November 23, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

During this season of Thanksgiving, I have been reflecting on the things for which I am grateful as we approach a new year. First and foremost, I am grateful for the opportunity to call Flagstaff and NAU home. Being a Lumberjack is a tremendous honor—one I do not hold lightly.

I am grateful for the students who, in pursuit of their life goals, have chosen NAU. They are the reason we are all here, and I continue to be inspired by them.

I am grateful for our faculty and staff throughout the state and at every level who have worked hard to provide high-quality education to our students as we continue to wrestle with the challenges of a historic pandemic.

I am grateful for the hard work and optimistic contributions from so many in our community to the development of the Strategic Roadmap. Seeing this vision grow beyond what I could have imagined is a testament to what happens when a community works together.

Finally, I am eternally grateful for my family and friends who continue to support me in all my endeavors and give me myriad reasons to live in the moment and enjoy the journey.

As my family and I prepare for our first Thanksgiving here in Flagstaff—on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region—our awareness of the painfully colonizing myth of origin that gave rise to this national holiday is heightened. We seek to celebrate the familial connections that bind us while honoring the past, present, and future generations of Native Americans and Indigenous Peoples who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.

Rima and I are also finding ways to give back to our community as a way to honor the ideas of generosity, reciprocity, and gratitude. We invite you and yours to consider the following near-term opportunities for engagement:

- **Giving Tuesday**: On Tuesday, November 30, join the Lumberjack community for #GivingTuesday—a 24-hour global day of giving. Whether you make a monetary donation or spread the word and encourage the participation of others, let’s see what the NAU family can achieve together. At NAU, we will focus our Giving Tuesday efforts on the Lumberjack Emergency Assistance Fund (LEAF), which helps students in need continue to thrive in their studies. Rima and I are excited to donate to this
important cause, so be sure and look for information to match our donation or make a gift to any **NAU Foundation** fund on Giving Tuesday.

- **United Way of Northern Arizona**: This year, our university-wide goal is to have 300 staff and faculty donate $30,000. Should the university community reach this goal by December 28, the Office of the President will pledge an additional $10,000. To get us started, Rima and I will contribute the first $3,000. For more information, including how to donate through payroll deduction, visit **NAU United Way**.

- **Volunteering**: Although the new Staff Community Engagement Time policy doesn’t go into effect until January 1, we can get a jump start on giving back to our communities. Volunteers are needed throughout the year, and even more so during the holiday season. Consider donating your time to help those in need. As a starting point, Rima and I are exploring this list of community programs and volunteer opportunities.

May we all use the holiday as an opportunity to learn, rest, give back, reflect, and embrace the path of excellence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

With gratitude,

José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President