



Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

March 26, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

Spring is officially here. In Flagstaff, this means the arrival of robins, crocuses, and a healthy helping of snow.

With the arrival of spring also comes news that NAU has met the requirements to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution. A Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) is defined as an accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment. HSI status allows NAU to apply for grants to expand educational opportunities and improve the attainment of Hispanic students and to expand and enhance academic offerings and programs.

The HSI recognition underscores our commitment to underrepresented populations and providing increasing levels of access to these students. We are proud of attaining this distinction, as it reflects positively on our staff and faculty and institution overall.

I am also excited to report that we received word this week that six NAU students were selected for National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program awards. The awards provide support for their graduate education, a nod to their potential and research achievements in STEM and STEM education. The awards provide annual stipends, an education allowance, and mentoring and networking opportunities to allow graduate students to be more independent in their research and branch out from grant-funded projects.

NAU's winners are:

- **Jessica Archibald**, master's student in environmental science and policy
- **John Castañeda** a doctoral student in applied physics and materials science
- **Jonathan Chin**, a senior majoring in physics and mechanical engineering
- **Megan Gialluca**, a senior majoring in physics and astrophysics
- **Andy López-Oquendo**, a doctoral student in astronomy and planetary science
- **Ethan Taber**, a master's student in environmental science and policy

I'd also like to provide an update from our Organizational Growth and Effectiveness Initiative (OGEI) team. Our team of faculty and staff is the foundation for NAU's success and the services we provide to our students, our communities, and our state. An integral

part of the OGEI process is NAU's commitment to a total rewards program and compensation philosophy designed to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, high-quality, and motivated workforce.

I am pleased to report that the compensation and classification portion of the project has been finalized with the publishing of updated staff titles, grades, and salary ranges. Moreover, we are taking an additional significant step by moving employees up to the new minimum compensation levels for these ranges, which will positively affect nearly one-third of our staff. Additional information can be found on the [Compensation & Classification website](#). Human Resources will be communicating with impacted individuals as early as next week.

Our actions reflect the need for NAU to invest in our people, and we will continue to review the market and current compensation rates to ensure that over time we remain highly competitive. We know we have some ground to make up, given the financial challenges we faced throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We are evaluating options to incorporate additional salary adjustments that were, by necessity, deferred during the height of the pandemic and reward your efforts and dedication. I appreciate your continued commitment to our students' success and to this truly exceptional institution.

I close with a COVID-19 update. NAU continues to work with community partners to provide access to vaccines. Now that vaccine eligibility in Coconino County has opened to anyone 18 and older, we encourage all students to register for a vaccine appointment. Scheduling your vaccination as soon as possible will allow you to receive your first and second doses before the end of the semester. You may register at the [Coconino County website](#). State sites in Maricopa, Pima, and Yuma counties now have vaccines available to faculty, staff, and students, as well as anyone over 16 years of age.

NAU continues to follow COVID-19 mitigation protocols. For the safety of our students, faculty, staff, and everyone in our extended communities, we ask that you stay vigilant, wear masks, wash your hands, maintain appropriate distancing, and take every precaution available to keep yourselves and others safe.

As of this afternoon, NAU is managing 15 COVID-19 cases among students on and off campus, up slightly from last week. Additional updates can be found on [NAU's coronavirus page](#).

Let's finish the semester strong and go home healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a trailing flourish.

Rita Hartung Cheng
President