March 9, 2022

Highlights:

- Release of Draft #3 of the Strategic Roadmap
- Engagement phase #3 runs from March 9-April 1. Visit the [Strategic Roadmap webpage](#) to download the draft and share your feedback.
- Where we’ve been, where we are going, and where we are headed

Dear Lumberjacks,

I am pleased to share Draft #3 of NAU’s Strategic Roadmap. With its release, I will contextualize our work through three key points: 1) our vision for equitable postsecondary value and why we are pursuing this work; 2) our progress and how to review and engage on Draft #3; and 3) the path for what lies ahead.

**Our vision: Equitable postsecondary value**

Our vision is bold and straightforward: We aspire to be a national leader in *equitable postsecondary value*—to serve as an engine of opportunity for students and communities throughout Arizona and beyond.

Now more than ever, advancing equitable postsecondary value is immensely important for institutions of higher education. Throughout our country, the question is continuously asked: *What is college worth?* While the value of postsecondary credentials is clear in terms of social and economic return for graduates, that return is often not fully realized by individuals and communities, and, unfortunately, it has not been equitably accessible.

At NAU, we will build on our 122-year legacy of excellence to expand our efforts to provide equitable access to and support for high-quality and impactful academics, scholarship, creative endeavors, and public service, to propel economic and social mobility, transform lives, and contribute to the vitality of communities. We are committed to being Arizona’s leading engine of opportunity, and our Strategic Roadmap will organize our work to ensure we deliver on this promise.

The Strategic Roadmap also serves another crucial purpose. It is our institutional value proposition that speaks to audiences beyond our university—future students, parents, community leaders, policymakers, funders, and many more. Even before finalizing the Roadmap, we have successfully leveraged this platform over the past few months to secure $81 million in transformative investments and crucial policy changes that contribute to equity and access, advocate at the national level for support for Hispanic Serving Institutions, and develop numerous other impactful strategies and partnerships that together are signaling to the people of Arizona that a New NAU is in the making—one that leverages the distinctive excellence that characterizes the
university of today and reaches higher to meet the needs of tomorrow. With a Strategic Roadmap in place, we will be even better positioned to present our vision in a cohesive and compelling manner that helps us garner the support and momentum necessary to make that vision a reality.

Our journey: A roadmap for NAU by NAU

Draft #3 represents the culmination of much work throughout our NAU community. It echoes the input and aspirations shared during the Presidential Transition, it has been enhanced by two iterations and thousands of points of feedback throughout the fall, its goals and objectives have been refined by dedicated facilitative working groups, and, following my charge in December, our steering team has brought it into sharp focus in this latest draft that is bold, succinct, actionable, and measurable. In this draft you will see The NAU Charter: Equitable Access to Excellence, which synthesizes and harmonizes many inputs and helps us set the foundation for the Strategic Roadmap.

Throughout the process, we have been flexible and adaptable, listening to input and reshaping both the Roadmap and the process by which we author it together, as one NAU community. It has been crafted to consider and meet the broader political, demographic, and market constraints and opportunities in which it will be deployed.

The outcome is our Roadmap.

With its release today, we also begin what is the final phase of engagement—which will run from now until April 1—to refine the Strategic Roadmap. The goals and objectives are now mature and clearly linked into a cohesive whole. In the next phase of engagement, I ask our NAU community and external stakeholders to consider providing feedback holistically, remembering the internal and external purposes of the Roadmap and understanding that it applies to all of our work and not to any individual unit or area in isolation.

I encourage you all to discuss the Strategic Roadmap with your colleagues and partners throughout the university with an eye to our institutional future—how NAU can achieve its goals, deliver equitable postsecondary value, and ensure it is a leader in opportunity and economic and social mobility. I encourage all within our community to submit their feedback—individually or collectively:

- Visit NAU.edu/Strategic-Roadmap to download Draft #3
- Email StrategicRoadmap@nau.edu or use our anonymous survey to share your thoughts

The steering committee will take in the feedback provided and finalize the Strategic Roadmap, working with the University Advisory Board to vet it one last time before seeking formal approval from the Arizona Board of Regents this summer. Following its approval by the Board, we will develop and launch action plans around the interlocking goals, attach metrics to key objectives, and begin the important work of implementation in the fall.

What lies ahead

From the beginning of this process, we have considered the Strategic Roadmap a three-year plan to accelerate our work in advancing equitable postsecondary value. I have
been asked why such a short timeframe given how long it takes to see institutional
change realized and student outcomes transformed.

This is an important question, and its answer is similar to why we have used a dynamic
and responsive structure to develop the Roadmap. Viewed broadly, the Strategic
Roadmap encapsulates our shared, transformative vision for the long term, knowing that
such a vision is ultimately derived from a series of well-sequenced and orchestrated,
incremental reforms that flex and adapt in the short term to an ever-changing set of
strategic constraints. The three-year timeframe will be structured such that the Roadmap
can evolve iteratively in short cycles, with ongoing phases of visioning, implementation,
assessment, and revisioning to keep our university on track, engaged, and energized to
deliver upon our mission.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to share a personal reflection that informs my own understanding of
our work and the importance of the Strategic Roadmap.

While we hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic lies behind us, the last two
years are a clear inflection point in all of our lives and will leave indelible marks of
economic disruption, racial and economic inequity, and deepening political divides that
will reverberate for years to come.

In this sobering context, there is hope for our collective futures that can be realized
through education broadly and higher education specifically.

Like many of you, I have spent my life engaged in the work of eradicating disparities in
educational access and attainment, seeking to facilitate and drive the generational
change that a higher education can provide. I’ve realized it in my own life, I’ve seen it in
the lives of my children, and I’ve been privileged to help countless students—as a faculty
member and administrator—write new futures for themselves as a result of
postsecondary education.

I am privileged to be here at NAU because I know this institution has the foundation, the
legacy, and the will to be the engine of opportunity for Arizona and a model for our
nation. We offer degrees and programs that change lives; we can and will improve
health, equity, justice, and prosperity in our communities.

I know you have seen and experienced this yourselves. I know this is what drives us at
NAU to give our all for our students. And it is this imperative that powers our Strategic
Roadmap to chart the path for a boundless future for our students, our communities, and
our university.

Please read the Strategic Roadmap, share your thoughts and think of ways in which
you, our colleagues, and our stakeholders more broadly can engage and mobilize in the
critical work ahead.

In partnership,

President