



University Strategic Planning Advisory Board Annual Report

August 2024

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY



Introduction

NAU's Strategic Roadmap, *Elevating Excellence*, guides and focuses our institutional efforts in seven strategic priority areas as we work to realize our vision to **be the nation's preeminent engine of opportunity, vehicle of economic mobility, and driver of social impact by delivering equitable postsecondary value in Arizona and beyond.**

The University Strategic Planning Advisory Board (USPAB) is a representative body of staff, faculty, and students who help advise and support the President and Cabinet on institutional strategic planning processes. During the 2023–24 academic year, the USPAB focused on monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Roadmap through presentations by, and engagement with, university leaders who shared the impactful work taking place across the strategic priority areas.

“We are not just planning for the future; we are actively creating it. Every initiative, every effort, brings us closer to realizing our vision of delivering unparalleled equitable postsecondary value.”

– K. Laurie Dickson,
Vice President for University Strategy and
Senior Associate to the President, USPAB Chair

This annual report showcases a range of emblematic institutional initiatives that have been advanced in the past year, which together propel our strategic priorities and enable NAU to realize our vision. Across all the USPAB's meetings this year, university leaders highlighted a tremendous depth and breadth of engagement with the Strategic Roadmap throughout the university, with countless local efforts contributing to our strategic priorities. For the purposes of this report,

the emphasis will remain on select university-wide efforts that have been the focus of Cabinet-level investments of time, talent, energy, and resources to support the Strategic Roadmap. Still, we recognize and applaud the many additional contributions to *Elevating Excellence* that are taking place throughout the university.

Ultimately, through the intentionality of our institutional efforts—large and small—across the strategic priority areas, NAU will increase educational attainment, enhance post-college outcomes for all students, and drive social and economic impact in Arizona.

As highlighted in this report, the impact of our work is significant, and a strong foundation is in place at NAU that is anchored in our vision. In the year ahead, the USPAB will turn its focus to facilitating the continued evolution of the Strategic Roadmap. We will build on the successes registered to date and help articulate aspirational goals and meaningful success indicators that demonstrate to internal and external constituents alike that NAU is truly delivering equitable postsecondary value in Arizona and beyond.

Strategic Priorities:

- Academic Excellence
- Student Success
- Commitment to Indigenous Peoples
- Impactful Scholarship
- Mission-driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff
- Community Engagement
- Sustainable Stewardship of Resources





NAU's academic programs are pathways to economic mobility and social impact

Academic Excellence

- NAU has expanded student research opportunities and increased internship participation. **These high-impact learning opportunities** help prepare students for post-graduation success. Because of their placement experience, **86% of students said they'd be more likely to pursue employment in the state of Arizona following graduation.**
- NAU faculty advanced teaching excellence and fostered learning environments that support the success of all students with the adoption of the **Inclusive Excellence in Teaching framework** and the launch of **First Year Together**, a first-year course design and coordination program.
- NAU received the prestigious Andrew Heiskell Award, recognizing the university's success in broadening participation among first-generation and lower-income students in study abroad and other international learning experiences through the innovative **Global Citizen Project Scholars program.**
- Spurred to meet Arizona's workforce and healthcare needs, **NAU Health efforts** expanded accelerated training opportunities in nursing. We launched an innovative hybrid Doctor of Physical Therapy program that strengthens preparation for clinical practice. Additionally, the initial design of the College of Medicine at NAU is underway to address Arizona's critical need for more primary care physicians and other healthcare professionals.
- Thanks to an investment of **\$13 million by the Arizona Commerce Authority**, NAU will contribute to Arizona's semiconductor ecosystem by expanding training programs and research related to metrology, a foundational component of semiconductor manufacturing.
- Responsive to the workforce and social needs of Arizona and beyond, NAU's **new academic programs are pathways to high-demand careers** in health, teaching, and other areas around the state. One example is the new state-of-the-art Mesa Workforce Development Center and its expansion of hands-on hospitality education to fill growing workforce needs.

“As a university we have succeeded in recent years in bringing the entirety of the academic community around a collective sense of purpose about what is important for NAU going forward and the ways in which we serve students through academic excellence.”

– Karen Pugliesi, Executive Vice President and Provost

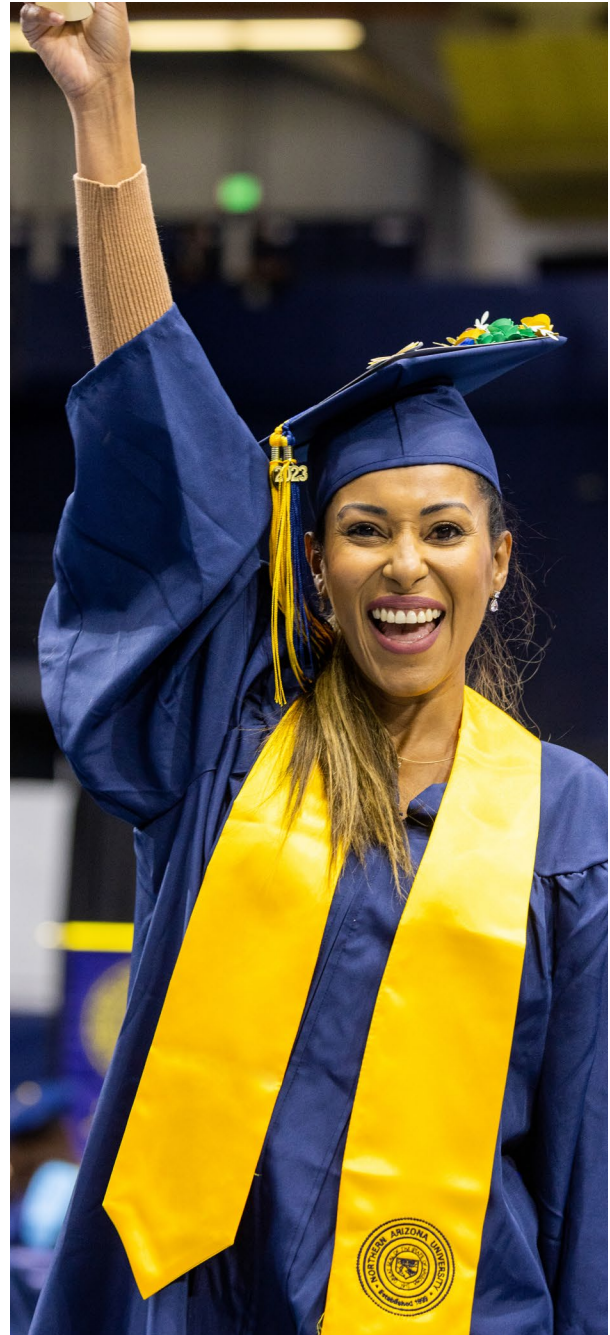
Student Success

- In fall 2023, NAU welcomed the largest number of first-year Arizona resident students (4,318) in its 124-year history. Nearly half qualified for the **Access2Excellence (A2E) tuition program** that ensures full tuition coverage for Arizona residents whose household annual income is \$65,000 or below or who are members of Arizona's 22 federally recognized tribal nations.
- NAU **won the Great Admissions Redesign Challenge**, a national competition to transform how students get into college. NAU's **Universal Admissions** program allows applicants who do not initially meet NAU's admissions requirements to be automatically accepted into an Arizona community college, with a seamless pathway to transfer back to NAU (with no re-application necessary) when they are ready.

“The Access2Excellence program is one of many NAU initiatives that is making a high-quality postsecondary education affordable and accessible for all Arizonans.”

– Anika Olsen, Vice President
of Enrollment Management

- At **GEAR UP 5E high schools**, NAU directly supported high school students in their educational journey by providing a combined **40,313 student participation hours** of academic advising, mentoring, financial aid, tutoring, career assistance, workshops, and educational field trips. Seniors at these high schools **received a total of \$12,686,432 in scholarships**.
- **Student success and academic momentum** are improving, with average credits earned in the first year on the rise, while retention from fall to spring for first-year students increased from 89.1% to 91.3%.
- NAU is increasing educational attainment with over **7,000 degrees awarded** in 2023, which includes 100 students whose push to complete their degree was energized by the support of the **Jacks on Track** program.
- As a marker of post-graduation success, **Arizona wage outcomes for Arizona residents** were the highest in NAU history, reaching a median of \$66,768 for bachelor's degree recipients ten years after graduation.
- NAU ranks in the **top tier for economic mobility** among all postsecondary institutions in the United States. The average NAU student begins to achieve positive returns on their educational investment less than three years after graduating, according to the Third Way Economic Mobility Index.



Momentum and retention are on the rise as NAU supports the success of all students





The Native American Cultural Center serves more than 10,000 students annually



Commitment to Indigenous Peoples

- Fall 2023 saw a **47% increase** in new Native American student enrollment with support from NAU's Access2Excellence tuition program. NAU's enrollment of Native American students is 15th of all four-year public universities.
- NAU **ranked 8th** in the nation for awarding bachelor's degrees to Native American students and **6th** for awarding master's degrees to Native American students in all disciplines.
- Celebrating ten years as a warm gathering place for students, scholars, tribal collaborators, the university community, and the public, the **Native American Cultural Center (NACC)** serves more than 10,000 students annually. Last year, the NACC welcomed 70,000 visitors and hosted more than 465 events, including tours, educational presentations, concerts, cultural events, and student services.
- NAU researchers are leading the **NSF Center for Braiding Indigenous Knowledges and Science**, a five-year, \$30 million center, based at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The center is designed to connect Indigenous knowledge with mainstream Western sciences to address some of the most pressing issues of our time.
- The **Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP)** is the nation's leader in strengthening tribal capacity and sovereignty in environmental and natural resource management through culturally relevant education, research, partnerships, and policy-based services. Over the past 32 years, ITEP has served more than 95% of all 574 tribes in the United States.

“NAU is making great strides to become the leading university serving Indigenous Peoples.”

– Ann Marie Chischilly, Vice President for Native American Initiatives

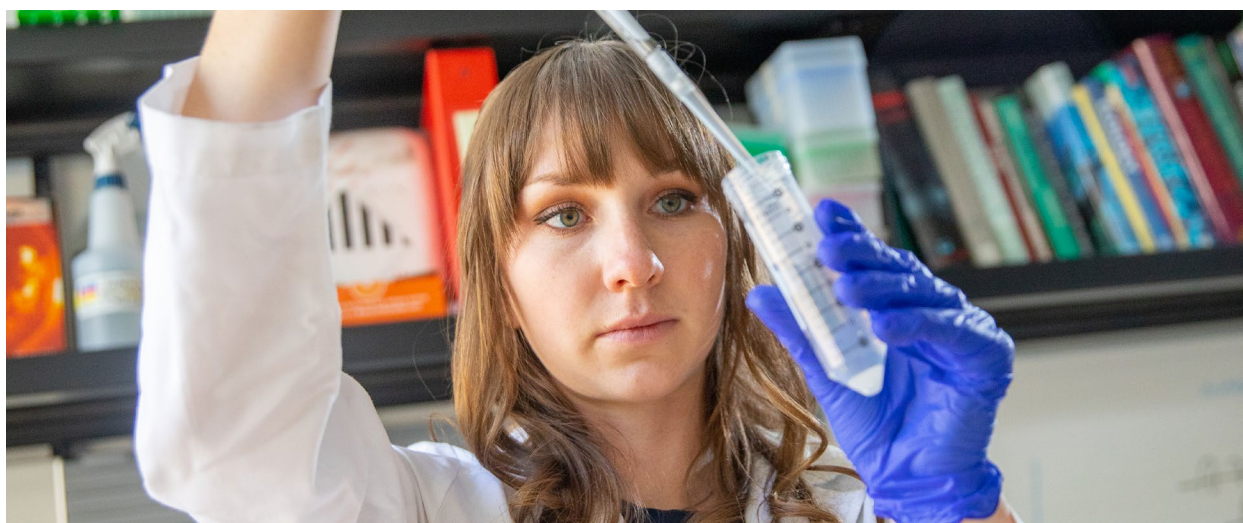
Impactful Scholarship

- In a **record-breaking year of research**, NAU experienced the largest annual increase in research expenditures in its history. Total research expenditures were \$77.5 million, an increase of \$10.8 million over the prior year. The university exceeded \$50 million in federal research dollar expenditures for the first time ever.

“NAU’s research strengths are aligned with our priorities in multiple dimensions, including helping to better the communities we serve and finding new ways to engage our students and support their success. It’s incredibly gratifying that we can achieve such a high level of research success while staying true to NAU’s student-focused and access-oriented mission.”

– Jason Wilder, Vice President for Research

- NAU’s research growth spans many areas of strategic investment and focus, including **health equity and health sciences, defense, climate change and forest health, and planetary science**.
- The Institute for Human Development (IHD) engages in **research and service activities that promote and enhance quality of life, community engagement, and economic opportunity**. In FY23, the institute’s budget included almost \$5 million in federal grant-funded projects that supported groundbreaking research and programs to help people with disabilities get the access and tools they need to get an education, find a job, and more, with nearly 15,000 participants served.
- Nearly 1,300 students received course credit, independent research credit, or were paid to **conduct research or projects in the arts and humanities**; 1,190 students gave 624 different presentations at the 2024 Undergraduate Symposium (a 46% increase).
- In spring 2024, NAU **recognized exemplary faculty** from a wide range of disciplines for their excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activities that advance disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and contribute to solving problems of regional, national, and global relevance.
- The Arizona Office of the Governor awarded a \$5 million grant to support NAU’s innovative scholarship and programming to ensure we are **better prepared for wildfire prevention, management, and recovery**.
- An interdisciplinary team of engineering students from NAU won a **national hydropower competition** sponsored by the US Department of Energy, helping them gain industry exposure and an advantage in their future clean energy careers.



Total research expenditures were

\$77.5 million

a record for NAU



Mission-Driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff

- NAU continues to **put its people-first philosophy into action**, working toward providing a 10% increase to all salaries in a three-year period. Since 2022, NAU has **invested an additional ~\$30 million** in salary adjustments and mid-year merit adjustments. NAU has recognized exceptional performance and advanced salary equity. In total, more than 48 percent of the university's faculty and staff have seen compensation increases of 10 percent or more in the last two years.

“ We recognize that our dedicated faculty and staff are the key to any success NAU has and any impact NAU is able to make. We continue to prioritize retaining, attracting, and developing a workforce that is highly qualified and committed to our vision and values. ”

– Josh Mackey, Vice President
and Chief Human Resource Officer

- NAU is committed to fostering a healthy, fulfilled, and mission-driven workforce. After two successful pilot years, **TrueBlue Summer Fridays** are a standard part of NAU's workplace practices and culture!
- **Retention of faculty and staff** is the highest ever in NAU's history.
- NAU developed an **Inclusive Excellence Action Plan** that focuses on meeting the university's commitment to educate, support, and empower students from all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences to reach their full potential.
- Building equitable policies and practices for staff, NAU redesigned its staff **performance management** approach and updated internal **professional development opportunities** known as Performance ELEVATED, BASEcamp, and ASCEND.
- Building equitable policies and practices for faculty, Academic Affairs revised the **COFS and faculty workload policy**, as well as faculty search processes, the Future Faculty Fellows program, and faculty salary market benchmarking practices.



NAU has invested significantly in faculty and staff compensation and workplace policies.



NAU's worldwide alumni network is over **205K**



Community Engagement

“NAU’s leadership in community engagement serves as a catalyst that drives our mission forward, supports making higher education more accessible and affordable, positively influences career readiness and post-graduate outcomes, drives social impact, and creates economic vitality.”

– Stephanie Smith, Associate Vice President, Advancement | Foundation

- **Six hundred and eight Alumni volunteered** their time, talent, and energy this year as mentors, chapter leaders, speakers, Undergraduate Symposium judges, board members, and many other roles. Their contributions help fuel the momentum and advance the mission of NAU.
- More than **205,000 alumni** are rooted in the NAU experience —the traditions, values, and pride that propel our journey to make a difference.
- Staff served **1,917 hours** as part of NAU’s Volunteer Release Time, supporting local schools, preparing meals for food-insecure people, participating in community clean-ups, and more.
- NAU hosted more than **15 career fairs** in 2023–24, connecting more than **4,800 students** with **470 unique employers**.
- The Center for Service and Volunteerism launched **Axe of Service**, a digital platform to better coordinate and connect community volunteer service opportunities among NAU employees and students.
- **Collaboratory** is a central repository maintained by the Office of Community Relations to document NAU’s external activities that contribute to broad social, cultural, and economic impact.

“Diversification of revenue streams is necessary as we navigate challenging economic times and collaboratively accelerate institutional priorities to realize our vision through aligned, focused efforts and investments.”

– Bjorn Flugstad, Senior Vice President, University Finance & Business Services

Sustainable Stewardship of Resources

- Through the collective impact of supporters, the NAU Foundation achieved another record fundraising year, resulting in **\$46,369,177 in private support from 10,627 donors**. Each gift and Axe of Kindness strengthens NAU’s distinctive excellence, empowering students to achieve their ambitions.
- NAU realized the highest-ever amount of **facilities and administration revenue** associated with sponsored awards.
- **The Smart, Sustainable, Comprehensive Campus Master Plan** was approved by the Arizona Board of Regents in November 2023. The plan focuses on students and the infrastructure necessary for their success, integrates smart elements, promotes inclusivity, and provides a vision for strengthened connections between campus and the local community, all while meeting NAU’s sustainability commitments.
- NAU received the Gold STARS® rating in November 2023, demonstrating continued progress toward **long-term sustainability goals**.
- **NAU faculty create engaging learning environments and teach** in-person and online courses with the support and structure of Canvas, NAU’s new learning management system.



NEW RECORDS set at NAU GIVING DAY 2024

 Total raised
\$791,688

2,027 Total Axe of Kindness 

 **400+** Giving Day volunteers students, staff, alumni

26 Challenges unlocked 

20 Statewide Giving Day events



University Strategic Planning Advisory Board

Charter

The University Strategic Planning Advisory Board (USPAB) is a representative advisory board charged by President Cruz Rivera with advising and supporting institutional strategic planning processes, monitoring the implementation and assessment of the Strategic Roadmap, and facilitating the continuous evolution of the Strategic Roadmap itself.

2023–24 membership

K. Laurie Dickson, Chair, Vice President for University Strategy and Senior Associate to the President

T Noecker, Vice Chair, Director, Strategic Planning & Institutional Analytics

Laura Jones, President’s Representative, Chief Data Officer

Judith Scholar Winfield, Staff Representative, Contracts Analyst, Facility Services

Kyrie Fry, Staff Representative, Director, University Marketing

Ashok Subramanian, Provost’s Representative, Dean, The W. A. Franke College of Business

Michelle Mack, Faculty Representative, Regents’ Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and the Center for Ecosystem Science and Society

Tarang Jain, Faculty Representative, Associate Professor, Physical Therapy and Athletic Training

Julian Bernhardt, Undergraduate Student Government Representative, ASNAU Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diamond Bracey, Graduate Student Government Representative, GSG President

2023–24 USPAB agenda

USPAB focused on monitoring progress indicators across the roadmap’s strategic priorities, as well as engaging with leadership across the university regarding divisional efforts and initiatives, intended outcomes, factors impacting success, and resource allocation. The USPAB provided critical feedback regarding alignment and magnification of efforts.

The USPAB thanks our institutional leaders for their thoughtful, informative presentations and engaging discussion regarding the collaborative efforts within and across units that provided the advisory board with information useful for monitoring the advancement of *Elevating Excellence*, NAU’s Strategic Roadmap.

Comments regarding this report may be sent to Elevating.Excellence@nau.edu.

Additional information regarding institutional metrics can be found at in.nau.edu/institutional-research.

2023–24 USPAB meeting schedule

August 2023	New Member Orientations
September 6, 2023	Impactful Scholarship presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jason Wilder, Vice President for Research
October 4, 2023	Stewardship of Resources presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bjorn Flugstad, Senior Vice President for Finance, University Finance & Business Services • Erik Nielsen, Chief Sustainability Officer, Associate Professor, School of Earth and Sustainability • Megan Cunningham, Director, University Budget Office • Steven Burrell, Chief Information Officer, Vice President for Technology
November 1, 2023	Student Success presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margot Saltonstall, Vice President of Student Affairs • Anika Olsen, Vice President of Enrollment Management • Chad Eickhoff, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management • Karen Pugliesi, Executive Vice President and Provost
December 6, 2023	Commitment to Indigenous Peoples presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Marie Chischilly, Vice President of Native American Initiatives • Ora Marek-Martinez, Associate Vice President, Office of Native American Initiatives
January 10, 2024	Academic Excellence presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Pugliesi, Executive Vice President and Provost • John Georgas, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Operations • Yvonne Luna, Vice Provost for Academic Workforce Alliances • Maribeth Watwood, Vice Provost for Academic Programming and Graduate Studies • Roger Bounds, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs • Yimin Wang, Vice Provost for Global Affairs
March 6, 2024	Faculty and Staff presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Mackey, Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer • Meagan Decker, Associate Vice President, Human Resources • Roger Bounds, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs • Justin Mallett, Vice President, Inclusive Excellence
April 3, 2024	Community Engagement presentation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Smith, Associate Vice President, University Development • Joshua Maher, Associate Vice President, Community Relations
May 1, 2024	Annual Report