April 4, 2022

Dear Lumberjacks,

Today marks just one month from the end of the spring semester! I know this means time is short to prepare for finals and meet project deadlines. But it also means we are close to convocations, commencement, and summer gatherings with family and friends, and I encourage you to look ahead to the celebrations that come with this busy season at our university.

To this end, I hope you will join me in recognizing and celebrating the contributions and influence of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans in our nation's history and in the shaping of our collective aspirations. We at NAU have traditionally chosen to mark Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month in April to ensure that students, faculty, and staff have more opportunities to participate in events than they would otherwise have given the heavy academic calendar in the month of May, when it is celebrated nationally.

This past weekend we kicked-off AAPI Heritage Month with the NAU HAPA Hawaiian Club’s 16th Annual Lu’au. If you missed it—as I unfortunately had to due to a prior commitment—here are a few excellent photos that highlight this wonderful event. I hope to join in these celebrations next year.

As with other heritage months, celebration of culture and accomplishments must be accompanied by reflection of treatment and otherization. Over the last two years we have seen a troubling rise in acts of anti-Asian bias and hate crimes throughout our nation and across the world. Against this backdrop—and the troubling historical context that includes forced labor as the nation built the transcontinental railroad that accelerated its westward expansion and internment camps that unjustly deprived tens of thousands of their liberty in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor—it is imperative that we work hard to support all members of our community. Together, we celebrate our diversity to advance the common causes of equity and justice for all.

Over the course of the month ahead, please consider being part of the celebrations of our AAPI community, which, in bringing to life a range of cultural practices, history, and education, brings greater visibility and knowledge to us all.

I am proud of our continued efforts as a university community to celebrate and embody the commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice that are held so close—and that are reflected in the aspirations of our Strategic Roadmap and
infused throughout our institutional practices.

I look forward to celebrating AAPI Heritage Month at NAU and to the great work and bring future ahead for our university community.

Sincerely,

José Luis Cruz Rivera
President