



Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

January 18, 2021

Dear Lumberjack family,

As we celebrate and honor Martin Luther King, Jr. on this national day of recognition, I am reminded of the extraordinary time in which he lived, the civil rights for which he fought, and the impact one person can have on humanity and on history.

We have lived through a historic time the last few months. The country's current struggle speaks to the fact that equality has not yet been achieved and that Dr. King's work is not yet complete. It is more important than ever to keep Dr. King's legacy alive and to continue his work.

Dr. King achieved much during his short life and his words, life, and work are still relevant today. The Reverend's work led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and to progress surrounding inequalities pertaining to segregated housing, women, Native Americans, and Vietnam veterans.

Every year, we come together as Americans to celebrate Dr. King's legacy. At NAU, we embrace and celebrate students of all races, creeds, cultures, and gender identities. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is a core value. Almost 40 percent of our student body, about 11,535 students, come from diverse populations. This is an increase of nearly 7 percentage points over the last five years. The diversity of our faculty and staff also continues to grow, with 22.1 percent coming from underrepresented backgrounds. I am deeply proud of the progress we have made and thankful to everyone's commitment to supporting diversity and understanding how it enhances student success.

This morning, NAU will honor the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. with the discussion "The Importance of Black Lives," led by activist, professor, commentator, host, and TV personality Marc Lamont Hill. Registration is required and can be found on the [MLK Day Celebration webpage](#). Many thanks to the Office of Inclusion for hosting today's event and a warm welcome and our sincere gratitude to Mr. Hill for leading this important talk.

To everyone at NAU, I wish you a day of reflection on how we—as a community and as individuals—can carry on Dr. King's work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and a trailing flourish.

Rita Hartung Cheng
President