October 29, 2021

Highlights:

- Since August 31, NAU has been working to advance a new Strategic Roadmap to refocus our university-wide efforts to deliver equitable postsecondary value to our students and the communities they represent.

- Draft #1 was released October 14 and elicited substantial engagement, which will inform Draft #2.

- Preview of Draft #2:
  - A new goal and working group to foreground our commitment to Native Americans (submit working group nominations for student, faculty, and staff representatives to StrategicRoadmap@nau.edu by November 4)
  - Two new guiding principles that will inform all of our goals and objectives
  - A more focused set of objectives for community-wide input

- Save the date for the launch of Draft #2 at a special Zoom event: NAU Strategic Roadmap Convocation, noon to 1 p.m. November 9.

- Encouraging continued engagement and collegial, thoughtful feedback that will help us advance and deliver on our mission—together.

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Dear Lumberjacks,

With the conclusion of the first phase of engagement on the Strategic Roadmap and our facilitative working groups diving into the feedback shared by our university community, this is an opportune moment to pause and reflect on the road we have traveled thus far.

I acknowledge that today’s message is lengthy. For those who have been following the Strategic Roadmap process closely, much of this information is well known. For others, in the thick of the semester with so many priorities and commitments, I hope this will serve as a reference point and summary of our collective work to-date and a clear outline of what to expect in the weeks to come.

I hope to hear from all voices to inform and guide our planning when we release Draft #2 in a few weeks, as we endeavor to refocus and rejuvenate our sense of purpose at NAU and ensure we can meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. I encourage you to review the highlights of this message, read in detail sections you are unfamiliar with, and reach out to us should you have questions about any part of this process.
Setting the foundation for the Strategic Roadmap process

As the NAU community prepared to welcome our Jacks back for a safe and vibrant Fall 2021 semester, I had the privilege of meeting with faculty and staff from each and every academic college as well as several administrative divisions, centers, institutes, faculty groups, staff councils, and governance and advisory bodies—including the Arizona Board of Regents, the NAU Foundation Board, the NAU Alumni Association Board, and the Native American Advisory Board, among others.

These meetings provided an opportunity to share what I had learned during the presidential transition and the first few weeks of our 17th presidency and engage those in attendance in a discussion on some preliminary ideas focused on how NAU can be a national leader in supporting equity in and delivering value from postsecondary education to our students and the communities they represent. And how we could do so by structuring our work across six dimensions related to 1) academic excellence; 2) student success; 3) research, scholarly, and creative activities; 4) faculty and staff; 5) stewardship of place; and 6) stewardship of resources.

In presenting these ideas, I often stressed that moving in this direction was essential—imperative—for us in this moment of turmoil and change, both in society at large and in higher education specifically. In an arc stretching back to our founding in 1899, we have consistently planned, committed, and articulated our mission of access and service. In recent years, these plans have taken many forms and they are anchors for our philosophy as a university—the One NAU Strategic Plan, the Diversity Strategic Plan, and so many others—from the institutional to departmental level. These plans represent countless hours of work and much careful thought, and they describe our collective aspirations.

But the aspirations memorialized in these plans must also be backed by the cohesiveness of our collective actions. At this inflection point, we need to seize the moment and engage in a redoubled and refocused manner in accelerating progress toward those goals—holding ourselves accountable and ensuring that our words are supported by the investment of time, talent, and resources to truly make a difference in transforming lives through equitable educational access and outcomes. Hence, the need for an actionable Strategic Roadmap.

Organizing, staffing, pacing, and communicating the work

The Strategic Roadmap process was officially launched on August 31 and has since moved through an articulation of its organizing principles, staffing considerations, and pacing of the work. We have endeavored to keep the university apprised of relevant developments along each step of the way via university-wide emails and a centralized portal. Consistent with our commitment to nurture a collaborative approach based on trust and transparency, we have continuously asked for input about the process in each and every one of our emails and in-person exchanges of information about the development of the Strategic Roadmap; all in an effort to sense and respond to our university community in as real time as possible. For convenience, here’s a list of our communications to date:

- August 31: NAU’s strategic roadmap: Advancing equity in and delivering value from higher education
- September 9: How NAU will structure the Strategic Roadmap process
- September 23: The facilitators of the Strategic Roadmap
- October 14: Help Shape NAU’s Strategic Roadmap
- October 18: Encouraging your continued feedback on the Strategic Roadmap
Creating the vehicles for engagement

Understanding that the best way to shape the roadmap and chart a course to action is to do so together, we have sought to mobilize our university community through a call to action and provide as many avenues for engagement as possible. Ultimately, we settled on the following vehicles that would allow our community to interact with and provide feedback on the roadmap:

- Dedicated email, which was made available after the launch of the roadmap, for individuals to directly share their feedback and ideas with our core team.
- IdeaScale, a rich, interactive crowdsourcing tool to enhance transparent public engagement in the roadmap.
- Listening sessions to share live feedback with our facilitative working groups.
- An anonymous survey available on the roadmap portal.

The IdeaScale platform required significant work to setup. We express our appreciation to our colleagues in IT Services for their efforts on this front and to those who participated as beta testers—past and present cohorts of the University Leadership Program and Presidential Transition Commission members who helped improve our use of the platform and prepare for its broad launch earlier this month.

Strategic Roadmap Draft #1: Exceptional engagement

The first draft of our Strategic Roadmap was released on October 14. The draft included dozens of objectives drawn mostly from existing university plans distributed across the six goals previously announced. A call was made to the university community to engage with Draft #1 to help our facilitators reduce the number of objectives to be included in Draft #2 to a more manageable 5-10 objectives per goal.

I am pleased to report that the level of university engagement has been extraordinary. In total, more than 5,000 engagements were made across our various vehicles; from comments at listening sessions to votes and ideas submitted via IdeaScale to emails directed to the Strategic Roadmap team. Thank you for your feedback and support throughout this process.

Strategic Roadmap Draft #2: What to expect

Our working groups are currently synthesizing the feedback received and we are well positioned to share Draft #2 in the first half of November. The following are highlights of what you can expect to see in Draft #2:

- **Goals**: The first draft of our roadmap included six goals in support of one overarching vision: Become a national leader in our demonstrated ability to deliver equitable postsecondary value. Each goal included a draft “goal statement” meant to broadly describe the type of objectives that it would advance. Based on input received and opinions elicited from a broad set of Native American communities during this engagement phase, the second draft will include a distinct goal, making clear in the roadmap our ongoing commitment to Native American students and communities—Goal 3 as presented in the One NAU Strategic Plan. This goal and the underlying objectives will be refined and aligned with the other roadmap goals through the second phase of engagement.
Working groups: To ensure the integrity of our process, a working group led by Ann Marie Chischilly, Interim Vice President for Native American Initiatives and Executive Director of the Institute for Tribal and Environmental Professionals, will tend to the new goal described above. The working group will have the same structure and charge as those already in place and today we provide an open call for faculty, staff, and student nominees to serve on this group. Please send a note of interest by noon Thursday, November 4, to StrategicRoadmap@nau.edu. We will also collaborate with the Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, and undergraduate and graduate student governments to encourage nominations. We look forward to finalizing the membership of the working group during the week of November 8.

Guiding principles: Our first draft included three cross-cutting guiding principles to inform all our efforts that were derived from the university priorities articulated during the Presidential Transition: a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice; a commitment to leveraging and building upon our distinctive excellence; and a commitment to working collaboratively, with trust and transparency. To ensure our commitment to Native American students and communities and our commitment to advancing our status as a Hispanic Serving Institution, Draft #2 will include these as two new guiding principles.

Objectives: Draft #1 presented a list of 15-30 objectives, curated mostly from existing university plans, for each of the six goals. Armed with the input received during this first phase of engagement, our working groups will present a refined list of 5-10 objectives per goal for the NAU community to provide additional feedback. Objectives that do not make it into subsequent drafts and the final Strategic Roadmap will be moved to a separate list of important objectives that could be included as part of other initiatives and/or planning efforts at the divisional, departmental, or unit levels.

Clarification: Based on the input received to-date, the addition of guiding principles, and new distinct goal, there will be significant overlap between the One NAU Strategic Plan and the Strategic Roadmap. This continuity of work has been intended since the beginning of the process—we are not starting over, but rather refocusing and reenergizing our work. However, in the interest of streamlining the interrelation of our guiding documents of record, the roadmap team is developing recommendations that will be released with Draft #2 that will help us clarify how we will link the plan and roadmap moving forward, ensuring that our goals and objectives are clear, drive tangible action, and are supported by accountability and progress metrics, all in the service of our mission of delivering equitable postsecondary value.

Additional information regarding Draft #2, including an overview of the objectives ultimately included under each of the seven goals, will be presented at our NAU Roadmap Convocation. Please save the date for this Zoom event scheduled from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, November 9. I hope you will join us for an informative discussion and additional information on how to engage with this important university effort. This session will be recorded and available for viewing following the event as well, and the updated Draft #2 document will be posted online following the Roadmap Convocation.

The road ahead: How to engage

As mentioned earlier, I am thrilled with the level of engagement, the quality of the feedback, and the genuine appreciation for the work that we have seen in response to Draft #1 of our Strategic Roadmap. I am hopeful we will sustain this level of engagement in response to Draft #2 and beyond. As we prepare to enter the engagement phase for Draft #2, I offer the following points on how we can
individually and collectively make this process constructive and meaningful in advancing our work.

- **Email communications**: Please read our email communications regarding the Strategic Roadmap process and feel free to reply with questions or comments. Alternatively, please contact our Strategic Roadmap team directly at [StrategicRoadmap@nau.edu](mailto:StrategicRoadmap@nau.edu). Our team actively monitors all forms of feedback and is ready to respond as appropriate.
- **Portals and platforms**: We understand there are many demands on our time, so if you ever feel disconnected from the work, consider visiting our [Strategic Roadmap website](#) to review all past communications, understand the engagement vehicles, revisit the goals and objectives, and get involved in the process.
- **Submitting feedback**: As with the first engagement phase, you can submit your questions, comments, ideas, or concerns via email, IdeaScale, listening session (dates will be posted soon!), and anonymous survey.
- **Collegiality**: To nurture the inclusive environment that is so important to the Lumberjack community, we ask that all feedback be presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive manner, assuming good intentions on the part of all our colleagues. Our commitment to collaborating is built on a foundation of trust and transparency. As the record shows, throughout this process we have embodied this spirit in our work and translated our community’s feedback into action, which we will continue to do.

As always, I look forward to our collective work ahead and know that together we will accomplish great things.

To this end, I ask that we continue to engage with each other as partners and colleagues; listen to all the voices in this process—especially those that are often silent; and invest our time, talent, and energy in the pursuit of the bold and boundless future that is in store for NAU.

In partnership,

José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President