



Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

June 26, 2020

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to report this week that the implementation of a rigorous plan to address the health and safety concerns of faculty, staff, and students is well underway. In light of the governor's recent remarks addressing rising COVID-19 numbers in Arizona, we believe it is even more important that we disseminate our plans as broadly as possible to reinforce our commitment to addressing current circumstances.

Northern Arizona University's top priority continues to be the health and safety of all Lumberjacks. This must be a community effort. Today's message includes details of our mitigation strategies, but success will require every student, faculty, and staff member doing their part by embracing and practicing a commitment to individual and campus safety.

The central tenets of our **Jacks are Back** plan include stressing frequent hand washing, implementing physical distancing protocols across campus, mandating mask wearing where physical distancing is not consistently possible, and providing all Lumberjacks with the training and education they need before returning to campus, which will help us enforce these protocols. The first step is our **return to on-campus work plan** announced last week, which will phase in our faculty and staff's return to campus. Masks or face coverings must be worn by everyone in classrooms. They also must be worn in all public and shared spaces on campus, including meeting rooms, common areas, restrooms, elevators, buses, and outdoor spaces where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. In addition to educating our employees and students, our teams are focused on appropriately sanitizing workspaces and addressing spacing needs in a range of working and academic environments.

As we move forward, I want to acknowledge the concerns that some faculty and staff may have about returning to campus and what that means for them personally. We are working on a plan that will address specific individual concerns on a case-by-case basis. This plan will direct those employees who self-identify as qualifying under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to work directly with Disability Resources to determine whether a reasonable accommodation exists that still allows the employee to perform the essential functions of their job. This plan will also direct those employees who don't qualify for ADA accommodation to work directly with their supervisors, and HR as needed, to address any concerns. We are working on guidance for unit leaders, and we will share that guidance with them very soon.

Our plans align with those of many other colleges and universities across the country and have been developed in consultation with, and following guidance from, local and national health officials and experts. While there is no such thing as a zero-risk environment, we are taking extraordinary measures to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19. We will continue to monitor the latest information from the CDC and implement additional measures to reflect future guidance.

I believe that Dr. Larry Penley, Chair of the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), provides an excellent perspective on why the Regents have encouraged and endorsed our state universities' plans to open their campuses for the fall in **his op-ed this week**.

We recognize that a major challenge will be educating our students about what they must do for their personal health and to help protect those around them, including our faculty and staff. This is why we are asking our students to take our **Lumberjack Way pledge**, which codifies their

commitment to themselves and—importantly—to the broader community. Part of the Lumberjack Way pledge includes a commitment to daily self-screenings prior to interacting with others on campus, and we will provide the information and tools to make these screenings a simple part of everyday life for our students. We will be asking our faculty and staff to take these daily health screenings as well as we work together for a healthy community.

The careful, phased-in, science-based approach we are taking to opening campus will allow us to begin the semester on August 12 with the confidence that we are doing the right thing for the students we serve, as well as for our valued faculty and staff.

More information and details on our back to campus plan can be found at nau.edu/jacks-are-back/.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rita". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small mark at the end.

Rita Hartung Cheng
President