September 23, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

It has been a few weeks since my last update on the progress of our Strategic Roadmap efforts, and I continue to be inspired by our Lumberjack pride and enthusiasm to advance this important work. Today, I am pleased to share important updates on our Strategic Roadmap. Before I do, however, I want to take a moment to focus on the term “equitable postsecondary value,” as it is the foundation that drives and informs this work.

We know the transformative power of higher education to enrich individuals' lives through economic and social mobility and to improve the health and prosperity of our communities through a more engaged, civic-minded citizenry. That is the value that postsecondary education brings to individuals and to communities.

But we must do more.

Our vision is to broaden access, particularly to historically underrepresented and first-generation students—using a diversified and systematic approach to meet them where they live and learn—with the goal of fostering a more educated, equitable, and just society. To meet our vision of equitable postsecondary value, we must provide education that is accessible, affordable, and attainable for all. Further, we must ensure that our graduates achieve economic and social mobility. That is the equitable postsecondary value we must deliver.

Our work must have intent and purpose; it must reflect who we are as a university community; and it must be situated within the context of higher education in our nation and, specifically, in Arizona, where NAU will lead as an engine of opportunity and positive change.

The facilitators of the Strategic Roadmap

With this context in mind, I am pleased to share the individuals who will facilitate our Strategic Roadmap efforts this fall. I want to thank all members of our NAU community for their enthusiasm to engage in this effort and the many dedicated and talented faculty, staff, and students who volunteered to participate.

Please join me in thanking our working group facilitators, listed below, for their willingness to lead our community engagement:
I want to reiterate the importance of your engagement and participation in this process. The facilitative teams and I will be looking to you—our NAU community—to steer the direction of the roadmap moving forward. Together, our community will serve as the steering committee for this process, and, as such, the Strategic Roadmap’s work will be guided by a committee of the whole.

The working groups are convening in the next few days and will work quickly to articulate aspirational goal statements for each area, draft objectives that can inform concrete actions based on existing plans and best practices, and soon launch an engaging virtual portal that will serve as the primary vehicle for university community members' participation in the roadmap and a centralized source of information about the process.

As we prepare to engage with you in the advancement of our roadmap for the future, I encourage you to consider how our work as a university can be coordinated and driven by objectives that embody equitable postsecondary value. Across the six dimensions of work, we will be coordinated and cohesive in our efforts to advance this mission. Through months of listening, learning, and transitioning to NAU, I have heard your aspirations; now, I am excited to hear how we can work together to realize them and shape a bold and boundless future for NAU.

What lies ahead
As the working groups move forward, you can expect a few key milestones this fall:

- **First draft**: A preliminary outline of the Strategic Roadmap will be put forth concurrently with the launch of our virtual engagement portal in early October. This initial rendition of our objectives will be broad, and we will look for your thoughts and feedback to expand the breadth of objectives to be considered.

- **Second draft**: A substantive second draft of the Strategic Roadmap will be shared in late October, reflecting a refined set of objectives grounded in the first round of community input. To more clearly delineate the objectives, engagement will be open for an extended period and will include listening sessions to capture the myriad perspectives and priorities from our NAU community.

- **Third draft**: To be shared at the conclusion of the fall semester, a robust third draft of the roadmap will distill the engagement of this iterative process into a set of goals and objectives that truly reflect the priorities of NAU—as a university community—for delivering equitable postsecondary value. The third draft will be open for feedback into early 2022 to advance the roadmap from the broad conceptual set of priorities of our institution writ large to an action plan, backed by accountability metrics, that will structure how we proceed toward meeting the objectives and realizing our goals.

Throughout, we will have a variety of avenues for input—listening sessions, a dynamic virtual crowdsourcing tool to facilitate active engagement, emails, surveys, and more. I look forward to reviewing the draft versions of the Strategic Roadmap throughout the fall and to your ongoing thoughtful engagement to steer and inform the goals and objectives for our university.

More as the work unfolds,

José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President