February 4, 2022

Highlights:

- Summary of Public Health Advisory and AY21-22 Steering Committee recommendations
- Operating status unchanged with no significant adjustments to operations
- COVID-19 data
- The week ahead

Dear Lumberjacks,

Today’s COVID-19 Community Briefing reflects continued improvements in the local, state, and national pandemic outlook. These optimistic conditions allow us to plan more actively for the weeks ahead, with clear markers for a return to more in-person activities on our campuses.

Against this backdrop, we plan to set the week of February 14 as a marker of when to ease our current enhanced mitigation strategies, with mask requirements continuing. Having a target date allows our community to begin planning for the activities and engagements that enrich the Lumberjack experience. It also allows us to reflect on and plan for the appropriate mitigation measures that we must consider moving forward.

We have arrived at this point and stand on the cusp of richer levels of engagement thanks to your commitment to care and personal responsibility. I ask that we all continue to model the spirit of our Lumberjack community of care in the days and weeks ahead so that we can maintain our educational momentum and fully realize the crucial developmental opportunities that occur both inside and outside of the classroom. Ultimately, the risks and needs of our physical and mental health must be considered individually, while we also take into account the impact of our actions on others throughout our community.

I encourage all of us to work together to contribute to the vibrant fabric of our university community that is committed to student success and cares deeply about the health and well-being of every Lumberjack.

The pathway ahead will inevitably have its challenges, but today I am encouraged by the steady moving of the needle back to normalcy.

Summary of Public Health Advisory and AY21-22 Steering Committee recommendations
NAU’s Public Health Advisory Committee met on Wednesday to review the latest COVID-19 data and operational updates; the represented groups also shared specialized information from their fields. Points of emphasis included case trend review and, if the trend of lower infection and case rates persists, options for setting target dates to lift mitigation measures, the importance of personal responsibility and risk assessment for all individuals, and the steps necessary to continue essential activities and phase back to greater normalcy in operations.

NAU’s AY21-22 Steering Committee met on Thursday to review the information from the Public Health Advisory Committee. Based on the information, the group recommended setting a target date for return to more in-person activities, with student engagement and mental health as key factors behind the recommendation.

After careful consideration of the recommendations of the Public Health Advisory and AY21-22 Steering Committees, as we ready for the week ahead, NAU will:

- Continue to deliver instruction and support services in their originally designated modalities (in-person, hybrid, remote) to sustain student academic momentum.
- Continue to provide accommodations for individuals who need to quarantine or isolate due to testing positive or being exposed to COVID-19 or experiencing other COVID-19-related circumstances.
- Allow events to take place with masks required and grab-and-go food options only and delay the start of intramural sports.
- Encourage in-person attendance and engagement in classes and at university activities, with masks required to mitigate risks while supporting a rich and vibrant student experience.
- Based on continued monitoring of conditions, plan for February 14 to lift restrictions on food at events and return to normal operations for activities outside of classroom environments.

The measures above will continue to be evaluated and updated weekly based on the latest information.

Operating status unchanged with no significant adjustments to operations

NAU’s operating status for the week of February 7 will remain unchanged—with primarily in-person instruction and support services on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus and at statewide sites with in-person modalities, and full residential capacity on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus.

Ongoing mitigation measures

- Important general guidance and new information:
  - Strongly consider getting vaccinated and/or boosted (see the Vaccination section below for more information).
  - N95 masks from the federal government are being distributed in Coconino County. Please fill out the form on the North Country Healthcare website to request an N95 mask.
- Masks:
  - Masks are required on NAU campuses in all classrooms and academic buildings and other locations where physical distancing is
not possible, and strongly encouraged for outdoor events and gatherings.

- The **CDC provides resources** about types of masks and their benefits, as well as how to wear and care for your mask.
- Disposable masks as well as a limited supply of N95 and KN95 respirator masks are available to employees and departments on request through Campus Supply; contact 928-523-6414 or NAU-CampusSupply@nau.edu.

**Vaccination:**

- NAU strongly encourages all individuals in our community to get vaccinated and receive a booster shot if they are eligible. **Vaccines are a proven and effective means of reducing the risk of infection and lowering the risk of adverse health effects.** More information about vaccines and their benefits can be found on the **CDC website.** Visit the following links for information on where you can be vaccinated:
  - NAU Fieldhouse and Campus Health Services
  - Coconino County
  - Arizona Department of Health Services

**Testing:**

- NAU strongly encourages individuals randomly selected for mitigation testing or who have been exposed to COVID-19 to be tested at any of the sites identified through the following links:
  - NAU Fieldhouse and Campus Health Services
  - Coconino County
  - Arizona Department of Health Services
- As shared last week, the federal government is shipping free at-home COVID-19 tests. Visit **COVIDTests.gov** for more information and to order.

**Managing exposure:**

- The **CDC recommends different routes to manage exposure** depending on your vaccination status. We strongly encourage individuals to review the latest recommendations on what to do if you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

**COVID-19 data**

The following data informed the approach described above.

- **COVID-19 cases:** The number of **Arizonaans testing positive for COVID-19** continues to be high, but has declined to levels last seen in December 2021. **Coconino County’s most recent weekly report** shows high transmission.
- **Isolation and quarantine:** As of today, NAU is managing 250 COVID-19 cases among students on- and off-campus on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus, representing 1.3% of the total Flagstaff Mountain Campus student enrollment. This number is down from last week.
- **Testing results at the Flagstaff Mountain Campus:** For the week ending January 29, testing at the Fieldhouse, Campus Health Services, and self-reported COVID positives yielded the following results:
  - 3,789 tests—up from the previous week’s total of 3,692
    - 2,477 tests by NAU students, faculty, and staff
- 1,312 tests by non-NAU community members
  - 746 positives (19.7%)—down from the previous week’s total of 962
  - 447 positives (18.0%) among NAU students, faculty, and staff
  - 299 positives (22.8%) among non-NAU community members
- **Ongoing mitigation testing:** Today, 2,500 members of the NAU community were called for mitigation testing to be completed next week.

The week ahead

We plan to share a similar briefing next Friday, following the same process of review and advisement by our Public Health and AY21-22 Steering Committees. If emergent conditions require a more rapid update, we will notify our NAU community accordingly.

Sincerely,

José Luis Cruz Rivera
President