



# Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

October 9, 2020

Dear Lumberjacks,

As we settle into fall, I hope you are staying active and taking advantage of our great fall weather and the natural beauty around us. Our environment in and around Flagstaff is one of the things that make being at NAU such a unique experience. I am inspired by the beauty of the changing season, but even more so by the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff.

Earlier this week, I shared an overview of our many successes with the university's leadership and the Faculty Senate. I am happy to share some highlights of these presentations with our larger Lumberjack community.

Our efforts to expand access and create equity have paid off dramatically. Since 2014, we have nearly doubled the percentage of first-generation students, to more than 45 percent, providing opportunities for social and economic mobility that may have been limited for them in the past.

I am also happy to report that once a student is here, they are likely to stay and thrive. Despite the pandemic, our retention rate remains close to ten-year highs, four- and six-year graduation rates continue to climb, and the median class size remains unchanged from last year.

Our investment in technology has allowed us to equip 95 percent of our classrooms statewide with NAUFlex technology, helping students learn seamlessly face-to-face or online.

Our virtual capabilities have helped us enhance the learning experience, allowing us to bring guest speakers from around the globe to our classrooms, and inspiring a great deal of creativity among our world-class faculty members. The fact that our faculty and students have embraced NAUFlex technology is reflected in some astonishing statistics. The use of Zoom technology has exploded with 61,661 Zoom meetings since the beginning of the semester, accounting for more than 44 million meeting minutes, and involving 777,578 meeting participants.

Technology has also facilitated our ability to remain highly engaged with our students, a critical factor in maintaining our strong retention numbers.

- Student Affairs hosted more than 4,600 student sessions this summer to strengthen retention and academic success.
- More than 5,200 mentoring, tutoring, and academic support sessions have been held this semester—3,396 of which were held virtually.
- NAU hosted more than 9,300 phone or Zoom pre-semester advising appointments between July 1 and August 11.

- NAU hosted more than 7,500 phone or Zoom advising appointments this semester—more than 3,000 additional appointments from fall 2019.
- Our Academic Success Centers have accommodated more than 7,800 visits by more than 3,400 students including more than 1,100 one-on-one tutoring appointments and more than 4,200 supplemental instruction visits.
- Knowing the COVID-19 pandemic would increase the need for access to all areas of health-related services, our Campus Health Services substantially increased access for in-person, telehealth, and other services. More than 15,700 individual health services were provided since May, including 1,700+ telehealth appointments, 5,800+ in-person Campus Health appointments, and 2,700+ tele-counseling appointments.

These examples show that not only is technology helping us supplement our more limited use of in-person interactions, it holds the promise of helping us deliver a higher degree of service to our students once the pandemic is over. My thanks once again to every member of our community for embracing these changes and helping to ensure we provide access to the university in a multitude of modalities that support our "student-first" focus.

Meanwhile, our COVID-19 risk mitigation efforts continue to be effective. As of this afternoon, NAU is managing 79 cases among students on- and off-campus, 48 fewer than last week. Continued testing, and your efforts to protect yourself and our community, is making a difference. For more updates, please visit [nau.edu/coronavirus](https://nau.edu/coronavirus).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita", with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Rita Hartung Cheng**  
President