes of study—residential, hybrid, and online. Naropa is in the final year of the Title III grant from the US Department of Education, supporting the development of online undergraduate programs. The grant has been highly successful; and, at its completion, it will have sponsored the creation of four majors, seven minors, and over 75 total courses.

Naropa is also at the forefront of research into the benefits of contemplative practices through its Cognitive and Affective Science Lab (CASL).

The Center for Contemplative Chaplaincy offers APCE-accredited Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internships in community settings under the supervision of an ACPE-certified Faculty Educator

The Keating-Schachter Center is dedicated to bringing spiritual wisdom into education, creating opportunities for university students and staff to meet and interact with wisdom holders from the world's spiritual traditions.

Mission, Culture & Inclusive Community Centers

At the heart of Naropa's unique educational model is a commitment to transformative learning—the belief that we must transform ourselves to transform the world. The division of Mission, Culture, and Inclusive Community (MCIC) is charged with values integration across the University. In addition to ensuring the University adheres to principles of restorative justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, MCIC also houses several cutting-edge integrated learning centers. These include the Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education, and the Joanna Macy Center for Resilience & Regeneration.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees provides stewardship for the University as “trust holders” for the University’s mission and wellbeing. With advice and feedback from the administration and the greater Naropa community, the Board articulates and champions the mission of the University, sets policy, and ensures sufficient resources to support the institution. The President reports to the University’s Board of Trustees and serves at its discretion. The President is an ex officio voting member. The Board currently consists of 15 voting members, which includes the Faculty and Student Trustees. Board members serve as volunteers and are elected by a majority of the Board members.

The Board, which is the final authority for institutional governance, enjoys a strong, collaborative working relationship with the President and the Executive Leadership Council (ELC).

The Board of Trustees, along with the President and the Vice President for Development, Enrollment and Student Success, is committed to strengthening alumni relations and developing broad, long-term support for the University.



Executive Leadership Council

In 2021, as part of its strategic planning process, Naropa formed the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) —representing a new model that broadens leadership across strategic initiatives, to include more involvement of academic and student support areas. The ELC is charged with the overall accountability for creating and implementing institutional initiatives.

Faculty & Shared Governance

Academic shared governance at Naropa University is conducted through the collaborative interchange of university faculty with senior administration. Faculty shared governance provides faculty with a collaborative role in establishing academic policy. The University faculty, in concert with the Vice President/Chief Academic Officer, works through the Faculty Senate (Cauldron), academic committees, and Academic Council. Both the President and the VP/CAO are non-voting, ex officio members of the Faculty Senate and Academic Council.

University-Wide Collaboration

Naropa University values and strives to engage internal constituencies in planning and visioning for the University. A recent example is the Campus Planning Steering Committee—a committee consisting of senior staff, staff, faculty, and students, which is being formed to help envision the future of Naropa’s campuses.

The Naropa Board of Trustees includes a faculty member and a student as full fiduciary and voting members of the board, who are nominated by their respective University governing bodies.

In addition to the faculty shared governance structures, the Student Union of Naropa (SUN) is the student government that acts as a bridge between faculty, staff, student groups, and the students themselves. The Staff Executive Council (SEC) represents staff, and provides a means of communication between the University administration and staff at Naropa.



Growth

While many segments of higher education struggled post-pandemic, Naropa increased enrollment by 30% in three years and increased retention by 9%. Our fundraising has increased year over year since 2020; and in the 2024-25 academic year, we are on track to increase fundraising by 40%. Naropa's most recent fundraising campaign, entitled "Naropa University: Now More Than Ever," acknowledges the way that the world can benefit from Naropa's focus on mindfulness, compassion, equity, and creativity.

Naropa Can Be Anywhere

At Naropa University, we believe that transformative education should be accessible to all, regardless of location. Expanding the University's academic programming to include online learning has allowed Naropa to serve a diverse and vibrant community of

learners representing a broad range of ages, cultures, and life experiences. Students can enroll in low-residency, fully online, or in-person programs. Currently, over 45% of our student body are enrolled in online or low-residency program—a dramatic shift from nearly zero percent pre-pandemic.

The online bachelor's degrees include programs such as Psychology, Art Therapy, Environmental Studies, and Interdisciplinary Studies. Additionally, the low-residency graduate programs offer the flexibility to study online and attend periodic in-person intensives. Low-residency programs include the Master of Arts in Ecopsychology, the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, the Master of Divinity, and the Master of Clinical Mental Health Counseling—Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling. A supportive, connected community is essential to student success; and Naropa offers robust online support services that mirror those of the residential campus.

Naropa is also a degree completion destination. In Fall 2024, 78% of our incoming undergraduate class were transfer students. Our transfer students find a sense of belonging while successfully completing their degrees. Naropa sees degree completion as a way to advance our mission, and as an important growth opportunity.

The Next 50 Years

Naropa University is in the midst of celebrating its 50th anniversary year, and this milestone has prompted the community to reflect on the past and prepare for the future.

The first 50 years of Naropa University were focused on building a campus identity and culture, academic programs, and community. Naropa now has a half-century of success in embodying the founding principles. We are proud of what we have achieved over the decades and how we have evolved with the times, expanding opportunities for people around the world to connect to our curricula and ethos. In recent years, technology has enabled us to grow through multiple modes. Naropa's new president will lay a path toward the next 50 years, supporting the core values and principles established at Naropa's founding and adapting to the current and future higher education landscape.



OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Trusted Leadership to Advance the Mission

The next President will have the opportunity to lead Naropa into the future. They will strengthen the University; guide change; and elevate Naropa's identity, reputation, and value to students and the greater community. To accomplish this, the President will foster a strong campus community and strengthen morale and trust.





They will model Naropa's values, champion clear and effective communication and operational transparency, and engage the campus community in creating a shared vision for the future.

Internal & External Facing Leadership

The President will have meaningful and frequent interactions with all members of the University community. They will also serve as a civic leader and spokesperson for the University—actively engaging locally, nationally, and internationally to build partnerships that support the University. The President will embrace the 24/7 nature of the job by being visible and engaged.

Conversations About the Future

As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, it will be important to manage the pace and scope of change successfully to advance Naropa's mission, vision, and strategic priorities. Described by its founder as a "500-year experiment", Naropa has always been a place of dynamic exploration. Our 50-year journey has been characterized by intentional, mindful leaps—restructuring programs, introducing innovative approaches, and continuously reimagining what education can be. The next President must be prepared to initiate deep, reflective conversations about our institutional identity with internal stakeholders. The President will lead with both wisdom and strategic acumen, creating space for diverse perspectives while maintaining a clear institutional vision.

Naropa has a clearly stated mission and purpose that has guided its evolution over the past 50 years. It is also true that Naropa has made rapid changes in response to urgent challenges, and not always according to a well-defined plan. Some programs and initiatives have not thrived, and were restructured or sunsetted due to low enrollment or other constraints. New programs have been introduced in response to social change and the evolution of the higher education landscape. These rapid changes have led to both positive outcomes such as enrollment growth, and

challenging consequences such as the loss of heritage programs and the departure of some key academic leaders.

A particular example is the recent pandemic, which quickly forced employees to work remotely and academic programs to move online. On a positive note, almost half of Naropa's students are now online post-COVID, resulting in 30% enrollment growth over the past 3 years; and Naropa faculty have learned how to deliver Naropa's contemplative education through online learning. However, Naropa has also been challenged by the shift from in-person to hybrid. Many faculty and staff members are partially or fully remote, including two key vice presidents who live outside of Colorado. Given this ongoing shift, the President will need to work with senior leadership to continue to develop a cohesive university culture that fosters community, communication, collaboration, and accountability.

The speed and depth of change, in the context of the chaos of the pandemic and the changing landscape of higher education, have greatly impacted the Naropa community. Through the dedication of all university constituencies and timely efforts to access government support, Naropa survived the storm. We emerged stronger in many ways, holding the clear intention to address the evolving educational landscape. All of this has resulted in an urgent need for an updated shared vision for the future of Naropa.

Developing a community-wide understanding of our current reality and a common vision about the next stage of Naropa

University is currently in process with the assistance of MindStream Higher Education Consultants. The next President will continue conversations about the future direction of Naropa and address issues of shared governance, decision-making, and resource allocation. Finally, the President will also need to work closely with the Board and executive leadership on developing and executing a capital investment plan.

Support Strategic Enrollment Management

The next President will understand that Naropa's finances are tuition-driven and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Growing enrollment along with competitive, but not unlimited, discounting is a fiscal imperative. Given the challenge of declining pools of potential students, the President will prioritize student retention, degree completion, and improving student recruitment—particularly those from underserved communities.

They will be proactive in seeking opportunities to expand academic programs and delivery options to meet the needs of an evolving student marketplace. Consideration of non-credit offerings and collegiate-level training will also be a priority.

The President will engage the faculty, staff, students, and leadership team in addressing enrollment challenges and developing innovative approaches that lead to effective and sustainable strategies. In consultation with the Board, the President and senior leadership will establish enrollment targets and communicate these goals with the community.



Accreditation

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will be making a formal reaccreditation visit in spring of 2025. It is expected that the HLC visit will result in reaccreditation. HLC accreditation is essential for continued student eligibility for federal aid.

We are currently positioning Naropa to apply for accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) for the Graduate Counseling program. The new Dean of Graduate Counseling will lead the pursuit of CACREP accreditation. Notably, an ever-increasing number of states require students to have graduated from a CACREP-accredited graduate counseling school to be eligible for a state license to practice.

The next President will be expected to establish and maintain beneficial relationships with accreditors, ensuring that Naropa is fully accredited by all appropriate regional and peer-accrediting organizations.

Adapting to a Changing Physical Plant & Infrastructure

The process of selling the Arapahoe Campus (one of two campuses owned by Naropa in Boulder) is underway. The sale agreements have been executed following a multi-year process of analysis, marketing, and assessment of alternative options and buyers. The sale will not close until sometime in mid-2026, with up to an additional two years to vacate the campus. An inclusive campus transition planning process has begun - with help from outside professional land architects and space planners, as well as a committee of trustees, staff, faculty, and students. The new President will step into that work and lead the complex process of relocating the Arapahoe campus functions to the Nalanda Campus or elsewhere, either physically or virtually. Campus planning will be informed by decisions made regarding the mix of in-person, hybrid, and online education that will be Naropa's future.



Financial Leadership

As a small university, Naropa's income is primarily from tuition and fees. The next President will be expected to develop and implement a plan to increase and diversify income streams through development of new degree programs, non-degree programs including continuing professional education, growing philanthropic support from foundations and individuals, contracts and partnerships with government and business, research efforts, and increased support from the federal government.

Over many years, Naropa has struggled to balance its operating budget. The University has sold some underutilized and non-mission critical properties, solicited and received additional donations, and benefited from COVID relief support to fund deficits. The sale of real estate has also allowed for the reduction of Naropa's long-term debt from about \$11 million in 2013 to \$3.8 million today. Recent enrollment growth, expense cutting,

and the implementation of operational efficiencies have improved Naropa's fiscal picture with more permanent rather than one-time actions. An outside firm (MindStream Higher Education Consultants) has been retained to examine all aspects of university operations and to provide a range of options to support strategic goals and priorities for fiscal sustainability and mission fulfillment. That work is about one-third complete. Once the consultant's work is completed, the President will need to bring leadership

University's overall finances and help fund future investments in university priorities. Naropa does not plan to use the multi-million dollars of proceeds from the sale of the campus to fund budget deficits, which are being addressed as stated above. Rather the proceeds will offer a unique opportunity for the new President, executive leadership, and the Board of Trustees to have significant financial resources for investment.

In addition to leading the campus relocation and strategic use of the sales proceeds, the President will be expected to take a leading role in active fundraising—in collaboration with the Office of Development and the Development Committee of the Board of Trustees—to invest in new programs, improve compensation, continue to offer significant financial aid, increase the endowment, and meet the competing demands for campus resources.

Development & Fundraising

The Office of Development operates within the Development, Enrollment, and Student Services (DESS) division. The department has instituted the Blackbaud RENXT database, created an annual plan and calendar of campaigns, established a metrics spreadsheet to track year-over-year performance, redesigned the development webpages, and enhanced the online giving process by streamlining the multiple online giving software configurations. Development also hosted our 50th Anniversary Gala in Fall 2024, which raised approximately 25% of our fundraising goal for the year from ticket sales, donations, scholarship support, and a silent auction. Annual giving has increased from \$1,888,000 in FY22 to \$2,986,000 in FY24 (63% increase). As of November 2024, giving is currently at \$2,859,000—71% to the \$4,000,000 FY25 goal. Donors increased from 422 in FY22 to 515 in FY24; and we are currently at 410 donors for FY25, 65% to the goal of 626.

to the data-driven campus budget discussions already underway and lead the planning to further reduce costs, improve revenue, and potentially reallocate resources to support a selected set of sustainable strategies.

Naropa maintains an endowment of \$4.8 million and continues to seek donations, gifts, and grants to support students, academic programs, capital improvements, and the overall operation of the University. The sale of the Arapahoe Campus will improve the



WHY BOULDER-DENVER AREA

Colorado's Front Range, including Boulder and Denver, is known for its quality of life, vibrant community, and stunning natural beauty. Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the region offers outdoor adventure, career opportunities, and progressive culture. The area is consistently named as one of the top places to live in the US. Colorado gets around 300 days of sunshine each year, and many residents enjoy an active lifestyle. The region's commitment to sustainability, public health, and partnerships in culture also adds to its uniqueness.

The city of Boulder has a population of around 100,000 people, and has a lively downtown, arts scene, and calendar full of community events. Boulder is a bike-friendly town, and the outdoor Pearl Street Mall is a popular downtown destination with shops, restaurants, and entertainment.

Educationally, Boulder offers a top-tier learning environment. Boulder Valley School District is highly rated, making Boulder a great option for families. The University of Colorado Boulder, a Tier 1 research institution, is only a few blocks from Naropa University.

Denver is just 30 minutes from Boulder, and Denver International Airport is located about 45 minutes away. This convenience allows residents to enjoy the resources of an urban area without the congestion of a bigger city, balancing connectivity with Boulder's small-town atmosphere.

QUALIFICATIONS & CHARACTERISTICS

The next President of Naropa University will be a transformational servant leader who possesses a terminal degree and demonstrates the scholarship and leadership skills necessary to earn the respect of all members of the college community. The President will have experience with and an affinity for contemplative practice, and will be open to discovering and



learning about Naropa's unique approach to contemplative education. They will demonstrate the vision, capability, and drive to inspire and motivate both the University community and a broad external spectrum of existing and potential friends, allies, and supporters to build mutually enriching relationships and partnerships.

While the search committee understands that no candidate will have all of the qualifications, we are looking for candidates with the following experience and abilities.

We seek a leader who transcends conventional leadership models. Beyond professional achievements, we are looking for someone who:

- Embodies a genuine commitment to reflective practice and effective decision-making.
- Embodies emotional intelligence and self-awareness.
- Integrates strategic thinking with compassionate action.
- Brings creativity and resilience to complex challenges.
- Demonstrates genuineness and humility in building trust.
- Includes diverse perspectives and creates psychologically safe environments for dialogue and collaboration.

Desired Qualities:

- Financial acumen with experience managing large, complex institutional finances—preferably in a higher education setting.
- A record of success in securing resources through private and public sources.
- Demonstrated leadership and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in higher education, including embedding DEI principles into strategic planning, policy-making, and daily operations.
- Experience supervising senior leaders, and a record of accomplishment in building collaborative teams across functional areas.
- Knowledge and experience in leading and managing multi-year planning and organizational change processes in higher education.
- A demonstrated commitment to academic values: teaching and learning, academic freedom and creative expression, research, and shared governance.
- Critical thinking skills that support a decision-making process that is reflective and data-driven.

- Excellent communication skills with attention to consistent communication and interaction with the university community.
- Effective listening skills where input is sought, acknowledged, and respected.
- Strong public speaking skills and the ability to effectively communicate complex topics to a variety of internal and external stakeholders.
- An understanding of Naropa's unique role in higher education and the ability to articulate this internally and externally.

If you feel drawn to this unique opportunity, we welcome your application.



APPLICATION PROCESS

The Naropa University Presidential Search Committee will begin reviewing and evaluating applications as they are received and will continue to accept and review credentials until a new president is selected. To ensure fullest consideration, candidates are advised to submit their materials by February 21, 2025.

Richard A. Wueste (richard.wueste@agbsearch.com) of AGB Search is assisting this search. Nominators and prospective candidates are encouraged to contact him.

Applications should be submitted electronically in PDF format to the [Naropa President Application Portal](#) and must include the following:

Materials must include:

- A Letter of Interest that responds to the Opportunities & Challenges and the Qualifications & Characteristics sections of this profile.
- A current CV or resume.
- The names and contact information (telephone and e-mail) for five (5) references who can speak to the candidate's ability to do this job. References will not be contacted until a later stage of the search or without the formal permission of the candidate.

Please direct questions regarding the application process to:
NaropaPresident@agbsearch.com.

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Naropa University is an equal opportunity and non-discriminatory employer and education institution and welcomes applications from all interested individuals. Naropa University is committed to providing a safe and nondiscriminatory employment and education environment. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, genetic information, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation that includes transgender state, marital status and family status, or other status protected by law. Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, is a form of discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 as well as Title VII, ADEA, and other state and local regulations.

