



May 6, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

I hope this message finds you well. On my end, my family and I continue to settle in and feel more connected with our Flagstaff and NAU communities every day—we have learned how to light a wood stove, found the perfect mac-and-cheese place, had pleasant conversations with neighbors, and more.

It has been a few weeks since my last update and as the semester concludes—punctuated by the largest graduating class in NAU's history—I wanted to share the progress we are making on our presidential transition.

Hitting the Ground Learning: An Update

A deep commitment to NAU resonates in every email, meeting, town hall, and Zoom session I have with members of our community. I recently met with our distinguished Regents' professors, and I am reviewing in-depth briefings from Executive Team members that provide details about the organizational structure and operations of the university, as well as the history, prospects, challenges, and opportunities of each division. I have also reviewed the comments provided through the survey on the presidential transition portal, which closed last Friday. It has been a pleasure to learn how you think about our shared priorities, distinctive strengths, and opportunities for the future of NAU. Below, more details about our transition efforts.

Presidential Transition Commission meeting April 16

The **Presidential Transition Commission** had its second meeting on April 16. This meeting focused on the areas of interest that have continued to surface throughout the transition process: transparency and trust; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and distinctive excellence. Commissioners joined breakout sessions to reflect on these thematic areas, consider how to address them during the first six months of our presidency, and continue to refine our understanding of our community's

values and priorities. We plan to convene the commission again later this month to develop distinct and sequenced activities that will generate momentum for our work.

Faculty-focused campus visit April 19-21

Determination and unwavering dedication are the highlights of this visit. I want to thank each person who helped make this visit an invaluable learning experience for me, including the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, academic chairs and directors, associate deans, members of the NAU Teaching Academy, Diversity Fellows and commission co-chairs, Service Professional Advisory Council and Classified Staff Advisory Council, Non-Tenure Track Faculty Council, the Coordinating Committee on Sustainability, and the Latinx Student Union and Hermanas United for Change.

After each encounter, I was left in awe of all that is taking place at our university and the people who are leading and supporting this work. I toured the nationally recognized School of Hotel and Restaurant Management and enjoyed delicacies made by our talented chef and students. I visited the North Campus science buildings and was afforded a look into the inner workings of some of our research labs through the eyes of a graduate student. I experienced a most engaging and informative visit to an active forest restoration project, facilitated by the Ecological Restoration Institute. Meeting our international students and the team at the Center for International Education and visits to an anthropology class and labs showcased exceptional programs. And I appreciated hearing from members of our NAU team during office hours and from our student club and organization presidents in a virtual town hall.

Staff and community-focused visit May 13-14

With the academic calendar in mind, my first two visits to NAU focused on hearing from students and faculty. I am now very much looking forward to my next campus visit, which will take place May 13-14. This visit will be focused on our staff and members of the Flagstaff community who do so much to advance and advocate for our university's mission. We will post the schedule for my next visit on the [presidential transition portal](#) on Monday.

Hitting the Ground Working: A Look Ahead

As we near the start of our 17th presidency, I've been increasingly thinking about how to translate all that I've heard into actions that will help realize our professed values and distinctive excellence.

To this end, I am considering different approaches for organizing and prioritizing our work and will have more to share in the next few weeks as I factor in the input from my upcoming campus visit with staff and community members and the recommendations of the Presidential Transition Commission.

For now, I can say that in considering how to best organize and prioritize our work, I am inspired by the "nothing considered in isolation" principle that guided the development of NAU's Flagstaff Campus 2010 Master Plan. While the principle was meant to guide the physical development of the

Flagstaff campus, it encapsulates many elements that can help us inform and integrate all aspects of our work, clarify the way our university is organized, build and strengthen connections among units, design and launch new projects, implement plans in a phased manner, and coordinate with our communities throughout the state.

The pivot from *hitting the ground learning* to *hitting the ground working* also necessitates a hard look at how well our institution's organizational structure, leadership teams, and consultative, deliberative decision-making processes support the work ahead. I am a firm believer that form needs to fit function and look forward to sharing my thinking and getting your feedback on these matters as things evolve.

I will continue to keep you updated as the transition progresses. Please stay engaged and continue to send your ideas and recommendations—your voice matters.

I close by wishing you and yours the best today and always.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "José Luis Cruz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

José Luis Cruz
President-designate

