September 15, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

¡Enhorabuena NAU!

**National Hispanic Heritage Month** (NHHM) is an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the richness and diversity of our Hispanic, Latina/o/x, and Chicana/o/x communities. The next 30 days will afford us a special opportunity to learn, embrace, and celebrate the cultural, literary, artistic, and intellectual contributions made by these communities at NAU, in Flagstaff and Coconino County, and throughout the country.

NHHM originated in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Johnson and was enacted into law and expanded to 30 days by President Reagan in 1988. It is a celebration of the customs and achievements of immigrants of Hispanic heritage. The observation runs through October 15.

I am proud of my Puerto Rican heritage and am excited to share it with my NAU family. I am proud that NAU-Yuma has been designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) for many years because of our commitment to the City of Yuma and serving the strong and vibrant Hispanic communities in southwestern Arizona. I look forward to visiting NAU-Yuma in early October to celebrate their accomplishments and redouble our efforts to provide access and value for the students who learn there. And I am especially proud that today, as we kick off National Hispanic Heritage Month, our entire NAU community can celebrate together as a designated HSI.

In March of this year, while I was in the midst of the presidential transition, I learned that NAU had officially met the United States Department of Education HSI criteria. This designation is conferred to institutions with 25 percent or more Hispanic student enrollment. This is a simple number and one that we should aspire to build as we strive to provide access to and value from an exceptional educational experience for a student population that reflects the diversity of our state and the communities we serve. But the real benefits go far beyond a number. The diversity of backgrounds, thought, perspectives, and lived experience that this designation brings are what enhance our purpose and vibrancy as a university community. The confluence of customs, traditions, histories, cultures, and meanings that are reflected in the students and communities we serve enrich NAU and enhance all of our lives.

As we reflect on this milestone for NAU and the opportunities before us to better serve our students and their communities, I encourage you all to join our broader community in this celebration. Here are just a few highlights that are forthcoming for NHHM in the next 30 days:

- NAU’s Office of Inclusion is helping us with our inaugural celebration of Hispanic Serving Institutions Week with a **Librito Drive-Bilingual Book Drive**. Donate a
bilingual book for the Flagstaff community at the Office of Inclusion.

- The Office of Inclusion will host numerous events and programs throughout the month. I will be joining for a conversation about my educational and life journey through the lens of NHHM on October 13. Learn more online.

- To celebrate through music, Rima and I created a playlist of some of our favorite Spanish-singing artists representing Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Panama, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Argentina, Spain, and the United States, I hope you enjoy, and I hope you share some of your own favorites!

- Read about what Hispanic Heritage Month means to members of our NAU community.

- Our alumni community is also involved. The NAU-TEN alumni career coffee break will honor and celebrate NHHM by featuring a panel discussion about NAU's status as an HSI, focusing on the alumni faculty and staff ambassadors who serve our students and how the broader alumni community can engage. Register to participate in the coffee break session at 9:30 a.m. on September 24.

As you can see, classrooms are not the only place we learn. NHHM is one of many celebrations we will enjoy together this academic year—focused on the diversity of our Lumberjack community. We become a better world and better people when we learn to appreciate and value all that makes us unique and find that we are the same in so many ways.

Gracias, NAU, por celebrar la diversidad y elevar las aspiraciones de todas las comunidades que nos hacen una universidad.

José Luis Cruz Rivera
President