



June 2, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

My last official day as Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost of The City University of New York was this past Friday, May 28. It was an emotional week as I met in Zoom rooms with so many colleagues whom I had the privilege of working with and learning from during the five years my family and I lived in New York City. I now look forward to officially joining the NAU community on June 14 as together we seek to meet the many challenges and seize the myriad opportunities ahead.

I would like to use this time to reflect on my last NAU visit and our most recent Presidential Transition Commission meeting and provide an update on the consultation process for interim appointments.

#### **Staff- and community-focused visit May 13-14**

One of the most important things I have learned throughout my career in higher education is that the commitment and dedication of a university's staff is integral to the institution's ability to deliver on its mission. This last visit not only affirmed what I already knew, but I was also inspired by the depth of knowledge and the pride and compassion of our NAU staff team.

This visit included meetings with the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, the Council of Academic Professionals, the Office of the Registrar, business analysts, the HR and finance service teams, the Office of Human Resources, staff in the Office of Sponsored Projects and the Office of the Vice President for Research, and our team in Contracts, Purchasing, and Risk Management.

I met with individuals during office hours and truly enjoyed the questions and participation during the Staff Town Hall hosted by the Service Professionals Advisory Council and the Classified Staff Advisory Council.

I toured classrooms with members of the NAU ITS team, learning about innovative and

non-traditional learning spaces and the services ITS provides to our students and faculty.

I visited Wilson Hall, McKay Village, and the Honors College residence halls and learned about the extensive accomplishments of our Housing and Residence Life staff throughout the pandemic. I am inspired by their passion for serving our students and their commitment to a vibrant campus life experience. And, somehow during this visit, I committed to participating in the dunk tank during our Welcome Week festivities in the fall.

Hearing from many voices within our Flagstaff community was another highlight of my third visit. Given the time constraints, my meetings with community members have been limited. But I am thankful that I will have time over the summer, before the academic year begins, to 1) spend more time engaging with the people and organizations who make Flagstaff such a vibrant and caring community and 2) venturing out to Yuma and the many statewide communities that entrust us with their higher learning aspirations.

### **Presidential Transition Commission meeting May 21**

I had a productive discussion with commission members about the themes rising in the past few months of listening and consultation: transparency and trust; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and distinctive excellence. The more I hear from our community, the more I believe that equity will be a critical part of our strategic framework and the conversations we will have in the first year of our presidency. And I was pleased that the commission members shared opportunities to support this direction. Commissioners affirmed that we need to listen, learn, communicate bi-directionally, and work together to realize the future we all want for NAU.

The commission also spent time evaluating their work, resulting in the creation of a list of topics, people, groups, organizations, and activities to engage with so our presidency can hit the ground running. Our work will include celebrating and recognizing the heritage and culture of everyone in our community—engagement that extends beyond Flagstaff and recognizes the more than 8,000 NAU students who are learning online or at locations throughout the state; listening to many voices and ensuring there will continue to be opportunities for feedback, ideas, and suggestions; and connecting and partnering with our communities—in Flagstaff, throughout the state, in Indigenous communities, and beyond—to advance access and opportunities.

I am privileged to have already learned so much and embrace the fact that I still have much more to learn. I am so thankful for the commission's work and have every confidence that they have set our presidency up for a successful beginning. Even as our presidency pivots from *hitting the ground learning* to *hitting the ground running*, I commit to you that I will keep listening and keep learning.

### **Consultation process for interim appointments**

Last week, as mentioned in my previous [presidential transition update](#), I had the opportunity to meet with a number of stakeholder groups and ask for their input on the qualifications and priorities that I should look for when evaluating candidates to serve as Interim Provost and Vice President for

Academic Affairs, Interim Vice President for Research, and Interim Vice President for Student Affairs.

The balance of these conversations led to the revised priorities described on the [Presidential Transition portal](#). Please note that the qualifications and priorities are not exhaustive, but they reflect the core work that will be the focus of our interim appointments. This week, I am meeting with many highly qualified candidates for these three positions and look forward to providing an update soon as we work to fill these critical roles in our 17th Presidency's leadership team.

In closing, I want to thank you for your honesty throughout the transition, for your kind welcoming of me and my family, and for your support that will help us achieve a presidency that can realize a bold and boundless vision.

I look forward to seeing you soon at NAU.  
In partnership,

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

**José Luis Cruz**  
President-designate