



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 9, 2022

Dear Lumberjacks,

Today, I am thrilled to share that a much-discussed need in our community is about to become a reality. Thanks to a months-long effort by a dedicated team at NAU, we will be opening an **Early Learning & Development Center (ELDC)** in January 2023 that will help serve the childcare needs of our NAU community. This week, we will begin the process of hiring a director for the ELDC, and I wanted to ensure that our community was the first to know as news becomes public.

This is an important step in meeting a longstanding need for our NAU community—greater access to and options for affordable childcare in Flagstaff. As the ELDC begins operations, we will scale up to help meet this need, with spring operations planned to serve 25 children aged 3-5 years old and significant, yet responsible capacity expansions planned for future years, starting in Fall 2023. In alignment with our commitment to remove barriers and provide increased opportunities and access to education, initial preference will be given to the children of NAU students, followed by children of NAU employees.

The ELDC will be much more than a basic childcare center, thanks to the integration of management, programming, and services with our renowned team in the College of Education. Once operational, the ELDC will provide an environment that supports children's intellectual growth, social-emotional intelligence, and physical development, while also serving as a site for education, best practices and professional development for NAU students studying early childhood education, speech and language, and other related majors.

In addition to the ELDC's work to improve access and affordability of childcare, NAU also will be extending additional support to qualifying full-time undergraduate students enrolled in Nursing, K-12 Education, and Early Childhood Education programs this fall. Thanks to a partnership with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, NAU now will offer an opportunity for eligible students to apply for childcare expense reimbursements that will help them pursue and persist in their studies. If you believe you or someone you know is eligible for this support, please visit nau.edu/heccp.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to several leaders and partners who have helped bring this important initiative to fruition, including the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), whose partnership and facility lease have made this vision a reality; Provost Karen Pugliesi; the faculty and staff of our College of Education, and Drs. Ramona Mellott, Pam Powell, and Victoria Damjanovic in particular; and members of our Community Relations, Contracts, Purchasing, and Risk Management, and Facilities Services teams who have helped bring us to the finish line on this important project, among many others.

I am excited for the work ahead and the opportunity the Early Learning & Development Center represents for NAU to support our students, faculty, and staff in their childcare needs now and into the future. We will be sharing more information in the months ahead as we launch a website and application for the ELDC and hire a director and team to lead this important work.

Sincerely,



José Luis Cruz Rivera
President



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