

# Wy'east Zen Center

## Fall Term Student Program

The Term Student program is designed to provide structure for those who wish to intensify their practice and sangha connections for a specific period of time. Terms are typically three months long. Committing to a term provides a clear beginning and end to a period when Zen practice and involvement at Wy'east Zen Center take a higher priority in your life. Because you are not making a long-term commitment, and because you are joining others in the term, the chances of following through on your intention to intensify practice can be greatly improved.

The Term Student program consists of three basic elements:

- your own daily practice at home and/or work;
- regular involvement at Wy'east Zen Center
- attendance at the term opening retreat **October 8<sup>th</sup>** and closing retreat **Jan 7**

These are tied together with a Vow of Practice. A Vow of Practice is something that can be done on your own, independent of the Term Student program. It often includes a theme, or statement of purpose. When we wish to intensify our practice, there is usually an underlying motivation that calls us to do this. It can be helpful to recognize and identify this purpose, and include it in the vow.

After the statement of purpose, include a description of your basic daily practice. This includes things like your daily zazen, any service you do, verses you incorporate in daily life, reading and study. We encourage flexibility, with a "bottom line" description, i.e. "I will try to do morning zazen five days a week, but will always do it at least two days a week." The idea is to make a vow that will cause you to stretch, but is doable over the whole period of time. Then list the extra events you will do, including participating in the term student retreats or other Zen retreats (such as Rohatsu or Segaki) you plan on doing this term. This could include retreats or events at Dharma Rain Zen Center or Brightway Zen.

During the opening retreat each term, students summarize their vows during the term dedication ceremony and then place them on the altar. This ceremony is taken from the monastic term dedication ceremony in which monks agree to spend the term in training together. Sharing our vows at this time permits the group to witness each person's commitment, and we also have the opportunity to share something of what it is that brings us together to practice.

One major purpose of the Term Student program is to create a venue in which a group of lay people can go through a practice period together. Because we are not a monastery, it can be difficult to meet each other in the intimate way that develops when people live in close proximity for an extended period of time. Much of the first retreat each term is spent connecting with each other. To do this, people new to the program

are asked to prepare by taking the time to write out three personal outlines. You would start by looking back over your life and writing a chronological outline of your life events. Next, you would write a “karmic outline.” This is a list of events or circumstances that have marked you in some way, and have contributed in making you who you are. These can be specific things like alcoholic parents, or more general ones, like growing up in the country, or near a lake. Third, make a “spiritual outline.” This is, perhaps, not very different from the “karmic outline,” but we have found that what people have in mind when they take the time to look back on their lives causes different things to emerge. Think specifically about things that have formed your spiritual point of view. So please take the time to look back from these different perspectives. What you write can be for your own use only, or you may give it to the priests if you wish. This exercise is to prepare you to make a five or ten minute presentation at the first retreat of the term. We want people to say something about who they are, what has brought them to this practice, and what they bring to the practice and to the group. After each person speaks, the others will ask questions.

Other elements often included in the Term Student program are a text that is studied for the term with Dharma Talks during meditation, and mondo practice, which is an exercise that brings the way we meet each other into the realm of Dharma. The Dharma is not something that is grasped in the mind, but something that is realized in our lives. Deep and intimate Sangha connections are vitally important in helping us bring the Dharma to fruition in a real way. That is what we hope to accomplish in the Term Student program.

Participation: If you are interested in participating please contact Shintai at [jdungay@hotmail.com](mailto:jdungay@hotmail.com) or 971 344 5431 or Jyoshin Clay at [jyoshin@dharmarain.org](mailto:jyoshin@dharmarain.org) to sign up. If you are participating for the first time, we will set up a time to talk individually about the program and your vow. If you have participated in the past, please let me know if you would like to set up a time to talk about your vow.

\*This document adapted from Dharma Rain Zen Center’s term student program information.