



# Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

October 16, 2020

Dear Lumberjacks,

NAU has a long history of providing a warm and inviting welcome to students of all races, creeds, cultures, and gender identities. We consider our commitment to diversity and inclusion not only a core value, but cause for celebration. Our activities over the past month reflect this priority—we have celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, LGBTQIA+ History Month, and Disability Pride and Heritage Month—and we are excited about our plans to honor Native American traditions and culture in November during Native American Heritage Month.

I am deeply proud of the progress we have made in this area during my tenure and thankful to everyone committed to supporting a culture of diversity and understanding that continues to enhance the success of our students. Almost 40 percent of our student body comes from diverse populations. This translates into 11,535 students, an increase of nearly 7 percentage points over the last five years. The diversity of our faculty and staff also continues to grow, with 22.1 percent coming from underrepresented populations.

I am impressed by the efforts of the Lumberjack family to embrace diverse communities, cultures, and perspectives. The latest proof of our commitment in this regard is the NAU Diversity Fellows Program.

I would like to acknowledge Diversity Fellow and NAU Professor Dr. Gabe Montaña for his counsel and leadership in the creation of this presidential initiative that will:

- Recognize those who have shown commitment to diversity and inclusion at NAU
- Assemble leaders to provide, enhance, and support NAU's vision of Diversity and Inclusion efforts
- Identify a group of fellows to serve as liaisons to the NAU community in the implementation of our Diversity Strategic Plan

The Diversity Fellows Council will be made up of 8 to 10 members who are knowledge experts and will serve three-year appointments with a potential one-time renewal. They will receive an annual \$1,000 stipend from the Office of the President.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to nominate themselves or colleagues who have shown an extraordinary commitment to diversity and inclusion within and/or beyond NAU. Nominations are open through 5 p.m. Tuesday, November 17.

Details and a nomination form can be found on the [Diversity Fellows Program site](#), or obtained by reaching out to the Center for University Access and Inclusion at [CUAI@nau.edu](mailto:CUAI@nau.edu).

I am confident that this initiative will help ensure that race, ethnicity, religion, sexual and gender identities, disability, and all perspectives are valued, celebrated, recognized, and woven into the fabric of NAU. Doing so provides a more enriching and robust experience for our students, preparing them for their lives beyond campus.

I close this week's message with the latest update on our COVID-19 risk mitigation efforts. As of this afternoon, NAU is managing 72 cases among students on- and off-campus, slightly lower than last week. Updates can be found at [nau.edu/coronavirus](https://nau.edu/coronavirus).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita", written in a cursive style.

**Rita Hartung Cheng**  
President