The “Indigenous Studies and Latinx Studies” cluster hire seeks to meet institutional imperatives to serve Indigenous and Latinx students at NAU and to meet curricular needs necessitated by the new General Studies requirements. The cluster contributes to the scholarship and pedagogy of intersectionality by recognizing that Latinx and Indigenous people have frequently occupied the same geographic and social spaces in the American Southwest, and that these experiences (sometimes codified in family ties) have sometimes linked their historic and contemporary fates. More directly, it seeks to deepen and develop scholarship and teaching related to the current and historical experiences of Indigenous and Latinx peoples in the United States across a wide array of disciplines.

While we do have existing faculty who work on Latinx and Indigenous issues, hiring a cohort of faculty during the 2021-22 academic year will allow us to create new curricula and a community of practice, increasing the likelihood of interdisciplinary scholarship. Moreover, it will be important for early career scholars to have a cohort of colleagues with whom to collaborate as well as senior colleagues who can advise and mentor them in the early stages of their career, thus increasing the likelihood of faculty retention.

We will develop formal mentorship procedures for faculty in the cohort, foster community through structured activities such as writing groups and professional development, seek cross-college collaborations and develop formal curricula as related to the General Studies requirements around diversity and indigenous peoples.

Given NAU’s commitment to higher education for indigenous people and its recent designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution, this cluster will both enhance institutional goals and meet the expectations of our students. We regard this not as a one-time hiring initiative but rather as a down payment on a priority that will guide the institution for years to come.