

April 25, 2017

Dear Friend of DRBU:

A university is many things at once. At its most basic, it's a physical place, a patch of land with buildings where people live, eat, sleep, and gather. It's a place where students form the ideas and friendships that may ground or transform them. It's a place for scholarship, concentrated effort, and laughter.

All of which is to say that a place like Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) has many moving parts. Being at the hub of DRBU's flow of activity is both a joy and a challenge. In this letter, we hope to give you a taste of what's been happening here over the past year, since the last annual letter.

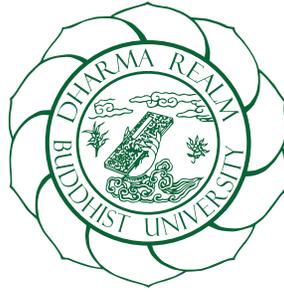
First and foremost, DRBU's student body has grown, welcoming new BA and MA entering classes. Observing students' enthusiasm for DRBU's learning model, which involves no small amount of reading and classroom participation, is inspiring to everyone involved. In the words of one DRBU student, "At first, it was intimidating, because of the small classroom size; there's no hiding. But you go to class and it's like this magical co-creation . . . Traditionally, you have a professor that teaches you the content, but here the professors tease it out of you. It's very empowering."

DRBU students also show impressive initiative, participating in or proposing extracurricular and social activities such as hiking, knitting, and sharing vegetarian recipes. Embodying a spirit of generosity, they regularly serve food to the homeless at a local Ukiah shelter. The Three Treasures Tea Club tastes fine teas and learns about their herbal properties and history. The Chinese Speaking Club has been practicing the art of Chinese lantern making. (For regular updates on student activities, see DRBU's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DharmaRealmBuddhistUniversity/>.)

Most students also participate in campus work-study to help offset their tuition. They learn office, gardening, and kitchen skills, and lend DRBU their considerable talents in matters such as web design and use of social media. (If you haven't visited www.drbu.org lately, take a look at how it's been revamped!)

Even with full teaching loads this year, DRBU's professors took steps to advance scholarship in their respective fields and share wisdom beyond the DRBU community. Among the highlights were a September 2016 conference jointly coordinated by DRBU and UC Berkeley titled "Self, Sacrifice, and Cosmos - Late Vedic Thought, Ritual, and Philosophy" and a public lecture by Chancellor Emeritus Ronald Epstein on "Harmonious Relationship as Buddhist Practice."

In addition, DRBU's co-curricular team arranged numerous well-received public events this year, such as a concert on the *guqin* (a traditional Chinese instrument), a forum on "Ethics and the Environment," and lectures on topics like "Thomas Merton and Contemplation," by Clare Ronzani, and "Civic Engagement for Humanity," by Marion Kwan and DRBU Trustee Carol Ruth Silver.



Broadening DRBU's network internationally, a University delegation traveled in November 2016 to Taiwan. Members not only gave lectures and met with local dignitaries, but also signed sister-university agreements with Huafan University and Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts. With further planning, we hope these will lead to exchange programs for faculty and students, joint projects, and academic meetings and events.

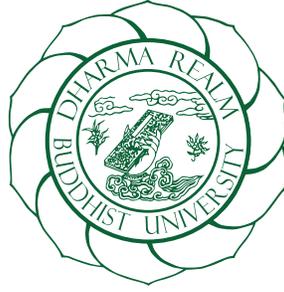
Recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) was a major milestone for DRBU. The strong commitment shown by students and faculty was instrumental in DRBU successfully obtaining this status, in June 2016. WSCUC praised DRBU "for its development and ongoing support of a community that is remarkably engaged in old and new ideas, consistently open to fresh perspectives, and creative in advancing the University's mission on and off campus." WSCUC will be making a return visit in November 2017 as part of the ongoing process toward full accreditation.

Another important milestone was reached in January of 2017, when the California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) granted renewed permission to operate the BA and MA degree programs. This approval is an important adjunct to accreditation, as WSCUC requires institutions to maintain their state approval status.

Building a campus to accommodate expanding educational and administrative activities is essential to a thriving university. A \$5.4 million renovation of the 27,700 square-foot South Wing of the "University Building" is well underway. Decades ago, this impressive facility was designated by Ven. Master Hsuan Hua to house the University's main functions. This first phase of renovation will create much-needed classrooms, office spaces, student study areas, a meditation hall, computer labs, and collection rooms for the University Library. With approximately nine months' work accomplished, the South Wing is scheduled to open in August 2017.

Over the past year, DRBU's Extension Program has ramped up its activities, holding a number of innovative retreats of varying focus and duration. One of these was a two-month "Living the Practice" immersion program, which ran from mid-October through mid-December of 2016. Ten participants—some of them entirely new to Buddhist practice—stayed on campus and followed a rigorous daily schedule of studying the Dharma, meditating, attending ceremonies, and performing community service. The initial program was so well-received that the Extension team offered another equally successful "Living the Practice" session in Spring 2017.

The Sudhana Center, located in Ukiah's historic westside neighborhood, hosted several events this year. A noteworthy retreat was "Adulting in the Dharma," led by Rev. Heng Sure. Sixty participants investigated what it means to grow up in today's world and how the Dharma can aid in that endeavor. One participant noted afterward, "What resonated with me most . . . was a song that Reverend Heng Sure performed on the guitar. The lyrics . . . consisted of an English translation of a verse Venerable Master Hsu Yun wrote upon his awakening. It goes:



*The cup hit the floor with a ringing sound
That echoed in the air
Empty space, too, broke to bits
And my mad mind stopped right there.*

Over the course of the next few weeks, I kept reciting and contemplating this verse—an inspiration to be happy and the master of my mind at all times.”

DRBU’s unique program offerings have begun to garner the attention of the broader Buddhist community. An example is the recent naming of DRBU by the *Tricycle* magazine as one of the few “practitioner-friendly institutions” in the U.S., where one can both study and practice Buddhism. This recognition reflects the quality of DRBU’s programs as well as our commitment to the scholar-practitioner model.

As DRBU develops into a world-class institution for Buddhist higher learning, the University Board of Trustees understands that such an endeavor requires a sound financial foundation. The Board is planning a ten-year, \$30 million campaign to ensure that critical resources and support are available for the upcoming phase of University growth.

We are delighted to report recent, significant growth in support for DRBU. Our donor base has doubled from the previous year. With generous support from Board members and donors, we reached the halfway mark of this year’s Annual Fund goal of \$275,000 as of the end of March. There are a few months remaining for DRBU to reach its goal for the year.

Thank you for your continued interest in DRBU’s efforts to provide an education unlike any other offered in the United States. We often hear the question “How can I help?” There are many ways to make an impact, such as spreading the word about DRBU to your circle of friends, naming DRBU in your estate planning documents, or making a financial gift to DRBU’s scholarship, building, endowment, or annual fund. Every gift goes a long way in this time of intense growth. Please see www.drbu.org/giving for details.

And if you’re not a local, please stop by DRBU for a visit next time your travels take you to Northern California! We’d love to show you around and share our unique and inspiring campus with you.

Sincerely,

Bhikshuni Heng Chih, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees

Susan Rounds, Ph.D.
President