March 1, 2022

Dear Lumberjacks,

The first day of March brings thoughts of spring and the possibility that the pandemic will become endemic. But today, I want to turn our collective focus to another milestone that March brings: the start of Women’s History Month, which is an annual opportunity to learn about, reflect upon, and revisit our conceptions and appreciations for the role women play in the world of today, and the one we all hope to build for tomorrow.

I’ve been thinking a lot lately about how gender discrimination—often compounded by other social ills and -isms—not only holds individuals back, but also impedes our collective ability to move forward. My thoughts have been spurred by the CDC’s new guidance, which acknowledges that after two years we must steel ourselves to live with the virus that so disproportionately hurt the people of the world, especially women, women of color, and women who are economically marginalized. They have also been ignited by images on social media depicting how the nomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson—the first Black woman put forward to serve as a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America—has polarized many in our country.

Women’s History Month serves as an annual wakeup call reminding us that we need to be intentional about driving the kind of social change needed to ensure that all women—regardless of background—are afforded the opportunity to meet their full potential. History is replete with stories of ways that women of all cultures have helped societies heal from their sins of the past, mobilize for a more equitable present, and aspire for a more inclusive and just future.

NAU’s Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), our Women’s and Gender Studies program, and our History Department are leading the efforts for events highlighting women during the month of March so every Lumberjack has the opportunity to see the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the legacy of women’s history and contributions in providing positive role models to inspire us and expand our sense of what is achievable, together. I hope you will consider participating in these events.

- International Women’s Day March 8, 1-2:30 p.m.: Rebecca Mwase (they/she) will give a talk entitled Declarations of Desire: A Home-Making. Rebecca is a Zimbabwean-American theater and performance artist, ritualist, creative consultant, producer, facilitator, and cultural organizer working at the intersection of art and social justice. [Join Rebecca’s presentation via Zoom.]
- Thursday, March 24, 5 p.m., Professor Micki McElya of the University of Connecticut will give a talk entitled No More Miss America: The Pageant Turns 100,” which explores the interconnected histories of the Miss
America Pageant, the Miss Black America Pageant, feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, Evangelicalism, and the New Right in post-WWII America. **Register for Dr. McElya’s presentation.**

- Fifth Annual Women’s and Gender Studies Program and the Commission on the Status of Women Essay, Poetry, and Art Contest. **Entries due March 28.**
- **Martha Portree CSW Scholarship campaign,** ongoing through the month of March
- Arizona Women in Higher Education is excited to announce the 2022 annual conference entitled **Bridging Divides: Building Constructive Collaborations** is scheduled for April 6-8, 2022.

I am proud of the strong work taking place at NAU through the Center for University Access and Inclusion and the Commission on the Status of Women—advocating for equity and leading the way to a future free of judgment and inclusive social cohesion.

Sincerely,

José Luis Cruz Rivera
President