October 29, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

As we near the festivities surrounding Halloween, we know many Jacks are considering their costume options.

And so, we take this opportunity to recommend that we all take the time to think about how our choices—even if we believe they are innocent or harmless—may negatively impact others.

We do so because we have heard from many Lumberjacks who have been hurt, humiliated, and upset in the past by the insensitivity of others wearing poorly considered costumes that serve to sustain harmful stereotypes, spread racist tropes, or trivialize the struggles, values, and cultures of specific groups who are a part of our diverse community.

This is not a situation unique to NAU. But, while our university supports freedom of expression, we as a community also have a collective commitment to diversity and inclusion. Choosing a costume with thoughtfulness is one way we hope our Lumberjack community can come together to demonstrate our best selves.

As we prepare to celebrate Halloween this year, let’s take the time to think about not only what we are going to wear, but also the potential impact it may have on others. Here are three questions to get us started:

- Does my costume perpetuate negative or disrespectful stereotypes about a culture, race, or tradition?
- Is my costume making a joke at the expense of someone’s hardship?
- Does my costume represent a culture, race, or ethnicity that I don’t belong to or identify with?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, please consider rethinking your costume—the possibilities are endless and surely, we can enjoy Halloween mindfully and without turning a person’s identity into a stereotyped image.

Remember, you are part of a larger community that is diverse in background and experience. While you are entitled to make a personal choice, your choices also can make a difference for all of us.

Let’s please have fun, respectfully!

Sincerely,