



January 6, 2022

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**Highlights:**

- Creating a New NAU Workplace through three core initiatives:
    - Adopting a hybrid-first approach
    - Adopting core business hours and a flexible schedule
    - Implementing True Blue Summer Fridays
  - What to expect in the coming weeks as we implement these initiatives
  - The importance of flexibility and a note of thanks
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Dear Lumberjacks,

Last summer, as our 17th presidency began and our university looked forward to welcoming our students back for a rich and vibrant Fall 2021, I charged our Office of the Provost and the Human Resources team, supported by the universitywide **New NAU Workplace Committee**, to tackle an issue of the utmost importance for our present success and continued excellence. I asked that they think boldly and expansively about how we can re-envision our practices to ensure that NAU is a truly exceptional place to work. Key to this effort would be the development of recommendations for how our university can become a leading institution of higher education in hybrid and remote work practices, while maintaining and enhancing the quality and beneficial impact of our services for our students.

Today, I am pleased to share that we are making progress on several important faculty-related initiatives and policies, including reviewing and advancing the teaching track proposal, increasing the number of multi-year appointments for teaching-focused faculty, developing a workload policy framework, and approving and launching a number of tenure-track faculty searches. Continued enhancements for our faculty-related policies for work, development, and well-being are a priority for the spring and will be led by our interim Executive Vice President and University Provost, Dr. Karen Pugliesi. More details will be shared with the NAU community as this work progresses in the spring.

As to staff-related initiatives and policies, several initial steps were taken in pursuit of workplace enhancements throughout the fall, including the new **University Closure policy** and the **Staff Community Engagement Time policy**. Just before the holiday break, my leadership team and I reviewed several recommendations from the New NAU Workplace Committee and our Human Resources team. Today, I am pleased to share three core initiatives for staff that are the product of this work and will help us realize our ambitious goals.

## **The New NAU Workplace: Hybrid-first approach**

*NAU will adopt a hybrid-first approach to work for all non-faculty positions.*

The baseline for our hybrid-first work environment will be the option for three days of on-site work and two days of remote work for most employees.

This framework is broad and will, of necessity, vary among departments based on needs for in-person services, staff schedules, and the like. While there will be individual variation, this approach sets clear guidelines for how we will structure the New NAU Workplace—meeting increased demand for flexibility, adapting and optimizing our service delivery, and ensuring we continue to deliver on our mission of educating students.

Implementation of this practice will be carried out at the unit level over the coming weeks and months—pursuant to review and approval of unit plans by division heads or their designees—with full universitywide adoption of this practice planned for March 1. The timeframe for implementation will allow units to assess and plan for individual arrangements and schedules, technological support for on-site and remote work, and allocation of office and collaborative space on campus.

## **The New NAU Workplace: Core business hours**

*NAU will adopt core university business hours that span from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. The core business hours program will allow greater individual and departmental flexibility within this range to have employee schedules start and end at different times between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., while having an overlapping core service window to ensure cohesion of university operations.*

As with the hybrid-first approach, core business hours will be implemented and vary at the unit level, but the expectation will be that all employees are available during the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. for business operations, with optional tailored flexibility established within individual units to determine flexible and effective use of time and resources outside of these periods. Setting a core period of operational hours will allow for both individual and departmental flexibility in approaching work, while ensuring quality of service, collaboration, and availability among employees and teams throughout the 40-hour work week. In conjunction with the flexibility of hybrid work, core hours will help all employees maximize productivity and balance the many other priorities in their lives, such as childcare.

With the core hours framework, the majority of university personnel will complete their daily 8-hour work duties in the period of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with overlap during the shared hours of 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Implementation of this practice will be carried out at the unit level over the coming weeks and months, including individual arrangements and schedules, with full implementation planned for March 1—pursuant to review and approval of unit plans by division heads or their designees.

## **The New NAU Workplace: True Blue Summer Fridays**

*Effective Summer 2022, NAU will implement the True Blue Summer Fridays*

*program, where most university offices will be closed or working at reduced staffing capacity on Fridays in the summer, with most employees shifting to a 4-day/10 hours per day work schedule.*

In recognition of the variance in workload that occurs in the natural rhythms of university work, as applicable, NAU will implement this program to shift most operations to a four-day work week with extended hours in the summer. This program will allow our employees to balance work and life during a period where the beautiful weather in Flagstaff provides countless opportunities for enjoyment and recreation. In addition, limiting our operations on Fridays over the summer will lower university expenses for operating and maintaining buildings and reduce our energy output, contributing to broader goals of financial and environmental sustainability.

Individual units will continue to have responsibilities on Fridays—for scheduled classes, summer programs, student support services, and the like—and corresponding flexible arrangements will be made to ensure consistency of operation and equity of implementation of this program.

Details of this program and how it will affect individual employees will be finalized at the unit level over the coming weeks and months—pursuant to review and approval of unit plans by division heads or their designees—with implementation plans shared by the end of April.

### **What to expect as we implement these changes**

A theme for all of these developments is individual tailoring of work hours in a way that will also maintain and enhance the quality of our work—through expanded service hours and increased employee satisfaction. We must recognize that a large and complex organization like NAU has need for diverse roles and responsibilities. Not all employees will be able to work the same schedules, and we are mindful of these differences. Thus, the New NAU Workplace is truly a framework and guiding philosophy that focuses on enhancing the quality of life for our staff and faculty while continuing to deliver excellent, high-quality service. Implementation will happen locally based on unit-level business needs and a collaborative effort between supervisors and their employees.

Today, in announcing these bold new measures, we are at the beginning of the process. A number of steps are forthcoming to reach full implementation, so I ask for your patience as we operationalize these significant adjustments to our workplace practices. More information will be made available, including FAQs, through NAU Human Resources on the [New NAU Workplace page](#), which will be updated soon with additional information.

### **A note of thanks as we look to the future**

Arriving at this point on staff-related workplace policies and practices has been the product of much hard work and thoughtful input from many in our NAU community. I want to thank the many members of our NAU community who have been involved in this work—Josh Mackey, our Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, the entire team at Human Resources, the New NAU Workplace Committee, and the many individuals who have shared their input and feedback as we seek to make NAU a leader in workplace practices and

culture.

This is a great experiment as we advance our work at NAU and transform lives by delivering equitable postsecondary value to students and their communities. The three practices outlined above will be the core elements of the New NAU Workplace and will provide a solid foundation for the implementation of our Strategic Roadmap. We will continue to review, assess, listen, and adapt as appropriate to ensure our employees who are so dedicated to our mission are valued and supported in their own personal and professional journeys.

I look forward to the great work I know we will accomplish together. And I am excited to have your enthusiasm, commitment, and contributions now and in the future.

Sincerely,



José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President



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