



February 9, 2022

Dear Lumberjacks,

I have used these first months as a Lumberjack to closely observe how our organization operates—the internal workings of my leadership team; the patterns and parameters of engagement with faculty, staff, and student representative groups; and the flow of information and avenues for input and advisement between university decision-making bodies and the broader university community. In addition to building trust and transparency, my goal is to bring stability and make changes in a thoughtful, purposeful way based on clear areas of need within our organization.

Thus far, these have included the appointment of a superb group of colleagues who fill interim leadership roles in **Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Affairs**, adjustments to the organization and responsibilities of the **President's Office**, and, most recently, **optimizations in our reporting structure** to facilitate closer collaboration and more nimble execution of our strategic goals, particularly as we move through the Strategic Roadmap process and lay the groundwork for its implementation. (Updates on the Strategic Roadmap process coming soon!)

After more than six months of reflection and first-hand experience—and significant consultation—I'm excited to share a substantive update on how our university leadership teams will be organized, their membership and function, and the implementation of key new university advisory bodies that will support and inform our work—representing the depth, breadth, and diversity of our university community.

#### **President's Leadership Team:**

**President's Council:** Comprised of members of the university's senior leadership, this group provides direct, day-to-day support in strategic visioning and operational delivery of the university's mission, goals, and objectives. Members include the Interim Executive Vice President and University Provost, the university's two Senior Vice Presidents, leaders for student affairs, enrollment management, and research, as well as core members of the President's Office advisory team, including General Counsel, Chief of Staff, University Strategy, and Communications and Media Relations.

**President's Cabinet:** Formerly called the Executive Team, the President's Cabinet is made up of the heads of the executive divisions and operational

units that advance the university's mission. I will look to this group for advisement, support, and action across the full range of university affairs.

### **Universitywide representative advisory boards:**

**University Advisory Board:** Comprised of the President's Cabinet, the heads of NAU's governance groups that represent students, faculty, and staff, and delegates from the Academic Leadership Assembly and the Commission on Commissions, the UAB meets quarterly and serves as an information sharing and advisory body. Through its broad representation, the UAB seeks to bring greater coherence and transparency to the operations, decision frameworks—including data usage and data governance—and actions of Cabinet units, governance and representative groups, and the broader strategic context in which the university operates. The proceedings of this group will be shared through public notes following its quarterly meetings, with an expectation that all members can bring agenda items forward for consideration and that they will report and disseminate university information back to their corresponding areas.

**University Budget Advisory Board:** UBAB is a representative advisory board that provides input and recommendations to the president on prioritizing and funding university initiatives and operational excellence through the budget process. The work of UBAB focuses on aligning university resources with the mission enumerated in the Strategic Roadmap, through divisional priorities and current and anticipated revenue streams. UBAB will be chaired by the Senior Vice President for University Operations and will work closely with all Cabinet members throughout the annual budget cycle, culminating in an annual public memo to the president with advisory recommendations for the coming fiscal year's priorities. After careful review of the advisory recommendations and other important considerations regarding the strategic context in which the university operates, the president will publicly respond to UBAB, describing the approved budget and indicating how the recommendations from the advisory board informed the final budget.

**University Strategic Planning Advisory Board:** USPAB is a representative board whose charge is to support NAU Strategic Roadmap processes and facilitate its ongoing drive for transformative action and transparent accountability. Further, USPAB also assists divisions, colleges, and units with developing their strategic plans, while ensuring that those plans align with the University's goals and strategic imperatives from the Roadmap. USPAB will be chaired by the Vice President for University Strategy, and it will be formally convened and charged in Fall 2022 to begin its work in conjunction with the rollout of the Strategic Roadmap.

**Commission on Commissions:** Drawing on the existing structure of the **Diversity Commissions**, the Commission on Commissions will be formally included in the university advisory structure to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice are foregrounded in university advisory processes and decision-making. Continued work in this area is planned to bolster and reinforce the importance of this crucial part of our mission and will be forthcoming in the weeks and months ahead.

## **A note on the structure of advisory boards:**

As noted above, UBAB and USPAB serve as universitywide advisory bodies that will be an ongoing and important part of our decision-making framework. We have sought to create symmetry and diverse representation in their membership. We will soon discuss expectations of the nominations process with the leaders of our Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, Associated Students of Northern Arizona University, and Graduate Student Government, who will then be in touch with their constituencies to solicit nominations for individuals to serve on these advisory bodies.

## **Ongoing work with our university governance groups:**

To provide transparency and predictability to our collective work and interactions, I have also reviewed with Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, ASNAU, and GSG presidents a framework that we will use in our ongoing engagement and collaboration.

- First, as each semester begins, I will meet individually with our governance leaders to discuss our individual and shared priorities for the semester ahead.
- Second, following that discussion, I will meet with their leadership teams to discuss more concretely an agenda for mutual priorities that we will agree to advance over the coming months.
- Third, I then will join the full membership of each group for an open forum, typically in the middle of each semester, to have a broader level of engagement with all of their constituents.

I intend to mirror this process in the fall and spring to ensure regular and open communication with our student, faculty, and staff leadership. As unique and time-sensitive circumstances may merit, ad hoc convenings with some or all of these groups will always be possible to engage on specific topics.

Finally, as part of their representation on the University Advisory Board, I expect that our governance group leaders will have standing agenda items to update on the general work within their area and also specific topics that may need to be considered during these quarterly meetings and for deliberation among university leadership.

## **Looking ahead:**

The measures laid out above are made against the backdrop of our emerging Strategic Roadmap and are informed by the guiding principle that the form of our university's work should be evaluated and adapted, as appropriate, to fit its function.

As we pursue the important work ahead, I am sure there will be additional adjustments to optimize our efforts and those will be communicated in a timely and transparent manner. In the meantime, I look forward to the new structures we have in place, to the exciting initiatives underway and in the pipeline, and to all of your ongoing contributions to our university's mission.

Sincerely,

*José Luis*

José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President



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