

October 30, 2020

Dr. Larry Penley  
Chair, Arizona Board of Regents  
2700 N. Central Avenue, Suite 400  
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Dear Regent Penley,

I am pleased to share the attached reports with you and members of the Arizona Board of Regents that provide a comprehensive look at the strides Northern Arizona University has made over the past three years in relation to the multiple-year goals set by the Board. Throughout my tenure at NAU, I have focused on building on the university's foundational strengths—student access and success, excellence in undergraduate education, and a personalized, student-focused experience—while at the same time being responsive to developments across the landscape of higher education and positioning NAU for long-term sustainability. In support of these goals, NAU has developed a comprehensive strategic plan; assessed and improved business practices and academic structures throughout the university; and adopted policies and procedures in order to provide consistency and meet the needs and complexities of the future of Arizona's higher education system—all while expanding on the key components of student access and success which are NAU's points of pride.

This year has brought with it many unexpected challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am, however, pleased that even in the midst of this unprecedented global crisis, NAU continues to move forward and attain goals. While we have missed some targets set by the board—including in enrollment and degrees awarded—we are trending in the right direction and have seen all-time highs for retention and graduation rates, increased diversity throughout the university, and record research activity. The holistic approaches to improving structure and processes highlighted in these reports reflect an institutional culture of assessment, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive change management. COVID-19 has certainly caused setbacks, but the culture we have created at NAU has allowed us to continue to focus on the future and the success of our students, while at the same time responding to the new landscape of higher education and today to the unique challenges and demands of the pandemic.

Below, is a listing of the attached reports:

- Enterprise Metrics Report
- University Business Practices Report
- Academic Organizational Structure Report
- Undergraduate Transfer and Graduate Student Enrollment Report

In preparing these reports, I have reflected on the tremendous progress made at NAU since I arrived in 2014. Today, we are more focused than ever as an institution on our goals, better equipped to meet the needs of a broader population of students from more diverse backgrounds, more connected to the region, state and world in which we live, and prepared to face the future. I am grateful for the leadership and dedication of my executive team in helping bring so many impactful, university-wide initiatives to fruition that benefit our students, the institution, and our state. I am confident in the university's direction moving forward and the strong foundation in place for the next president of NAU.

I look forward to discussing these reports with you and the Board in November. Thank you for your continued support of NAU.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rita Cheng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rita Hartung Cheng  
President

## Enterprise Metrics Report

Northern Arizona University continues to be a student-centered university, focusing on student, faculty, and staff engagement at an individual and personalized level. This is a hallmark of NAU and something that both our alumni and our current students note as a key factor in choosing NAU, as well as a defining characteristic of their NAU experience. At the same time, our university is also emerging as a catalyst for research, scholarship, and innovation, as reflected through tremendous gains over the last several years in research expenditures and the scholarly productivity of NAU faculty. This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the strides NAU has made in all areas of its mission—student access and success, research and discovery, and engagement and service. This is particularly valuable to understand the trajectory of growth and development of the institution, even as 2020 has posed significant challenges and some setbacks in certain operational areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While NAU has long been distinguished by its student-centered mission and that has remained a central priority, building out operations and processes in a targeted, strategic manner, with an emphasis on data reporting and analysis have been key objectives throughout my tenure. By prioritizing assessment and understanding of programmatic impact and improvement efforts, NAU has adapted to better serve our students and align with the efforts undertaken by ABOR to provide concrete, metric-based goals for Arizona's public universities.

I appreciate the collaborative nature in which NAU's metrics were developed. As you will see, some areas that were considered a stretch have been surpassed, while others have been more difficult to achieve, but are nonetheless critical targets as Arizona remains committed to increasing access to postsecondary education for a diverse population of in-state residents and increased attainment throughout the state. Given the importance of all of these metrics to student success outcomes, service to our students, and impact to the State of Arizona, NAU must remain a committed partner into the future with aligned institutional-wide priorities and investments. I am confident in NAU's continued ability to provide the signature, personalized education our students expect, while increasing student access and expanding programs in a targeted, strategic manner that will position us for future success.

- **Freshman Retention:**

- 2017: 75.8%
- 2018: 73.5%
- 2019: 77.5%
- **2020: 76.3%**
- 2020 Goal: 78.0%
- 2020 Over-Attainment: 78.5%

- **Research Expenditures:**

- 2017: \$46.3M
- 2018: \$52.9M
- 2019: \$58.9M
- **2020: \$65.0M\***

- *\*Preliminary; to submitted to NSF in January 2021 and published late November 2021*
    - 2020 Goal: \$40.8M
    - 2020 Over-Attainment: \$42.2M
- **Bachelor's Degrees Awarded:**
  - 2017: 5,901
  - 2018: 6,042
  - 2019: 6,123
  - **2020: 6,259**
  - 2020 Goal: 6,431
- **Total Students:**
  - 2017: 30,368 (Fall 2016-FY17)
  - 2018: 31,057 (Fall 2017-FY18)
  - 2019: 31,073 (Fall 2018-FY19)
  - 2020: 30,736 (Fall 2019-FY20)
  - **2021: 29,569 (Fall 2020-FY21)**
  - 2020 Goal: 32,716 (Fall 2020-FY21)
- **Number of Degrees in High Demand Fields:**
  - 2017: 3,547
  - 2018: 3,799
  - 2019: 3,855
  - **2020: 3,923**
  - 2020 Goal: 4,146

Several key conclusions can be gleaned from the numbers reported above, including how NAU has excelled and also how external circumstances, driven first and foremost by COVID-19 and its far-reaching impacts, have presented challenges. Our efforts in strengthening NAU's research productivity and reputation have seen tremendous results. Consistent year-over-year growth has resulted in NAU surpassing the over-attainment goal by over \$20 million in research expenditures. Through strategic investments in core areas of research excellence that align with NAU's mission, including research centers like the Center for Ecosystem, Science, and Society (ECOSS), the Center for Health Equity Research (CHER), the Southwest Health Equity Research Collaborative (SHERC), the Center for Materials Interfaces in Research and Applications (!MIRA!), and others, NAU has begun to generate a critical and sustainable cohort of scholars who are leaders in their fields. Further, through this growing excellence, NAU is more easily able to attract new faculty members to join these teams, in turn bringing more prestige, grant activity, and impact to our students and community.

While our research endeavors continue to blossom and their impact comes into even greater focus and importance due to the pandemic, student enrollment and the many associated metrics have been faced with substantial challenges, particularly since the beginning of 2020. NAU celebrated record retention last year and our outlook was strong heading into 2020. With the pandemic affecting retention across the country, however, and many students facing financial

and health challenges, we have seen slightly over a full percentage point decline in first-time, full-time student retention. Enrollments were already changing due to demographic shifts in the college going population, with slight declines in undergraduate enrollments anticipated. The pandemic accelerated this change, resulting in the declines we have observed for Fall 2020, with particular pandemic-linked declines in out-of-state and international enrollments. As we move forward, these are focal points of our enrollment management and student life outreach and engagement efforts and are highlighted along with specific marketing and enrollment strategies and tactics in the Student Access and Success Plan and our Strategic Enrollment Management planning efforts.

Despite some setbacks related to the pandemic, NAU has continued to deliver on its mission of access and success, underlined by increases in enrollment and graduation rates among many underrepresented student populations. Examples include increases in the percentage of first-generation students, from 28.3% in 2014 to 46.2% in 2020, and diversity as a percentage of total student population, which rose from 32.3% in 2014 to 39% today. Among specific populations, this growth has been substantial: over the same timeframe (2014-2020), enrollments of Black/African American students have increased by 11%, Asian student enrollment increased by 35%, and Latino/Hispanic student enrollment is up over 37%. As the diversity of NAU's student body increases, we have also adapted to ensure these students are retained and successful on their path to graduation. First generation student retention has increased from 68.8% to 73% (only slightly behind NAU's overall retention rate), and four year completion among first generation students is up from 35.8% to 40.3%, underlining our commitment to success for all of our students. Finally, our efforts to recruit and retain a diverse student population are helping to advance NAU's mission and this December we will apply for Hispanic Serving Institution status as a result of reaching the required 25% Latino/Hispanic student enrollment threshold.

Further, as a result of our market research, marketing, and programmatic excellence, enrollments have grown in specific areas targeted for future growth, including graduate education, which has increased by 12% overall, 16% in Flagstaff, and 37% online. The pandemic poses many uncertainties, but our growth in certain key areas during these challenging times provides reason for cautious optimism in our positioning for the future. NAU is delivering the programs and services students want and need, and we have robust resources that allow students to progress and excel in their studies through to graduation. As the pandemic continues, we are positioned to weather these challenges and emerge strongly to continue to enroll and help students realize their aspirations at NAU.

The metrics for degrees earned and degrees in high demand fields reflect the challenges above but also demonstrate a strong and improving trajectory for NAU. Degrees awarded have been trending upward, reflecting our ongoing success in retention and graduation efforts. Retention reached a record high last fall, and graduation rates for both four- and six-year metrics, at 46% and 57%, respectively, are the highest in NAU's history. Students are persisting at NAU as a result of excellent academic programs, robust student support programming—aided by reorganizations in key units like Enrollment Management and Student Affairs that are now more focused and effective in their service delivery—opportunities for experiential learning and undergraduate research, and the dedication and professionalism of our faculty and staff. Degrees in high demand fields similarly continue to grow, as our investments in areas of critical

importance for professional success and careers of the future are realized. Enrollments and degrees awarded in health fields, engineering, teacher education, and cybersecurity, among others, have been growing rapidly. Our new program development efforts and academic organization reflect the emphasis placed on educating students for high-demand fields and guides are ongoing recruitment efforts.

Considering the strong trajectories across the metrics above, even taking into account the expected dips resulting from COVID-19, NAU is in a sound position for the future. This year has seen challenges nearly across the board due to the pandemic; however, with the structural adjustments we have made to university operations over the last several years, NAU has been able to adapt and will rebound as the economy begins to recover.

A significant and ongoing challenge for all of our endeavors is funding for higher education—now more so than ever given the additional pressures we face and increased costs to operate during COVID-19. NAU and our sister institutions must continue to advocate for higher education funding from the State of Arizona in the future. We remain committed to our mission of student access and success. Key to delivering on this is keeping costs for students low while providing quality academic programs and strong student support services. Through organizational efficiencies, we continue to refine our program delivery and support structures to ensure our students get the quality education they expect from NAU. We are also closely assessing price positioning within the competitive higher education marketplace to ensure that NAU can facilitate student success while operating in a manner that is fiscally sustainable. More state support will allow us to advance quicker in all of these areas and accelerate recovery efforts from COVID-19 that will allow NAU to lead education in our state well into the future.

## **University Business Practices Report**

Upon arriving at Northern Arizona University, early initiatives of my administration began with efforts to assess and analyze business practices of the university. Over the last three years, these efforts have accelerated to develop and implement streamlined business practices and emphasize efficiency and effectiveness in furtherance of the financial stability of the institution, enhancement of personnel and emphasis on the strategic plan. Underpinning initiatives to modify our business practices are the university strategic goals. Ensuring that students are successful and that university operations support their academic progress through quality services in all areas are at the forefront of these change initiatives. Prioritizing resources to student-focused services has been increasingly necessary as the university faced state divestment of funding and has increased reliance on tuition and fees.

As a university focused on access, diversity and student success that has experienced significant growth in recent years, NAU operates in a unique context and one in which assessment of business practices was essential. Historical processes throughout the university continued, but were often misaligned with current priorities, many times preventing the university from adapting to the large and complex organization it had become. While often done with the best of intentions, efforts to continue to operate like a small university often resulted in differential treatment of employees performing similar jobs across campus, no cross training of employees in preparation for retirements, leave or secondary coverage, minimal sharing of information or best practices Across divisions and units, and often, duplication of effort. On the flip side, some units within NAU had grown overly large as responsibilities accumulated due to diversification of the university organization as well as growth from increased student access. Both organizational silos and overgrown units contributed to the need to address efficiency and effectiveness through a comprehensive change management process. This change management effort started by refocusing the institution-wide focus on NAU's well-established priorities of student access and success.

Serving our dedicated NAU faculty and staff by providing training in the planned change management process occurred before we began professional development in new business processes and practices. Many opportunities were provided for inclusion in the change management process and growth and development initiatives have continued throughout to continue to assist individuals and support an institutional focus on priorities. This report outlines the numerous areas that have been assessed and improved over the past several years, highlighting the decisions behind those organizational changes, the process of implementation and the outcomes resulting from these initiatives.

### **Strategic Plan**

As NAU has evolved and grown, the need for a comprehensive, campus-wide visioning of the university, its mission, vision, and values, and its trajectory for the future was apparent. Through an extensive planning process that extended over a full academic year and involved broad stakeholder engagement, focus groups, campus-wide communications, and more, in 2018, NAU launched a new strategic plan. Outlining a bold vision for the future, the strategic plan reinforces the university's core values that are underpinned by five strategic goals: 1) student success and

access, 2) research and discovery, 3) commitment to Native Americans, 4) engagement, and 5) stewardship.

The strategic plan helps inform and guide university-wide planning, budgeting, decision making, and communication for the university. It has also provided an important jumping off point for other university-wide planning initiatives, including the Diversity Strategic Plan, the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, the Student Access and Success Plan, the Capital Improvement Plan, the Strategic Space Utilization Project, and Campus Master Planning initiatives.

Importantly, the Strategic Plan is a living document that guides the work of faculty and staff across NAU. Ongoing efforts to improve business practices, academic delivery, student success, and research are positioned within the framework of the plan and informed by its goals and the shared mission, vision, and values of the NAU community. One important leadership body that continues to inform decision making at a university-wide level centered around strategic planning priorities is the Strategic Planning and Budget Council, which is a standing committee of faculty, students, staff, and administrators. All university governance groups are represented on the Council. The Council coordinates the university's strategic plans and planning processes.

This influence was most significantly seen in the development of the updated strategic plan, the coordination of work on unit strategic plans, the planning and facilitation of the annual Presidential Leadership Retreat and suggestions for improvement opportunities such as development of the University Budget 101 training modules.

### **Approach to Change Management**

In tandem with university-wide strategic planning, NAU has adopted a robust, institutional approach to change management. Using the Prosci ADKAR model for change management, that focuses on managing change at both an individual and an organizational level to generate knowledge, buy-in, and coordination with change management efforts, NAU has been able to successfully implement many changes through this process.

ADKAR training is offered at NAU, both through in person courses and virtual training models. Importantly, the goal in adopting ADKAR as a university-wide approach to change management is to create a culture that embraces best practices and joins together in addressing changes to business operations and practices at all levels across the organization. Coupled with our strategic planning efforts, which keep units focused on the core mission and goals that have been defined and articulated by the NAU community, using ADKAR to pursue progress toward those goals is an important business change that has had far reaching and ongoing positive impact.

### **University Data Governance**

NAU's Data Governance initiative is an ongoing core business process that ensures modern operations, a data-based decision making culture, and broad stakeholder involvement in data collection and usage.

A core group within the Data Governance structure is the Data and Business Process Advisory Committee (DBPAC), which has university-wide oversight and responsibility for advising on data cleanup, reporting, survey administration and implementation, and ongoing data governance decision making. DBPAC serves a critical role as NAU continues to grow in many dimensions, including enrollment, research activity, student location and diversity, academic program offerings, and more. In order to facilitate efficient and effective oversight over the wide range of reporting conducted under these various areas, DPBAC has been responsible for ensuring that NAU has centralized, validated, and reliable data reporting and consistency in reports provided to key decision makers, including the President and NAU Executive Team.

In order to reflect the diversity of inputs informing university data, DBPAC is composed of a broad group of stakeholders, representing units that include Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Human Resources, IT Services, Marketing, and Research. The committee convenes regularly to review data issues and is chaired by the Chief Institutional Data Officer.

Given NAU's enrollment and the diversity of its student population, survey administration is an area requiring particular attention and oversight to ensure quality of survey instruments, prevent oversampling subpopulations and survey fatigue, and to ensure that usable and impactful data is gathered and reported out to key stakeholders. One of DBPAC's roles is to assess surveys and provide guidelines, feedback, and oversight of university-wide survey administration. This has been critical to ensuring a consistent university-wide culture of effective data collection that has helped to guide data-based decision making at all levels and across a range of units, including Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs. An online survey policy has been established that allows for coordinated review and communication of data requests. In addition, Tableau dashboards have been launched to make key data available in real-time to decision makers across the university.

In addition to DBPAC, other data-based advisory committees include the University Information Technology Advisory Committees, which provide critical oversight and leadership of university-wide IT initiatives. Included in these are the transformative Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) steering group, which has helped NAU provide integrated and cross-team connections with students in areas ranging from academic advising and student affairs, to financial aid and student accounting. On the business process side, WordPress and PeopleSoft IT Usergroups drive the continuing delivery of top-level services by university-wide business system applications. Finally, a University Web Advisory Committee, spearheaded by a cross-divisional leadership team, ensures that websites meet brand standards, are optimized and accessible, and are optimized to streamline internal and external users' interactions with NAU on the web.

The Strategic Project Review and Resourcing Committee (SPRRC) is another integral element of the Data Governance structure at NAU and is a key link between stakeholders and IT Services. All major Executive Team units are represented on SPRRC, which reviews cross-divisional project requests, brings visibility to IT project requests, ensures alignment of priorities, tactics, and business resourcing needs throughout NAU, and ensures strategic alignment of IT projects with university business goals and strategic objectives. By reviewing all requests for work and

prioritizing them against approved metrics, all divisions can improve resourcing efforts and allocation of project workload. Projects are reviewed and approved on a quarterly basis by the IT and Data Governance Trustees and work is assigned on priority and resource availability. SPRRC has been crucial to providing greater efficiency and effectiveness in a number of dimensions that include a shared governance model that elicits broad participation and shared accountability, clarified priorities and alignments of institutional strategies, increased transparency in IT projects and outcomes, and expedited digital transformation and improved coordination among divisions.

Through the SPRRC process, many projects have been successfully completed to help advance NAU's mission and steward resources for the university. Projects that have gone through this process have included automation of manual processes, elimination of paper forms, and consolidation and standardization of processes from many departments into one department. Through these projects, and in conjunction with targeted university policy changes, operational effectiveness and overall financial governance have been enhanced. Annually, an estimated 10,000 business hours are saved as a result of efficiencies resulting from this process, translating into approximately \$0.5 million in financial impact. A few examples are provided below that highlight the diversity of projects and areas of key savings:

- Electronic notice of appointments system instituted university-wide for all employees (time and material savings for paper and postage)
- Electronic student invoices (time and material savings for paper and postage)
- Pay cycle automation in Accounts Payable in conjunction with revised check processing frequency (time savings and material savings)
- Invoice automation (time and material savings)
- Automation of employee tuition waiver form, Home Use Equipment form, Registered Driver form, and Capital Project Authorization form (time and material savings)
- Staples eInvoice (time savings)
- Expanded Service Now adoption for workflow/case management in OGEI Service Teams (time savings)
- New cloud based budget software (savings and financial governance)
- Adjusted (lowered) approval levels for requisitions and the procurement card single purchase limit to \$2,500 (financial governance)
- Increased use of procurement cards across the university (increased rebate revenue)
- Automatically route blanket purchase orders through Purchasing for review (financial governance)
- Increase vendor credits in conjunction with centralized procurement policy efforts (financial governance)
- Increased the involvement of NAU's Contracts and Purchasing department in all contract renegotiations to drive better contractual terms (financial governance and additional savings)
- Highlighted during COVID-19 pandemic, centralized purchasing of personal protective equipment to take advantage of economies of scale

## Centralization of Information Technology Services

Centralization of NAU's Information Technology Services (ITS) began in fiscal year 2016 in response to significant reductions to the state budget that mandated an acceleration of efficiencies throughout the university. Rather than simply a response to budget cuts, however, the ITS centralization has developed over the past four years to include numerous efficiencies in business processes, greater effectiveness in service delivery, and high impact technology deployment across all of NAU's statewide locations. In fact, by eliminating siloed service units, NAU's integrated ITS division has enhanced responsiveness and increased student, faculty, and staff satisfaction with IT support. In addition, ITS has assumed responsibilities for additional services where technical expertise within the division has been leveraged to facilitate stronger, more coordinated business processes, including state-wide campus IT services, elements of library technology support, e-learning systems, and classroom/meeting room support. Through the elimination of overlapping responsibilities, realignment of staff responsibilities, and the deployment of new technological capabilities, ITS reduced overall staffing from 240 FTE to 195 FTE, providing NAU with approximately \$4.85 million in savings. Importantly, through a phased transitional plan based on ongoing needs assessments and continuing optimizations and efficiencies in IT service delivery, staff reductions were accomplished through natural attrition, and no IT professionals lost their job as result of the centralization process. The centralization effort also ensured greater equity in the allocation of ITS staff and resources between colleges and departments as a centralized service rather than siloed service units that were unequally funded and supported by their prior home departments.

Over the past three years, there have been numerous examples of increased efficiencies as a result of the centralization, including the partnership between ITS and Cline Library, launched in 2018. Working together, the Student Technology Center in Cline Library was launched in order to create a one-stop technology service center for students. Students are able to obtain hand-on support and computer repair as well as access to loaner laptops through the library circulation desk.

Another example is the standardization of computers and classroom support throughout campus, which allows for superior response and support throughout campus. In addition, the swift pivot to significant online learning in spring 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was possible due to the strong, centralized ITS support at NAU. Classrooms were already equipped with technology to facilitate virtual learning, ITS staff support enabled faculty to quickly adopt new instructional technologies, and, as the fall semester approached, ITS ensured that the NAUFlex model was successful by equipping 380 of 400 total statewide classrooms with standardized NAUFlex technology. ITS provides a 10 minute response window to any classroom, both physical and virtual, and classroom technology is maintained for high availability through the deployment of state-of-the-art capabilities.

Numerous assessments of ITS at NAU post-centralization have demonstrated the efficacy of this move. Satisfaction by faculty and staff with ITS is measured at 94% meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Classrooms across the university are on standardized 5-year computer replacement and upgrade cycles, replacing the fragmented service model which resulted in uneven replacements and often outdated and outmoded equipment from building-to-building

throughout the university. Software and hardware pooled licensing and purchasing efforts have provided NAU faculty, staff, and students with access to better equipment and services and at a tremendous savings to the university. Approximately \$0.78 million annually has been saved through centralized licensing negotiations and pooled resources. And finally, through centralization, ITS has been able to better support roles, specialization, and pay scales, investing in employee growth, preventing inequities in assignments and titling, and resulting in increased satisfaction with all ITS services (for FY20, satisfaction among all ITS clients was 97.5% reporting “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with service).

### **Enterprise Business Analyst Initiative**

Across NAU, Business Analyst positions are employed by units to perform important roles that aim to identify, optimize, and assess business processes. In assessing divisional needs, however, NAU determined that not every division has Business Analysts available to help optimize, coordinate, or otherwise facilitate efficient business processes on the unit level as dedicated support staff with expertise in data analysis, programming, and other important skills. Given the many complexities of business processes in higher education, and the need to drive efficiencies and effectiveness through technology and process optimization, the university identified eight analysts to fill the role of Enterprise Business Analyst to drive digital transformation across the institution. This team was formed by creating two new positions and centralizing six existing positions to create a coordinated central resource to drive digital transformation university-wide. As a centralized team with high-level proficiencies and a broad understanding of university-wide business needs, the Enterprise Business Analyst team is able to provide support on complex cross-divisional projects, and their work has resulted in greater accountability and improved outcomes (on-time, on-task, and on-budget projects) that are aligned with university strategy and executive priorities linked to the strategic plan. A recently completed example of results achieved by the Enterprise Business Analyst Team include the university-wide Directory Revamp Project, which completely overhauled NAU’s, providing additional information and making communication easier and more transparent for faculty, staff, and students throughout the university.

Unique to this group is that they operate on shared initiatives that are not owned by any one division or department. Enterprise Business Analysts provide support both for divisions that lack individual Business Analyst support and also for cross-cutting initiatives that require a breadth of experience inter-unit knowledge and collaboration. This team has made tremendous strides in identifying digital transformation initiatives that are aligned with NAU’s strategic goals, providing coordinated support and analysis of emerging technological capabilities and services among divisional stakeholders to improve services, and conducting business process reviews to assess, streamline, and optimize complex business processes across the university.

### **Organizational Growth and Effectiveness Initiative (OGEI):**

NAU’s OGEI project is a broad-based effort, launched in 2018 in partnership with Huron Consulting, to position the university for future success through a comprehensive modernization of its operational practices. OGEI reflects a need to balance the institution’s ongoing growth and development with a modern business model that provides better service delivery, employee

growth and development, competitive positioning within the workplace, and greater efficiency across all operational areas. This far-reaching initiative is composed of two major projects: the **Compensation and Classification Review** and the **Administrative Service Delivery Design Project**. Both are led by a coordinated leadership team and have been undertaken with similar approaches to stakeholder engagement and change management, due to the wide-reaching impacts and their importance to the future of business operations at NAU.

At this time, NAU is not positioned to fully address compensation increases across the organization, particularly as COVID-19 has placed additional budgetary constraints on all areas of the university. Importantly, however, all of the pieces are in place for OGEI to successfully guide future planning efforts throughout NAU and position the university for future success. Below is a summary of both projects and current updates on their status.

### **Compensation and Classification Review**

The objective of the Compensation and Classification Review is to undertake a comprehensive study of NAU's compensation and classification system and streamline it to achieve university-wide consistency in titling and salary ranges, provide clear paths for career progression, and leverage this modernization to attract and retain talented and dedicated employees. The previous system for compensation and classification in place at NAU is dated, having not received a comprehensive review since the late 1980s, and has posed challenges for departments and individual employees due to its outmoded and inconsistent nature. The Compensation and Classification Review has uncovered the scope of inconsistencies across the organization. From department to department, titles and salaries were not matched and employees were not provided clear avenues for advancement. This caused numerous administrative staff to jump between departments at NAU or leave the organization entirely in search of increased pay, responsibilities, and career development.

Through a university-wide study of compensation and classification practices, numerous surveys, and stakeholder information sessions focused on gathering input from across units and employee levels, data was gathered during the early phases of the project to help define the issues that had been observed and chart a path forward for overhauling this important area of business operations. Numerous resources for stakeholder input were deployed, including a dedicated email address for questions, regular communications from the OGEI leadership team to campus, and representatives from key stakeholder groups regularly engaging in advisement and consultative sessions about the project, including representatives from the Classified Staff Advisory Council, Service Professionals Advisory Council, Human Resources Liaisons, Provost's Academic Leadership Council, Academic Chairs Council, faculty members, and more.

Due to the scope and impact of the process, utilization of the ADKAR change management model, with a focus on the people impacted by the change, has been used to ensure clear and consistent communication and ongoing stakeholder engagement and knowledge of the project process, goals, and objectives. A robust website that contains important information from each phase of the project is in place to serve as a central resource for employees seeking to understand the process and how it impacts their future.

The project objectives are centered around accountability, adaptability, clarity, relevance, and stewardship. At its core, the Compensation and Classification Review is designed to enable NAU to better meet business needs and cultivate employee talent, increase job satisfaction, and reduce staff turnover. While the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed full implementation of the project, it is currently approaching readiness for full roll-out and implementation in early 2021. Job families and sub-families have been classified and career branches categorized to help clearly define roles and responsibilities, compensation levels, and progressions for employees specializing in particular areas of administrative work.

Currently, supervisors are now equipped with updated title information for employees university-wide, with the plan to roll out full information about title changes in February. In addition, information has been clarified on pay ranges and grade structures that will likewise be implemented soon. It is important to note that the current stage of the project does not involve immediate salary adjustments; rather, it is focused on titling alignment and assuring that compensation is aligned with market needs moving forward. Looking ahead, the Compensation and Classification Review is poised to make NAU a more competitive and attractive place to work and improve the ability of units to hire the right people, develop them, and meet business needs. It also serves as a template for departments to address organizational structure through more appropriate titling and job descriptions for administrative staff. Providing uniform grades, titles, expectations, and growth trees across campus ensures that NAU is positioned to meet business needs in the future and retain and develop a workforce that is committed to meeting the university's strategic goals.

### **Administrative Service Delivery Design Project**

In tandem with the Compensation and Classification Review, the Administrative Service Delivery Design Project is a comprehensive evaluation of business practices that has resulted in a move toward an integrated, shared services model that will allow staff to have greater role specialization, deliver services more effectively to their units, and generate institution-wide efficiencies. Broken into two broad categories, finance services and human resources services, the Administrative Service project has followed a similar process of stakeholder engagement, institutional survey of business practices, and assessment of potential options and efficiencies. Since the project launched in 2018, it has utilized a phased implementation model. This approach has allowed for a gradual implementation wherein efficacy can be assessed and the service team model improved for each subsequent phase of implementation. In addition, it has helped to ease the transition of duties among staff across campus.

The Administrative Service project links closely to the Compensation and Classification Review in part by providing a university-wide system for streamlining financial and human resources positions and implementing logical career progressions for employees within these areas. Designed to work in centralized clusters that provide a suite of administrative services to a dedicated group of units, each service team features significant role specialization and positional expertise in key administrative areas. Improved efficiencies and delivery of service due to less job fragmentation and the opportunity to work in a collaborative team environment are hallmarks of the service team structure. The first fully-fledged service team launched at NAU in February 2020 was the Humphreys Service Team, dedicated to providing financial and human resources

support for the College of Health and Human Services, the College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences, and the W.A. Franke College of Business. A major benefit provided by this team to the academic units served is lowering administrative burdens for faculty and allowing them to focus efforts fully on instruction, research, and service, rather than concerns about finances, reimbursements, travel arrangements, policy compliance, recruiting, and the like. The specialized service team has dedicated office space that is centrally located near to each of the colleges served, providing convenient access and connections. Efficiencies due to job specialization and familiarity with policies and processes have been immediately apparent as this team has served the three colleges.

Additional service team roll-outs are planned throughout the fall, with full campus-wide adoption of the service team model completed in early 2021. In addition to the finance and human resources teams, research administration is the final service team type that is being implemented and will have a powerful effect on streamlining university research administration, particularly given the demands of compliance and the university's rapid growth in this area.

Organizationally, the OGEI Administrative Service project will create significant efficiencies and savings in the long-term for NAU. Once it is fully implemented across campus, the project is estimated to realize the following gains in university-wide efficiency:

- Human Resources savings of 25 FTE positions
- Finance savings of 20 FTE positions
- Overall budget impact of between \$2-3 million in savings over time
- Projected 10-20% efficiency gain from service teams

### **Reorganization of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs**

In 2019, NAU restructured the division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA) into two separate and distinct units: one specifically dedicated to Enrollment Management and the other an independent division of Student Affairs. This reorganization was the result of extensive planning and reflection on NAU's growth and the important and differentiated roles each unit needed to provide for the recruitment of students and the success of students once at NAU. The EMSA reorganization provided an opportunity to fully assess all areas of operations within these units and provide stronger organizational structures, better collaborative alignments, sharing of key resources and expertise, budgetary efficiencies, and ongoing growth and development of employees within their departments.

Much of the work to realign these divisions began in 2018 through the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) planning efforts undertaken by NAU. Undertaken with the goal of having a comprehensive, strategic, and sustainable plan for growing and diversifying enrollments and integrating marketing and student success initiatives with enrollment management objectives, the SEM planning process charted a clear path for future enrollment activities. Including input and extensive consultation with Theresa Farnum, a nationally recognized retention expert, and Tom Williams of Williams and Company, whose work focuses on enrollment management strategies, the SEM plan helped uncover the need for greater divisional collaboration, particularly with University Marketing throughout the entire recruitment cycle, and also underlined the

complexity of operations and roles that NAU divisions were taking on. To streamline efforts, draw on greater unit expertise, and align with national standards for division of units, while also facilitating better collaboration throughout the recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation pipeline, the creation of two distinct divisions with specialized and focused missions became clear.

Each unit now has its own dedicated Vice President position that is a member of the NAU Executive Team, providing high-level, specialized leadership and oversight for their reporting units. Enrollment Management has university-wide responsibility to work with University Marketing, academic units, and other specialized areas, including the Office of Native American Initiatives and various departments in Student Affairs, to recruit students to NAU. Providing a full-service pipeline from early contact with high school students up to enrollment and the beginning of classes at NAU, the Enrollment Management team has a broad reach throughout Arizona and across the country.

In addition, a key unit within Enrollment Management is the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, and divisional leadership works closely with the President and the strategic finance team to ensure that NAU is positioned for future success and sustainability in its pricing and financial aid model. A number of important initiatives have been launched in recent years, including the Coconino First scholarship and continuation of the Pledge tuition program. Beginning in early 2020, the services of Human Capital Research Corporation (HCRC), a national leader in higher education price positioning research, were engaged to develop a comprehensive and strategic long-term plan for pricing, enrollment strategy, and institutional differentiation and sustainability. The work with HCRC draws on NAU's longstanding strengths, assesses areas of competitiveness and differentiation among peers, and looks for ways to enroll target demographics such that NAU can continue to fulfill its mission and also have long-term financial sustainability. This important work is progressing and NAU will provide a comprehensive update to the Board in November 2020.

Cross-divisional collaboration has been emphasized in the new organizational structure, with a particular focus on leveraging University Marketing early in the recruitment process. Marketing strategies are directly integrated into recruitment processes, and feature market research, targeted advertising initiatives, such as billboards and other signage focused on specific programs in areas of high demand, tailored digital and print marketing to individualized audiences (undergraduate, transfer, graduate, non-traditional, in-state, out-of-state, and more), and more that ensures maximum impact and return on investment for recruitment strategies. In addition, University Marketing also works closely with Student Affairs to improve connections with currently enrolled students, emphasizing opportunities, resources, and more to capture students across a variety of communication mediums.

As an independent unit, Student Affairs has made great strides in refocusing its efforts on student success once at NAU. Through a diverse suite of student support programs that encompass First Generation programs, Fraternity and Sorority Life, the Office of the Dean of Students, Campus Recreation, Campus Health Services, and more, Student Affairs offers targeted support to all members of NAU's student population and supports their success and development outside of the classroom. A strong emphasis is placed on retention efforts, and NAU has reported high

retention and increased graduation rates in recent years, including all-time highs for 4- and 6-year graduation rates of 46% and 57%, respectively. With tailored programming that supports students from diverse backgrounds, career development opportunities that connect students to the workforce and, and strong co- and extracurricular programming that promotes leadership, engagement, and a sense of belonging, NAU is helping our students persist and succeed.

An important component of the EMSA reorganization was to ensure proper alignment of student-services resources to aid in broad-based student success efforts. The Office of the Dean of Students has received core investments to help ensure that this critical office is best meeting student needs. Recent upgrades include a remodel of office space to provide a central service location for the Dean of Students and the office's reporting units. In addition, staffing has been expanded and reporting relationships and position portfolios adjusted to align with priorities and leverage staff talent appropriately. Improvements have been made to conduct systems, including for off-campus and Greek Organization conduct systems, which have proven critical tools during the COVID-19 pandemic to enforce student behaviors, both on-campus and in our Flagstaff community. Similarly, the Office of Inclusion received a transformative upgrade to its physical space and organization in early 2019 based on the increased need to serve a growing number of diverse students.

As part of the EMSA reorganization, NAU's Capital Planning and Campus Operations division was included in the reallocation of resources. Specifically, University Housing and Campus Services and Activities were moved to better align with existing structures for operations and services within Capital Planning and Campus Operations. This adjustment allowed the newly formed Student Affairs division to focus entirely on student-related services, rather than having to also navigate the complexities of housing operations, custodial, and the like. Student Affairs retained the Residential Life component of housing, while the operations side was entirely shifted to Capital Planning and Campus Operations. This realignment leverages NAU's existing centralized services within Capital Planning and Campus Operations that include custodial, utility services and maintenance, and other operational units directly linked to physical plan and operations, allowing for closer collaboration and more efficient delivery of building-based services. In addition, the reorganization of Campus Services and Activities provides a similar organizational structure within which expert staff can take advantage of shared cross-campus systems to better handle auxiliary services.

## **Initiatives in Academic Affairs**

### **Centralized class scheduling and multi-term enrollment**

Centralized scheduling and multi-term enrollment efforts continue to be areas of emphasis and investment since their initiation three years ago. This work aims to unify and centrally support scheduling efforts across the NAU, while also providing a more predictable graduation pathway for students by building and releasing schedules that provide course offerings across the entire academic catalog early, allowing for effective planning and advisement. Most recently, an important milestone in these efforts was the launch of a new technological platform for centralized scheduling built on Coursedog, with its rule-based system rapidly expanding NAU's ability to effect change to scheduling characteristics across the institution. This work proved to

be particularly critical in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the capacity building and technologies that were created as part of this project enabled a unified and consistent response to changes in our academic calendar and instruction modes that would have otherwise been much more challenging. Moving forward, ongoing usage of Coursedog-based technology will streamline class scheduling and enrollment processes for all students and allow for greater efficiency in allocating space and faculty resources to meet student demand.

### **Centralized advising/advising reorganization**

Academic advising is a cornerstone of student success and has a tremendous formative impact on student perceptions and their intent to matriculate, persist in their program of study, retain in the institution, complete their degree, and excel in post-graduation career success. Prior to 2018, NAU's advising structure was decentralized, leading to a number of challenges and inefficiencies, such as inconsistencies in student experience, complexities in how student advising issues were handled, duplication of structures, lack of specialized advising, and an inability to pivot in response to changes in enrollment, among others.

Beginning in 2018, a complete assessment and reorganization of the university advising structure was undertaken in order to improve students' experience and ensure the highest standards in our advising practices. Turnover in advising was identified as a critical issue, stemming primarily from lack of mobility within the current structure that did not allow for advancement and increased compensation. The university addressed this through targeted restructuring and a strategic investment of just under \$185,000 specifically dedicated to salary increases. Highlights of the new structure, which has now reached full implementation and integration across NAU, include a unified leadership and streamlined business processes and communications to provide a consistent student experience across the institution. Structures have been implemented to consolidate expertise across delivery modalities, reducing complexity and improving the student experience by eliminating advisor changes associated with changes between in-person and online programs.

Centralized academic advising at NAU offers robust support for training, business process development, and technology deployment throughout the advising team, which has eliminated inefficient, duplicative efforts and allows for advisor expertise specialization and improved service. In addition, the new organizational structure allows for agile responses to shifting enrollment trends and improved load balancing across programs and advisors. Since 2016, at least 10 positions have been shifted to better align with student enrollment trends, and average advisor loads have shifted to approximately 375 students per advisor.

As a key, high-contact group that is integral to shaping the student experience, providing higher quality, more streamlined, and more consistent advising is an important and impactful change we have used to bolster the student experience at NAU. Through staff salary adjustments and enhancements made through the centralization of advising services on campus, we anticipate continued improvements in student satisfaction, degree progression, and the overall student experience. Emphasizing efficiency, shared knowledge and services, and impact to students, centralized advising has achieved broad success across dimensions and is now a well-established

university-wide organizational structure that is undergoing continuous improvement and refinement.

This fall as NAU grappled with the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of the new advising structure was brought to the fore. While enrollments had declined only slightly, the mix of students and the enrollment in particular programs and departments saw more dramatic shifts. Central advising resources pivoted quickly to serve colleges and academic plans that have seen steady and rising in demand, while limiting the resources dedicated to areas with enrollment declines. This ensures that student needs are met dynamically and advising staff are allocated consistent workloads that allow them to provide high-level services to areas of greatest demand. In the old, fragmented model, such an approach was impossible, as individual college-based advising teams would be either over- or under-worked. Now, resources can be adjusted quickly and this process continues to be refined in tandem with enrollment management projections for the future.

### **Academic Affairs restructure/reorganization**

The restructuring of the central Academic Affairs unit in recent years focused on a number of initiatives that reorganized NAU's academic structures to support important strategic priorities and ensure that academic programs are homed in appropriate units. A highlight of these efforts was the creation of the College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences, which is covered in greater detail in the Academic Organization report. Other efforts include better supporting important student success initiatives, such as coursework associated with the First Year Experience and First Year Seminar programs, by housing them in academic units with strong disciplinary affinity. While academic reorganizations, structures, and efficiencies are covered in detail in another report, it is important to note that all change and structural decisions are coordinated throughout the university. Projects like OGEI and the centralization of IT Services support academic units and allow for better use of resources and greater efficiency.

### **EAB projects**

As part of larger efforts to more strongly adopt data-informed decision making, NAU has invested significant energy in collaborating with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB) to adopt best practices in data analysis and business processes, with a specific focus on impacts to academic programs and planning. Currently, academic units are being engaged closely to build an understanding of the centrality of data insights in resource allocation decisions and to collaboratively build the common knowledge and understanding of critical metrics. An important recent milestone resulting from these efforts is the adoption and deployment of the EAB Academic Performance Solutions toolset, which has provided NAU with important insights on curricular metrics and opportunities for efficiencies, student credit hour cost differentials across programs, and comparative benchmarks with cohorts of peer and aspirational institutions. While still in the early stages, these efforts have already proven critical as the University navigates the impacts of the pandemic and we seek opportunities toward a more efficient resource allocation and reinvestments into strategically important programs and initiatives.

### **Online and Statewide Presence**

NAU Online has been evaluated and restructured to allow NAU to implement a streamlined and centralized process for units to introduce and process academic program changes, including applications for new programs, and changes to location and modality. The focus of this effort has been to integrate NAU's online and statewide presence with overall enrollment goals and market-based research. As noted above with Enrollment Management, NAU Online has benefited greatly from the strategic visioning for growth outlined in the Strategic Enrollment Management plan, as well as the tailored and focused support of University Marketing to ensure impactful promotion of programs in targeted markets. Additional benefits to the reorganization of NAU Online are highlighted in the academic structure report, with a particular focus on program creation and delivery and integrated instructional design efforts.

### **Diversity Initiatives**

NAU's organizational changes and structure are grounded in strategic priorities for the institution, and that is abundantly clear in the ongoing approach to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout our university. NAU serves an increasingly diverse student population, with total student diversity increasing from 32% in 2014 to 39% in 2020. NAU has made great strides in supporting diversity among faculty and staff as well. Diversity among all faculty has increased by nearly four percentage points since 2014 (13.0% to 16.8%), and diversity among all staff has increased by over four percentage points (23.1% to 27.5%) in the same period.

In order to enhance their experiences as members of the NAU community, we have created a Diversity Fellow position, which works across units on strategic diversity and inclusion efforts. Drawing on the existing structure of the Diversity Commissions, the Diversity Fellow enhances campus collaboration and spearheads critical initiatives, including the university-wide Diversity Strategic Plan (DSP). While the implementation of the DSP has been delayed slightly due to COVID-19, it is being released campus-wide this fall and will drive NAU's future efforts at an institutional, divisional, unit, and departmental level to bring diversity and inclusion to the forefront of all we do at NAU. From supporting and celebrating our existing diversity, to providing strong guidelines and policies to help improve the recruitment and retention of diverse student populations, to expanding the diversity of NAU's faculty and staff and providing them with the support they need to excel and flourish as valued members of the NAU community, the DSP will be an important touchstone for future planning efforts.

### **Capital Planning and Campus Operations Initiatives**

In addition to being an integral part of the EMSA reorganizational efforts, Capital Planning and Campus Operations has undergone significant centralized service changes and business process adjustments targeted at improving services for all areas across campus.

### **Campus Sustainability Initiatives**

NAU has a proud history of excellence in sustainability-related research and education. Recently, NAU has undertaken a concerted effort to build on this reputation and enhance campus-wide

sustainability initiatives and offerings through a centralized Office of Sustainability, a campus-wide Climate Action Plan, and a Sustainable Campus Ecosystem Initiative that draws on our distinctive strengths in this area and leverages the campus community's interest and expertise in sustainability.

The Office of Sustainability serves as the hub of sustainability efforts on campus and is appropriately aligned within Capital Planning and Campus Operations where sustainability initiatives find a direct linkage with all areas of campus operations. The Office of Sustainability stewards Green Fund-related projects, trains and educates Energy Mentors and offers Green Office certifications, and provides input on and advocacy for a range of sustainability projects and initiatives. The recently launched Climate Action Plan steering committee draws on university-wide expertise in sustainability-related topics. The broadly representative steering committee is tasked with developing a comprehensive climate action plan to guide NAU's sustainability efforts in the future. Finally, through grassroots organizational efforts from faculty, staff, and students, NAU launched in spring 2020 a Sustainable Campus Ecosystem Initiative that links faculty research and expertise with practical implementation of sustainability efforts to drive holistic change on campus and in the broader community.

### **Strategic Space Utilization Study**

As a precursor to a comprehensive campus master plan, NAU hired Sasaki to consult and embark on a Strategic Space Utilization Study in early 2019. The purpose of this project was to provide a clear understanding of how space on the Flagstaff campus is used today and identify future opportunities to optimize and improve the efficiency of space use. An approach was organized to provide a deliberate and interactive process that included guidance from a representative Steering Committee of stakeholders from across the NAU community, as well as engagement with students and representatives from all academic and administrative units. The project goals included identifying needs in program accommodation, promoting efficiency of space use, reinforcing equity and space use guidelines for all users, fostering a sense of community, taking into consideration the entire campus footprint, and minimizing cost for maximum results. The results of the study gave NAU a better understanding of where the university stands today and what its strengths, weaknesses, and needs truly are in terms of space usage. Equipped with this data, we have identified immediate opportunities to start addressing program needs, and suggested updates and changes to guidelines and policy as they pertain to space. This information will help guide the university on the next step in this critical process, as we move forward with our comprehensive Smart Campus Master Plan.

### **University Policy Initiative**

As NAU has grown and evolved, many of its policies have become fragmented and unevenly adopted. Realizing the challenges posed by a non-standardized university policy process, we launched a University Policy Program in 2017 to centralize, reimagine, and strengthen the university-wide system for developing and administering policies. The policy program's primary purpose is to implement best practices for university-level policy-making. The goals include creating a clear, well-defined, and effective process for proposing, approving, revising, and withdrawing University Policies. Led by the Director of Policy and a diverse and representative

Policy Advisory Committee, the program has helped standardized policy review, approval, and adoption processes, standardized formatting for all university policies, and developed a centralized policy library for transparency and easy reference by all members of the NAU community. Importantly, the centralized policy program helps mitigate institutional risk due to lack of uniformity in policies and ensures university-wide compliance. The policy program is an ongoing process improvement that contributes to the overall uniformity and standardization of business and policy practices at NAU.

## **Summary**

The depth and breadth of business process changes at NAU is immense. We have engaged in a consistent, ongoing assessment of institutional priorities, strengths, opportunities, and pathways for improvement. As the report above highlights, a special emphasis has been placed on aligning NAU's strategic goals throughout change processes to ensure our university is moving forward under a shared vision of excellence, serving our students, supporting our faculty and staff, and enriching the lives of our communities. In addition, we have focused on holistic approaches to finding efficiencies. OGEI is a prime example of a truly universal change process that will put NAU on sound organizational and financial footing into the future. We have engaged stakeholders from across campus throughout these efforts, ensuring consistent communication, representation of key shared governance groups, and broad awareness of change and the reasons for these adjustments. This process is driving greater efficiency and efficacy, and is also important to building a culture grounded in strategic goals, data-driven decision making, and, above all, a keen awareness of how organizational structure and financial health can improve how NAU serves its students.

## **Academic Organizational Structure Report**

NAU has undergone significant organizational enhancements among its academic units in order to meet the needs of our students. A strategic approach to academic organization is essential for NAU to provide high quality programs that meet the needs of our diverse student population, grow enrollments in a targeted and sustainable manner, generate sustainable revenue from enrollments, and recruit and retain excellent faculty who provide instruction and scholarship to drive the institution forward.

In recent years, some major structural changes have been made that have positioned NAU to be competitive in the dynamic higher education environment. These include the creation of two new colleges, new academic programs, refinement of academic program delivery, increased collaboration between units on campus to leverage expertise toward better meeting student needs, and strategic enrollment initiatives across colleges and academic programs. In addition, faculty hiring and retention efforts have been coordinated with programmatic expansion to enable NAU to have impactful research centers, strong graduate programs, and offer key undergraduate experiences through exceptional teaching and hands-on research opportunities.

### **Honors College**

In early 2017, NAU undertook a comprehensive planning effort to build a world-class Honors College living and learning facility, develop a curriculum, recruit leadership for the Honors College, and, ultimately, recruit and enroll students into this signature undergraduate academic program. NAU had a well-established and successful Honors Program (the oldest in the state), and both external and internal evaluations supported a launch of a fully-fledged honors college, better positioning NAU to recruit high achieving students and compete with its peers. An important planning consideration was that NAU lagged behind other institutions in its lack of a dedicated honors college: 81% of NAU's ABOR peers and 80% of regional competitors had an honors college in 2017.

The NAU Honors College opened its doors for the Fall 2018 semester. Featuring as its centerpiece a 204,656-square foot residential facility where Honors students live and learn, the Honors College features on-site faculty offices, an Honors writing center, eight state-of-the-art classrooms, and ample space for students to congregate and collaborate outside of the classroom. The Honors College curriculum is focused on small, seminar style honors courses; capstone work, including independent study, internships, and undergraduate research pathways; robust study abroad opportunities; and numerous opportunities for student engagement and leadership, both on campus and in the community. In addition, the Honors College has its own Dean, linked faculty who teach honors courses, and dedicated academic and student services staff to help facilitate student achievement.

The Honors College has helped NAU attract and retain a diverse and high-achieving student population and helps distinguish and promote the quality of the NAU brand to prospective students. The increased prestige and reputation conferred by the Honors College positions NAU competitively within the context of institutions with high-level honors education across the country. This benefits not only the institution on a broad level, but also benefits each and every

one of NAU's colleges and departments, all of which enroll honors students and offer honors courses. Since its launch in 2018, the Honors College has been successful in recruiting increasing numbers of high achieving students to NAU. Overall, first year honors enrollment has increased by more than 13% for the Honors College compared to enrollments in its predecessor, the Honors Program.

We look forward to the long-term success of the Honors College as it continues to enroll students and begins to produce graduates in the years to come. It provides a powerful, strategic linkage between NAU's academic units, our undergraduate-focused mission, our goals for recruitment and student success, and reputational and brand awareness and positioning within the competitive market for higher education.

### **College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences**

In 2018 after extensive consultation and study, NAU created the College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences (CEIAS). The academic units within CEIAS were originally part of the former College of Engineering, Forestry, and Natural Sciences, which was significantly realigned into its current structure as the College of the Environment, Forestry, and Natural Sciences (CEFNS). Segmenting out academic units into two distinct colleges, overseen by their own deans, department chairs, and administrative staff, has provided NAU with numerous advantages in terms of student success, academic program development, marketing and brand awareness, and scholarly excellence.

Specifically, as NAU assessed its academic structure, program enrollments, prospective growth, and other areas, engineering emerged as a discipline that was growing in size and scope. Resources in the old CEFNS were stretched and enrollments in the college continued to grow, without specialized support. In addition, as research activity and specialization increased in engineering and related disciplines, greater administrative support proved essential. At the time of CEIAS's creation, enrollments from its programs represented 36% of the total from CEFNS, its faculty formed 28% of the CEFNS total, and its research awards represented 10% of the CEFNS total (or 18% if the interdisciplinary research centers within CEFNS were excluded). This put CEFNS far above other colleges at NAU in terms of enrollment, faculty, and the like, while splitting out the two would align CEIAS as a college at the approximate size (with corresponding staffing levels) and research activity to the W.A. Franke College of Business and the College of Education. Through intensive study and consultation with leadership groups across campus, including the Faculty Senate, the creation of CEIAS was effectuated smoothly and in a manner that has provided numerous benefits to both colleges, their students, and their component departments, particularly through better distinction and recruitment opportunities, equitable work allocation, and better overall resourcing for college initiatives.

Through smaller and more programmatically focused colleges, CEIAS and CEFNS are better equipped to recruit students to strong, distinctive academic programs. Career preparation, mentoring, and academic support is more specific and less general, an issue that was observed in the old structure of CEFNS where degrees spanned a wide range of technical and scientific fields. A tremendous benefit has been observed in recruitment and retention of high-impact scholars and researchers and the ability to quickly adapt and launch new workforce-responsive

undergraduate and graduate engineering programs. As a direct result of this restructure, there is greater awareness and differentiation of NAU's distinct areas of excellence, both in the engineering disciplines, as well as in environmental sciences and sustainability education and research.

CEIAS now houses the School of Informatics, Computing, and Cybersystems (SICCS). Founded in 2016, SICCS is itself another important component of NAU's model for academic structure. Growing out of our informatics research center, this new school combined doctoral, master's, and undergraduate programs under one academic structure. An interdisciplinary school and focal point of expertise and education in critical modern sciences like computer science and informatics, SICCS is a testament to the focus on interdisciplinary impact, responsiveness to workforce and enrollment demands, and high-impact research. CEIAS is also home to the Center for Bioengineering Innovation and the Center for Materials Interfaces in Research and Applications, both of which serve as scholarly hubs, engage a number of graduate students, and provide opportunities for undergraduates to get hands-on experience in world-class interdisciplinary research labs and centers. Programmatic positioning and assessment continues, with a current proposal for an interdisciplinary department of Cybersecurity under consideration as a way to best leverage NAU's research expertise in this discipline and capitalize on the field of cybersecurity's strong prospects for growth in the workforce.

### **Program Changes**

Numerous adjustments have been made to academic program organizations and alignments to better foster program marketability, resources and impact, workforce alignment, faculty recruitment and retention, and student success. Below are key highlights that have been strategic areas for program changes and investments that are strategically designed to improve academic organizational structures at NAU:

- Combining the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science with the Informatics and Computing Program, to take advantage of interdisciplinary synergies and create a hub of data science and informatics programs in the form of the School of Informatics, Computing, and Cyber Systems (SICCS) and supporting new undergraduate and graduate programs in informatics. Enrollment in SICCS-affiliated programs has grown from by more than 47% since 2014, and SICCS currently enrolls just under 1,000 students.
- Reorganizing the department of Physics and Astronomy by separating physics and including those faculty and programs into the newly-formed department of Applied Physics and Materials Science, which is revitalizing physics research and education by emphasizing contemporary research questions and synergies with materials science and engineering and supporting new graduate programs at the masters and doctoral levels.
- Similarly, the department of Astronomy and Planetary Sciences is now streamlined and differentiated and allows NAU to maximize the impact of this area of strength in education and research. Astronomy and Planetary Sciences is well positioned to continue to grow through its partnerships with Lowell Observatory, the Discovery Channel

Telescope, several international observatories, and existing partnerships with our sister institutions in Arizona, all of which are enhanced by our location in Flagstaff and the reputation of the faculty in this unit.

- Reorganizing education-oriented programs that had developed over time across campus and housing them into appropriate academic units by moving Yuma education programs, the oversight of the Professional Education Program (PEP), and the Center for Science Teaching and Learning into the College of Education.
- Better supporting important student success related initiatives by moving programmatic oversight to academic units with strong disciplinary affinity, such as housing First Year Experience courses and program oversight in the College of Education and First Year Seminars in the College of Arts and Letters.
- Moving online degree programs, such as the bachelors programs in Psychology and Sociology, from NAU Online and Extended Campuses to a disciplinary home in the appropriate college (in this case, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences), providing direct faculty leadership and oversight and greater disciplinary expertise in program management and delivery.
- Innovating across organizational divides by developing a new doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Health as a collaboration between the College of Health and Human Services and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and aimed at supporting critical workforce needs for the next generation of leaders in health research and education.
- Created a new Department of Social Work to facilitate growth and specialization in this area of significant growth and impact to the workforce through both undergraduate and graduate educational programs. Formerly housed in Sociology, the separation ensured that professional development and accreditation criteria were prioritized. This realignment has seen tremendous program growth, with enrollments growing by just under 250% since 2014 (270 to 666 total undergraduate and graduate students).
- Launched the following graduate programs over the past three years, with a focus on areas of high workforce demand and connection to areas of research excellence at NAU for doctoral programs:
  - M.Ed. in International Education Leadership
  - Ph.D. in Applied Physics and Materials Science
  - Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering
  - M.S. in Building Science
  - Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology
  - M.Ed. in PK-12 College and Career Counseling
- Ongoing discussions with the department of Applied Indigenous Studies and the Native American Cultural Center to combine the academic unit within a collaborative, student-services oriented department with the goal of better delivering education and support

services to Native American students, in support of one of NAU's key strategic goals. This process is ongoing in consultation with Applied Indigenous Studies faculty and the Faculty Senate.

- Ongoing discussions with faculty in SICCS, Applied Physics and Material Sciences, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Mathematics to form an interdisciplinary department of Cybersecurity to foster research and education in this emerging field.

A key benefit of these efforts is the ability to rapidly develop and launch new undergraduate and graduate programs, enabled by the ability to offer focused attention to those programs and as a direct result of our restructuring efforts. Our Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan has been closely coordinated with all areas of program assessment, development, and implementation in order to ensure that broad, university-wide goals for enrollment are met, programs have reliable prospects for growth, and that academic efforts are complemented by robust enrollment management and marketing support.

In Fall 2019, to help facilitate a better understanding of peer institution approaches to academic structure, NAU's Provost attended a national conference centered on academic restructuring considerations for future transformation and growth hosted by Academic Impressions. This has served as an important benchmarking guide to identifying key areas for integrated planning and evaluation, assessment of current strengths and areas for targeted growth, and opportunities to tailor existing models to meet emerging trends and needs. This work has been shared among the Academic Affairs leadership team and SEM working group, and has been used to help inform ongoing decision making about academic structure adjustments and changes.

### **NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives**

Online, personalized learning, and statewide education are critical components of NAU's broad mission of access to a quality education. Each of these areas had previously functioned separately with limited collaboration. In addition, business processes and academic administration was fragmented across these units, with duplicated divisions for student recruitment, marketing, student advising, and academic programs in some areas, while in others there was direct linkage to home departments on the Flagstaff Campus. Through the OneNAU model that has been put in place across NAU, the majority of these units have been brought under the umbrella of NAU Online and Innovative Educational Initiatives, which includes the former Extended Campuses, NAU Online, NAU Personalized Learning, and Statewide operations.

This division, which reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, is now composed of a broad suite of units that have direct, collaborative relationships and functional synergies. These include the e-Learning Center, Instructional Design Pedagogical Team, Continuing Education, and Online and Personalized Learning Programs. Overall, NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives units provide support for the workforce, market analysis that is used university-wide to assess and articulate program needs and best modes of delivery, and innovative delivery to support NAU's statewide and online program offerings.

One component of the integration of dispersed units into NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives was a substantial evaluation of academic delivery and best practices in the former Extended Campuses unit. With important component of this transition was a program-by-program review of academic offerings that was conducted to evaluate and rehouse programs into academic colleges, as appropriate. In Fall 2019, two programs from Yuma were aligned with the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences: the Bachelor of Sociology and the Bachelor of Psychology. In addition, seven programs formerly housed in Extended Campuses were reassigned to NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives:

- Organizational Leadership (master)
- Applied Human Behavior (bachelor)
- Community Development and Sustainability (bachelor)
- Strategic Leadership (bachelor)
- Emergency Management (bachelor)
- Justice Studies (bachelor)
- Public Administration (bachelor)

These program reassignments were undertaken with the following goals and objectives in mind: aligning curriculum and learning outcomes regardless of course and program modality, ensuring consistent student learning experience. Allowing for intentional marketing and lead generation for programmatic growth. Simplifying application and admission processes for incoming students and enabling greater flexibility in choosing delivery method and academic program location. And streamlined student support services. The process of program evaluation and realignment is ongoing, to ensure that NAU continues to follow best practices and strategically align units to maximize impact and resource usage, and to improve the student experience.

NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives has also been evaluated and restructured to allow NAU to implement a streamlined and centralized process for units to introduce and process academic program changes, including applications for new programs, and changes to location and modality. Many changes have already been made to transition programs from in-person to online or to add an online offering to an existing program. The goal of this improved process is to streamline and facilitate processes and procedures for creating online program offerings and will allow NAU to increase its outreach. A critical goal for meeting student access, workforce demands, and efficient academic delivery efforts is to meet NAU students where they are already living and working and align programs with credits or work experience they have already achieved in anticipation of the next life or workplace goals they hope to achieve. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the centrality of having a flexible online educational platform to serve modern learners. Adjustments in organization are allowing NAU Online to be more responsive and impactful and its collaboration with academic departments throughout campus is crucial to ongoing growth at NAU.

Another reorganization in NAU Online was the transition of the instructional design team to have a direct reporting relationship to the Vice Provost and Dean of NAU Online. This has allowed for more direct collaboration with the units and programs delivering online education and was highlighted during the rapid launch of NAUFlex in Spring 2020. In a short period of time, nearly all learning successfully pivoted online, and throughout the summer and fall as full-

scale rollout of this flexible instructional model was launched to facilitate successful multi-modal education that mitigated COVID-19 risks while providing a fully-immersive educational experience. This close alignment between instructional design and NAU Online is also allowing NAU to build a collaboration with Arizona State University to strengthen our instructional design training, student success coaching, and studio production services in support of all online educational initiatives.

One final structural addition to NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives will be the addition of the Educational Partnerships team at the end of this calendar year. Transitioning this team from the External Affairs division at NAU to fully support the outreach and academic planning of NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives will complete the academic restructuring envisioned under the OneNAU model. This effort supports further alignment of pipeline programs at community colleges, as well as career and technical education districts, workforce needs assessments and business partnerships, and enhanced articulation of academic planning for transfer friendly programs and expansion of programs across online and statewide delivery models.

### **Undergraduate Focus**

NAU's commitment to providing an outstanding undergraduate education is a central strategic priority of the university and a hallmark of the NAU experience. Academic structure is critical to facilitating excellence in undergraduate program offerings, learning experience, and post-graduate success. The reorganization of CEIAS and CEFNS described above is an important way that we are addressing demand from undergraduate students for increased specialization and high-tech, workforce-ready degree programs.

In 2019, the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity was merged with the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, offering students a wide range of options for creative explorations. This spring, the center held the Jacks Big IDEA event, a 48-hour interdisciplinary problem-solving event focused on addressing real-world challenges in a well-researched, well-argued presentation.

Recent program assessments have led to the launch of high-impact certificate programs, like the interdisciplinary Innovative Thinking and Problem Solving certificate, which asks students to synthesize their academic expertise and turn it to innovation and real-world problem solving. Similarly, key programs that have an impact on retention, like the First Year Seminars and First Year Experience have been restructured to better align with subject matter expertise in academic departments, providing higher impact programming from the very beginning of our students' undergraduate experience.

The quality of NAU's undergraduate student experience is supported in many ways by graduate students serving as mentors, instructors, and campus leaders, and this connection has been actively developed in recent years, particularly as graduate education has expanded and, consequently, provided enhanced opportunities for undergraduate-graduate student engagement. Undergraduates engage with our graduate students in many aspects of instruction and research that enhance the undergraduate experience. Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) take their

responsibilities seriously and contribute to curricular development, pedagogical advancements, and student success initiatives.

Each year, approximately 120 undergraduate interns are hired through the Interns-to-Scholars program. In academic year 2019-2020, 563 Hooper Undergraduate Research Awards were granted, and 800 projects involving undergraduate students were showcased at the NAU Undergraduate Symposium. These students are working alongside graduate student near-peer colleagues in innovative research teams across the institution. The annual Undergraduate Symposium has joined with the Graduate Student Government's annual Poster Symposium to present research in a virtual format. In Spring 2020, NAU participated in the annual national Invent for the Planet event, and we will grow graduate participation in this event linking undergraduate and graduate students in interdisciplinary discovery.

Linking across disciplines and providing close connections for undergraduate students to work with NAU's world-class researchers is a key strategy that NAU has sought to enhance. Our research presence has grown and undergraduate students continue to look for opportunities for hands on learning, both inside and outside of the classroom, to complement their education and prepare them for the future. NAU has leveraged faculty expertise to meet the increasing need for undergraduate research opportunities in specific, research-focused undergraduate courses. Often the projects carried out in these courses are conducted in research teams, including graduate students, working on a general theme. Since 2016, in CEFNS and CEIAS, two highly research active colleges, enrollments in courses numbered 485 (Undergraduate Research) and 497 (Independent Study) have exceeded 2,060, indicating considerable undergraduate engagement in various forms of research and scholarship.

Coupled with academic programs are strong support initiatives through improved, centralized advising processes, a new division of Student Affairs that has oversight for all student programming and academic success initiatives,

Ensuring a strong pipeline system for undergraduates at NAU to persist into graduate programs is another strategic priority. We actively recruit our outstanding undergraduate students into our graduate programs, including accelerated options, and resources to enhance student awareness and preparation for continuing postsecondary education have been created that include a summer course on applying to graduate school and promotional collaborations with University Marketing to showcase the NAU graduate experience.

### **Impact of Faculty and Research**

NAU has seen tremendous growth in its research and scholarly impact over the past six years. Each year, research expenditures have increased to record levels, culminating in \$65 million this year. The growth in research activity and revenue is largely the result of strategic hiring in core areas of excellence throughout NAU. Overall, the institutional recruitment strategy for high-impact scholars is to generate clusters of critical mass in a particular department or center where NAU can emerge as a powerhouse, attract additional talented faculty, recruit ambitious and excellent graduate students, and grow our footprint for research. These successes, in turn, are helpful in recruiting undergraduate students due to increases in research activity, brand

recognition, and rankings, and these areas typically offer numerous opportunities for undergraduate students to gain hands-on research experience.

Graduate students are similarly able to pursue their academic degrees under mentorship provided through research centers and institutes, including the Pathogen and Microbiome Institute (PMI), the Center for Ecosystem Science and Society (ECOSS), the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI), the Center for Health Equity Research (CHER), and the Merriam-Powell Center for Environmental Research (MPCER). Recent strategic faculty hires have contributed to our recent NSF National Research Ranking of #196 (up from #201 in 2017), and have mentored over 200 graduate students in their research teams.

### **Commitment to Access Mission**

NAU is committed to the identification, development, and delivery of efficient programs that meet the needs and interests of all learners. We have developed a curriculum planning process to ensure program relevance and alignment with the workforce. In Fall 2019, the dean position within NAU Online has restructured into a Dean and Vice Provost role within Academic Affairs with oversight over the broader NAU Online, Statewide, and Innovative Educational Initiatives division. This division collaborates across campus with all academic colleges and is a key driver in online program development and implementation. In Spring 2020, the e-learning department was organizationally moved to report to NAU Online with a focused charge to support online curriculum development while ensuring best practices for faculty instructors.

Additionally, the Provost Office has committed to distribute a Market Demand list each fall and spring, which describes and assesses market demand and identifies high-growth, low-growth, and emerging academic programs. The list distributions coincide with quarterly calls for potential new programs, as well as new locations and/or delivery modes. Program proposal submissions are evaluated against measurable criteria, including plan and rationale for the proposal, alignment with institutional goals, identification of external demand, and impact on quality and enrollments.

To support the identification of specific program demand and opportunities, we have integrated the use of a variety of tools, including licensed platforms, which help us identify real-time labor demand and occupational outlook for new and existing programs. Our in-depth assessment for a potential program also considers demand trends, potential market saturation, and other institution offerings. The Workforce & Market Analysis: Program Outlook Deep Dive document, which results from this effort, ensures that we are providing the opportunities that students are most interested in across academic programs and has been a key feature of our academic planning strategies.

Since Fall 2019, the approach has resulted in increasing faculty receptivity to developing online and hybrid curriculum and micro-credentials. In fact, 31 degree and certificate programs have requested a workforce analysis since the program was launched. Eleven of the programs in this queue are graduate degrees and certificates, with the remainder being undergraduate programs. Identification of niche markets within our region is critical, where NAU can match skill gaps

with faculty expertise, track inquiries from prospective students, and assess real-time labor demand.

Furthermore, we recognize that graduate degree programs of the future must align with labor market needs, as well as provide flexible pathways and seek both traditional and non-traditional learners who are seeking educational attainment, workforce preparedness, and professional credentialing programs at varying career stages and in many locations. Such paths include accelerated time to graduate degree programs, as well as competency-based education. NAU is a leader in the state in the delivery of competency-based education. In June 2013, we launched a competency-based division called Personalized Learning. Currently, NAU offers two competency-based master's programs in an online, self-directed format: Computer Information Technology and Nursing. These flexible paths allow students to demonstrate and expand their knowledge through assessment of tests, projects, and other activities. Six-month subscription periods replace the typical semester, allowing for a truly personalized approach to learning. A student can begin a subscription every Wednesday of the year and students have access to register for multiple courses within the subscription period. Students in competency-based programs tend to be highly motivated since they are usually employed and in need of the degree for job security or advancement.

In support of our flexible paths, the Alternative Credentials Task Force has been charged with exploring the delivery of micro-credentials, beginning in Fall 2019. As a result of their comprehensive recommendations, NAU launched its first micro-credential with designated e-badge in January 2020. Creating an environment to incubate and deliver new offerings with consultation services to assist faculty is critical for success. To support the coordination of such offerings, NAU Online is collaborating directly with program leaders in the identification and development of alternative credentials. Faculty have expressed significant interest in establishing additional micro-credentials in numerous areas at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

### **Space and Facilities**

As part of the university-wide Strategic Space Utilization Study, a thorough assessment of the proportion of research and teaching lab space was conducted to enable continued growth within the STEM disciplines. Space is a critical strategic element of ongoing program development and growth, particularly in STEM fields where quality facilities play an important role in recruiting faculty and graduate students. In addition to resolving programmatic needs and efficient building use, the plan also considers how these renovation strategies contribute to the North Campus "Science Corridor." During this phased project, the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), along with university research support teams, were relocated within the Science Corridor, with Center for Health Equity Research (CHER) laboratories moving into the highly technical OVPR space in the Applied Research and Development Building. This re-assignment of space accomplishes several goals, including placing CHER students in close proximity to the Pathogen and Microbiome Institute laboratories, as well as providing in person research support to researchers working on North Campus.

A recent summary reported to NSF reveals an overall increase (144%) in research and graduate education space between 2015 and 2019 at NAU. The new allocation of over 11,000 square feet

in the Computer/Information Sciences area underscores dramatic growth in this area, including at the doctoral level. Recent expansions of research and undergraduate and graduate study space have been made possible by major state funding allocations toward STEM and health sciences research. While the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed many campus projects, the current work and future trajectory of NAU's space use is strategic and supports inter-departmental collaboration, administrative and research support, and targeted investments in areas identified for growth.

### **TRIF Investments**

The adoption of the current five-year TRIF research plan for 2017-2021 expanded the number of strategic investment areas for NAU beyond the traditional areas of Improving Health and Water, Environmental and Energy Solutions. The added investment areas of Astronomy and Planetary Science and National Security Systems has been closely aligned with, and provides robust support to, new graduate degree program growth, including the implementation of new Ph.D. programs in Astronomy and Planetary Science and Informatics and Computing, as well as a Master of Science degree program and graduate certificate in Cybersecurity. These expanded graduate degree programs complement recent additions in the area of Improving Health, which include Ph.D. programs in Interdisciplinary Health, Bioengineering, and Applied Physics and Materials Science. Increasing TRIF revenue during this cycle has allowed investments in all four TRIF Research areas to increase to \$8.8 million in 2020, a 22% increase compared to 2017, and has expanded the TRIF support of graduate students by 45% during this time, from 85 graduate students in 2017 to 123 students in 2020.

When considered in the context of academic organization, NAU has approached the development, implementation, and reconfiguration of academic colleges, schools, and programs with synergies and impactful use of resources at top-of-mind. For instance, the creation of SICCS has enabled NAU to pull together a critical mass of scholarly excellence and educational opportunities and fund changes through TRIF and other sources in a way that is impactful and efficient in meeting goals. Overall, our strategy has focused on opportunities for collaboration, shared expertise and research, and maximization of resources to grow and develop quality programs that benefit our students and our state.

### **Summary**

The future success of NAU hinges on the future success of our students, and all of our analysis and planning keeps them at the forefront. As institutional growth patterns shift away from a Flagstaff undergraduate focus and are diversified, particularly with increasing graduate and certificate programs, we must increase access to strong career opportunities through professional-oriented programming, and concomitantly, we must champion programs that align with our foundational research strengths and prepare scientists and scholars to drive disciplinary progress. Our program repertoire is constantly scrutinized and updated, and we have adopted a comprehensive market and workforce analysis approach to inform planning into the future. We will continue to build on the strong reputation of our face-to-face graduate programs in Flagstaff, and we will grow highly relevant accelerated and dual degree programs, online degree and certificate programs, and valuable micro-credentials across the disciplines. Addressing these

multiple fronts in ways that offer students meaningful programs at reasonable cost requires that we are nimble and responsive to an ever increasingly changing environment.

## **Undergraduate Transfer and Graduate Student Enrollment Report**

NAU has embarked on an aggressive strategic path to enhancing student access to a postsecondary education and ensuring that journey results in the completion of a degree. This has required internal evaluation of our business practices, the pipeline of students we aim to serve, the degree offerings at NAU across all locations, and the academic support structures provided to meet student needs and institutional goals relating to undergraduate transfer and graduate student enrollments and degrees awarded. Historically, NAU's institutional identity has centered around a strong, personalized undergraduate experience on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus, complimented by statewide programs delivered to meet local community workforce needs. This comprehensive mission remains consistent with NAU's current vision and strategic plan of student access and success and service to a diverse population through comprehensive undergraduate and graduate program offerings. An important component of this effort has always been, and will remain, working to ensure that students enrolled in community colleges, both in Arizona and elsewhere across the country, have avenues to complete their education at NAU and meet their educational goals. In addition, the university has continued to expand its graduate offerings, particularly in workforce-centered programming and, more narrowly, in select, high-impact research-focused offerings.

NAU's work in growing enrollments at all levels, including transfer and graduate, is underpinned by the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) planning process, which began in 2018. Charged with looking at enrollment growth and planning efforts holistically in order to meet attainment goals, diversify enrollment and revenue sources for long-term sustainability, and leverage cross-divisional expertise to maximize impact and return on investment from marketing and enrollment initiatives, all in a data-driven framework, the SEM plan has guided many of the program growth, process refinements, and marketing strategies outlined in this report. Transfer and graduate enrollments play a key role in this plan, given their importance to a diversified enrollment pipeline and class profile for NAU's future enrollments, particularly as traditional undergraduate enrollments are projected to remain flat in the years ahead due to demographic shifts.

The report below summarizes the strategies and initiatives to further enhance student access and Arizona's workforce through strategic attention to transfer student populations and graduate education at NAU, including the impacts that have already been realized from our work toward these important institutional goals.

### **OneNAU**

As the Board is aware, NAU had historically developed statewide and online programs through a separate unit called Extended Campuses, with duplicated divisions for student recruitment, marketing, student advising, and some academic programs. Other academic programs utilized college and faculty support from the Flagstaff Campus, but it was done through a series of incentives rather than an integrated expectation and workflow. Through the guidance of an advisory committee composed of individuals representing a broad cross section of the university, the Extended Campus model was eliminated and NAU adopted the unified OneNAU model that is in place today. Students are now recruited to any of NAU's locations and programs through a

comprehensive process focused on their needs. NAU's outreach and marketing efforts are fully integrated university-wide to meet institutional priorities with input from the Student Success and Access Planning Committee. Facilities and operations are managed centrally for all campuses, creating efficiencies in the management of leases and contract agreements. This has included an assessment of statewide resources and led to the closure of one site in the East Valley in order to maximize resources, consolidate services, and appropriately designate programs to high-impact sites that are optimally positioned to deliver services. And academic programs are in an ongoing state of improved transfer-friendly assessment and expansion.

The impact of OneNAU is far-reaching and includes critical expansion of access to programs that have traditionally only been available on the Flagstaff Campus to bring them to new locations and online. Leadership for Education Partnerships has been provided through External Affairs in the interim during this change management process and the final stage of this effort is to move the Education Partnerships unit within Academic Affairs under the division of NAU Online and Innovative Educational Initiatives. This effort will complete the strategic organizational redesign of OneNAU to support transfer students and our vision for expanding pathways and partnerships to continue to build Arizona's workforce statewide.

### **Transfer Enrollment Strategies and Process Improvements**

A major emphasis has been placed on improving the process for transfer student enrollment at NAU. Many transfer students face obstacles in terms of credit evaluation, program differences, and lack of support for non-traditional students. In addition, since transfer students do not share the same long-term connection to a four-year university community, they are often a group that faces retention challenges. To address these issues, NAU has invested significant resources in improving the full-cycle of transfer student recruitment, admission, enrollment, and retention services to provide a smooth path to NAU, integrated and responsive services, and ample resources for academic success.

NAU has instituted significant process improvements to smooth the transition from community college to NAU through our centralized JacksPath website. As a hub for information on transferring to NAU, JacksPath provides students easy access to information on how their credits will transfer to NAU, how to continue to make progress toward an NAU degree, and what specific NAU courses are needed in order to earn an undergraduate degree. JacksPath helps students make important decisions about their course of study and map out their academic journey, including providing information on the transferability of credits to different degrees and the applicability of degrees in the workforce. Through recent upgrades, JacksPath now has over 300,000 external courses in its library to help facilitate quick and easy comparisons between students' community college coursework and equivalencies, as well as prerequisites for courses or programs at NAU.

Following up the role JacksPath provides as a key planning tool for students, NAU now has a robust and streamlined transfer student application system. By streamlining the application to a single transfer application for all NAU campuses (rather than separate applications for each NAU location), students can now explore multiple opportunities and modalities at NAU more

easily. Additionally, other processes that have served to improve the transfer student experience from enrollment through advising include the following:

- Process consolidation of transfer credit and articulation to ensure full academic records are equated to NAU at the time of admit (improved advising experience).
- Implementation of “one stop” processing for transcripts, admission, transfer credit and articulation for students (improved advising and enrollment experience).
- Expanded role of Student Success Coordinators located on most community college campuses throughout Arizona to include financial aid and student account services on-site (improved overall services for transfer students and increase accessibility).
- New 2NAU program agreements with partner colleges and associated support from Student Service Coordinators (improved and streamlined student experience).

As a premier Arizona resident-serving institution, with the highest percentage of in-state student population among its ABOR sister institutions, NAU has taken great pride in providing many pathways for Arizona residents to complete a degree and continue to live and work in the state after graduation. The 2NAU program has been the umbrella for NAU’s partnership efforts focused on streamlining transfer student processes to NAU and, most recently, this included the implementation of electronic transcript processing for all Maricopa Community College and Coconino Community College students. Continuing to create simplified pathways for students to transition from their local community colleges to statewide programs reduces artificial bureaucratic barriers and allows NAU to meet students where they are to help them realize their educational goals, which is essential to help us reach the Achieve AZ60 educational attainment goals.

For many transfer students, finances pose a significant challenge, and NAU has pivoted resources to ensure that degree planning is provided in order to maximize resources throughout the community college and university pathway and to also provide targeted scholarships and financial support specifically to transfer students. The Transfer Award is a need based award launched to support transfer students joining NAU on the Flagstaff campus as well as at statewide sites. In addition, the Phi Theta Kappa award for high performing transfers helps recruit transfer students to NAU. Finally, the 2NAU Scholarship requirements have been simplified and the scholarship award has been adjusted from a one-time award to a two-year renewable award to help facilitate both enrollment and retention of transfer students at NAU. NAU’s Enrollment Management division has expanded its recruiting efforts focusing on transfer students to ensure this market receives appropriate attention. Monthly Transfer Fridays are held to provide transfer students an opportunity to visit in-person or virtually at NAU and learn more about the wealth of academic programs and diversity of student support and programming that NAU has to offer. Transfer Visit Days are held each semester as a robust campus engagement opportunity with prospective students. While highlighting NAU’s campus is important, we have also improved how we connect directly with students at their own community colleges. Our Transfer Tours, where NAU recruitment team members meet students at their home community colleges across the state, have been substantially improved. Underpinning these initiatives has been institutional investments to increase the size of the transfer recruitment team and increase recruitment in targeted out-of-state markets.

All of these process improvements to transfer student enrollment have been supported by the overall realignment of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA) into separate and distinct divisions. Enhanced allocation of expertise and resources to these specific areas has helped contributed to the overhaul in enrollment processes and outreach noted above. Further, Student Affairs, which now is focused more fully on the student experience, service to diverse student populations, and student success initiatives, has an office of Transfer and Online Connections that is focused on providing direct service and support to enrolled transfer students, helping them achieve their goals and persist to graduation from NAU.

More robust connections and collaboration between Enrollment Management and University Marketing is another prime factor in enhanced transfer student enrollment and outreach. With targeted digital strategies, NAU is connecting early and often with transfer students to ensure that they have heightened awareness of the excellent education available at NAU and the streamlined processes we have in place to quickly and easily enroll and support transfer students at NAU.

### **Out-of-State and Other Transfer Strategies**

Transfer programs for students within Arizona will continue to be a top priority, but expansion of NAU's transfer friendly environment beyond the borders of our state has provided great benefits to attracting additional partners and increasing student access and diversity. In particular, we have developed strategic relationships with California Community Colleges as the California University System reduced access to students within their state. We created an identical pathway to the 2NAU programs within Arizona, called CA2NAU, with full catalog articulation for populations in Jacks Path that provide an improved experience and targeted market growth specific for California transfer students. Similar efforts have begun in other target markets and will be expanded in the years ahead.

As a member of a number of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and a participant in the regional Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) tuition savings program, NAU has collaborated and networked with a number of institutions within WICHE to explore possibilities for expanded out-of-state transfer pathways. NAU is exploring participation in WICHE's Interstate Passport program and evaluating full participation based on the program's alignment with NAU's goals of providing a transfer-friendly pathway for students to complete their four-year degrees and the accessibility provided as a result of WUE tuition benefits. As noted, CA2NAU is a strong starting point. Another area of targeted growth and recruitment is with community colleges in Hawaii, and partnerships are being explored in tandem with overall expansion of recruitment efforts in Hawaii.

Transfer students will not all come directly from the community college pipelines, and NAU is positioned well to meet the needs of non-traditional transfer students in a responsive and effective manner. Many adults have entered the workforce with an associate's degree or some number of college credits and need to continue their education and earn a bachelor's degree, certificate, or other credential in order to advance in the workforce or fulfill their personal educational goals. NAU has established a team focused on business partnerships, workforce development and continuing education to support these initiatives going forward. This has

resulted in degrees offered on-site at local law enforcement training centers, in partnerships with cities and counties for leadership programs/degrees and with school districts for “grow your own” teacher programs and educational leader development. Additionally, programs have developed directly from workforce partnerships such as the online electrical engineering technology degree which will soon be launched. This team also supports the need for graduate degrees in the workforce. A listing of partnerships with business, government, and educational institutions is provided in the graduate section of this report, due to the linkage in this initiative to both transfer student and graduate student enrollments through these partnership programs.

Expanding 90/30 programs has been a priority for NAU in order to help transfer students successfully complete bachelor’s degrees by transferring up to 90 credits and then completing their final 30 credits toward their degree at NAU. These flexible options are available at multiple delivery locations and online and allow students to maximize their time and save money. 90/30 program offerings are targeted toward career-focused education that matches with student needs. In total, NAU offers eleven 90/30 programs, including two Nursing degrees, and has expanded this portfolio with three new program additions since 2018:

- Applied Human Behavior (bachelor)
- Industrial Leadership (bachelor)
- Strategic Leadership (bachelor)

NAU has also pursued MOU programs with Tribal Colleges in order to foster connections and opportunities for Native American students to continue their studies at NAU. With their focus on providing a culturally grounded education, Tribal Colleges comprehensively prepare Native American students for four year institutions, and with NAU’s strategic mission of serving Native American students, fostering strong connections between institutions and a pathway to earning a degree at NAU is important. Since 2016, MOUs have been signed with Diné College, Navajo Technical University, A:shiwi Tribal College, and Tohono O’odham Community College. An MOU with San Carlos Apache College is in progress and will be completed soon. In addition, NAU has 2NAU programs with Tribal College partners and has worked to improve internet connectivity onsite through work with Mural and NAU’s IT Services in order to facilitate continued education, including directly into NAU Online programs.

Overall, strategies around transfer students have been to integrate the support throughout the NAU campus units under the OneNAU initiative; increase the comprehensive support available on-site at statewide locations; maximize resources through consistent use of grants and contracts, marketing, recruitment, advising, and other support services; enhance student transfer tools, such as JacksPath; streamline and automate processes, such as the application and admissions process; maximize transfer scholarships and aid; and expand programs critical to the workforce and in areas of student demand.

### **Transfer Enrollment Trends**

Based on the most recent numbers available from the National Center for Education Statistics, transfer enrollment has declined since a high-point in 2011. In the most recent reporting year (2018), overall transfer-in enrollment to postsecondary institutions had fallen by more than 11%.

This trend poses clear challenges to our enrollment efforts with undergraduate transfer students. The trend is reflected at NAU, where transfer enrollments have declined by 7.5% since 2014. This decline has been mitigated by growth in online program delivery options. In Academic Year 2020, we saw an increase of 37.5% in transfer student enrollments in online programs. Given the increasing competition for fewer overall transfer students, NAU has focused extensively on improving the processes and support these students receive in order to successfully recruit and retain them. In addition, direct support from University Marketing and the ability to enroll in a multitude of modalities and locations (NAU Online, Statewide, and Flagstaff), position the institution to maximize competitive positioning within this enrollment segment. And finally, with online emerging as a key growth area for the future, we are working to position NAU's programmatic offerings to meet students where they are and provide opportunities for an a quality NAU education to transfer students in an online modality.

Finally, while the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on enrollments, it has highlighted the versatility and value of NAU's statewide presence and transfer student strategies. Through our robust efforts to launch NAUFlex at statewide locations, remote program delivery was possible as well as online options and some in-person sites, even when many community colleges throughout the state remained entirely online. The rapid pivot underlines NAU's ability to meet students across the state where they are and in the modality in which they wish to learn, and this will serve as an invaluable tool in the future as we continue to recruit transfer students across the state and around the country.

### **Graduate Changes, Organization, and Opportunities**

NAU has made significant organizational adaptations, backed by strategic investments, to build on the university's rich history of graduate education, with the primary focus being on meeting student needs, aligning with Arizona's workforce needs, enhancing opportunities for revenue generation and reputational value, and generating impactful research. NAU continues to expand access to graduate programming, as reflected in graduate enrollment patterns over the past decade. All NAU campuses have experienced graduate enrollment growth over the past three years. This growth is no surprise and is a direct result of enhanced partnerships, collaboration, and strategic decisions between academic units, the Graduate College, Enrollment Management, and University Marketing to help NAU achieve its graduate enrollment growth objectives. As part of an overarching business strategy for growing specific areas of enrollment in order to better balance the mix of overall enrollment and diversify and provide sustainable revenue sources, graduate programs are an ongoing focus.

The current pandemic underscores the urgency of many steps we have already committed to and launched, including expansion of academically robust curricula in multiple delivery modes, strong professional development opportunities, streamlined processing from application to graduation, and aggressive marketing focused on linking these opportunities with post-baccalaureate adults considering their next steps.

Significant growth has occurred within the health professions, and in the STEM disciplines offered in CEFNS and CEIAS. Doctoral students in these programs have successfully won NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program awards, which infuses generously funded graduate

students into NAU research laboratories. The College of Education (COE) has shown enrollment increases, and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (CSBS) has higher graduate enrollment than at any time in its last 10 years. It is important to note, however, that NAU will not be all things to all people, and programs will not grow equally in all colleges. Following national trends, graduate enrollment in our College of Arts and Letters (CAL) has struggled in recent years, having dropped 28% since its 10-year peak in 2012. These trends have informed detailed discussions with academic deans regarding program directions and current disciplinary trends. At all levels, NAU is focused on decision-making processes that are guided by relevant market patterns, student needs, targeted growth areas, and achieving a mix of student enrollment that enables sustained revenue. This model will allow NAU to continue to meet its strategic objectives and provide access to a quality education and the robust and responsive portfolio of programmatic offerings that our students need.

A continuing growth area for NAU is international graduate student enrollments, and we have sought to diversify the international student population by opening and expanding in key markets around the globe. India, China, and Ghana represent a few of those markets that have been critical to our growth over the past few years and will continue to represent places of opportunity for NAU to attract high quality graduate candidates.

NAU has nearly tripled the number of international graduate applicants in the past two years and even with a global crisis underway we see opportunities to increase enrollments in online as well as in-person degree programs on the Flagstaff campus. Graduate degrees continue to be a highly sought after improvement in the lives of international students. We are optimistic that NAU will continue to experience strong international graduate student enrollments in the coming years, as more students interact with our academic recruiters and advisors, learn what NAU has to offer, and understand the benefits that come from earning an NAU degree. Our strategy moving forward continues to focus on the recruitment of students from the developing world, including Latin America, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Western Africa, and to growing tailored online programs that can reach international students where they live. One example is the China MPA program, one of the first MPA programs available in China, where the degree is projected to be a sought-after credential in the years ahead. The program agreement was signed in July 2019, with a proposed start for the first cohort in Fall 2020. While the program has been delayed by the pandemic, it illustrates the aggressive strategy of delivering an NAU education in-country to meet target market needs. The program is on hold until full-scale travel is reopened, but it serves as a model of the possibilities for international graduate-level education that NAU is pursuing.

In order to shore up international graduate enrollments during the COVID-19 pandemic, NAU has focused on retaining currently enrolled students and identifying ways to get new students engaged in some capacity by taking one or more online courses, which reflects the agile enrollment and academic delivery model that NAU has sought to ingrain across academic units. Every option is being considered and pursued to maximize continued enrollments, both online and in-person, in an effort to maintain our international student enrollments and expand our capabilities to optimize the services we provide to students.

In addition to international growth, broad tactical plans have been employed university-wide to continue to grow graduate enrollments, in close collaboration with Enrollment Management and

the university-wide Student Access and Success Plan. Programs are examined individually and assigned marketing services and optimal recruitment support as appropriate. The recent hire of a full-time graduate recruiter in the Office of Enrollment Management and close engagement with University Marketing and NAU Online help inform these specific plans and allow for cross-divisional collaboration and draw on areas of expertise to reduce siloing and improve recruitment efforts across the board. An example is our online nursing programs, which have been represented at many health promotion fairs, incorporated into brand campaign ads in targeted locations, received extensive website enhancement, and are the subject of a dedicated digital lead campaign. Depending on the nature of programs and the avenues available to maximize their visibility and impact, the tactics vary; however, all graduate programs are being examined through this lens in order to drive enrollment and effectively and efficiently promote the NAU brand among a diverse audience.

Another key component of NAU's graduate admissions strategy is workforce partnerships between NAU and a number of public and private partners throughout the state. In support of the needs for an educated workforce, NAU provides partnership programs with organizations that confer a 10% reduction to graduate tuition. This critical enrollment strategy is particularly effective when combined with NAU Online graduate program offerings, which can meet students where they are as they balance a career, continuing education, and professional growth. Partners include government agencies, school districts, charter schools, community colleges, utility companies, and other public and private organizations. Our statewide Educational Partnerships team continues to work closely with the Graduate College, University Marketing, and Enrollment Management to identify emerging opportunities, programmatic connections, and more to expand this impactful program.

### **Graduate Curriculum: Review and Planning**

Few degree programs are experiencing low enrollment based on ABOR-defined criteria. However, NAU is closely monitoring programs that have recently struggled with enrollments and looking for ways to ensure they are appropriately aligned with student demands and have a strong outlook for the future. One example are our Master's of Engineering programs (MENG; Civil, Computer Science, EE, ME), which have recently had lower enrollments. Rather than eliminate these degrees, they are being refreshed and being converted to professional master's program with non-thesis options. Assessing the viability of program offerings is important for institutional stewardship and in the case of the engineering programs, the strategies will increase these programs' relevance to today's workforce and aligns with our 2025 goal of offering professional tracks for most NAU master's degrees.

As with master's programs, graduate certificate programs are assessed for systemic softness in enrollment and opportunities for restructuring and realignment are considered. In several cases, a new, robust micro-credential may be an appropriate offering, and proposals are currently being prioritized for development. Where a certificate program may struggle, a micro-credential has the opportunity to fill a niche for continuing professional education, and NAU is prepared to pivot programs to capitalize on this need. In certain cases, programs such as the Business Foundations Certificate are being eliminated, and the Graduate College and the W.A. Franke College of Business leadership are collaborating to develop more relevant and engaging

opportunities for students across campus to consider, including targeted micro-credentials. Other academic colleges are also aggressively driving micro-credential growth to meet unfilled needs and stay on the leading edge of program offerings. Examples include recent proposals from the College of Health and Human Services for the timely and relevant Telehealth Nursing micro-credential, the College of Arts and Letters for a micro-credential in Law, Ethics, and Policy, and interdisciplinary micro-credentials linked to proposed growth areas that include an MBA in healthcare.

We are proposing and implementing new programs based on market and workforce analyses, conducted through our partnership with Hannover Market Research, using a strategic approach to optimize offerings. We anticipate strong enrollments in these new programs, as we have in the Informatics and Computing Ph.D. program, which was launched in 2016 and today enrolls over 50 students. That enrollment is projected to double by 2025. We are enhancing opportunities and expanding marketing of our community campus programs, particularly in education fields. The Arizona Teachers Academy is providing exceptionally strong opportunities for NAU to meet critical workforce needs at greatly reduced cost to students, and the program has been a tremendous success since it was launched in 2017.

We continue to expand our repertoire of accelerated bachelor to master programs, which provide a strong avenue for strategic growth. Currently, NAU offers accelerated 4+1 programs across its academic colleges, with our goal for 2025 being for the majority of master's programs to provide an accelerated option, as this offers students the chance to earn valuable degrees, both of them at NAU, while saving time and money. A listing of current accelerated bachelor to master degree programs is below:

- Athletic Training
- Business Administration
- Chemistry & Biochemistry
- Communication
- Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Criminology and Criminal Justice
- Earth Science and Environmental Sustainability
- Education: Career and Technical Education
- Engineering: Civil & Environmental
- Engineering: Electrical
- Engineering: Mechanical
- English
- Forestry
- Geography, Planning & Recreation
- History
- Psychological Sciences
- Sociology
- Spanish
- Sustainable Communities

Mental health and allied health fields are areas with high workforce demand, high student demand, and strong growth projections. The Arizona state average for the ratio of mental health providers to population is 1:839. In 2016, the national average was 1:640. NAU is working diligently to address this critical shortage of mental and behavioral health professionals and the high demand for their services in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, and social service agencies that are primed to drive employment growth. In Spring 2020, NAU established the Clinical Psychology, PSYD program at the Phoenix North Valley Campus and currently has over 70 students enrolled. We have also expanded our offerings in counseling master's programs to include Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling and the EDS School Psychology

programs (all located currently at the Phoenix North Valley campus), and will now admit students annually to these programs, which will double their enrollment.

NAU's portfolio of graduate level health professional programs provides important workforce contributions to Arizona and the region as well. These highly competitive programs earn frequent external recognition and high national rankings. The Doctor of Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant, Speech Language Pathology, and Occupational Therapy graduate programs are all ranked by US News & World Report, with the Physician Assistant Master's program ranked #37 in the US. Graduates from these professional programs in the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) have remarkably high pass rates in their licensure exams and in employment. The Doctor of Physical Therapy program, as an example, boasts a 100% pass rate and 100% employment rate averaged over graduation years of 2017 and 2018.

Since 2017, nine new graduate degrees have been approved by ABOR for implementation at NAU, with a strong focus on either immediate workforce demand and growth or high research doctoral programs that link to established areas of faculty scholarship at NAU. These include master's degrees in Cybersecurity, Building Science, and International Education Leadership, as well as Ph.D. programs in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Physics and Material Sciences, both of which are housed in CEIAS. In addition, 11 new graduate certificates specifically targeted at meeting workforce demands have been launched in the same period, which expand NAU's reach and open new opportunities to enroll and educate graduate students and prepare them for future success.

### **Impact of Research on Graduate Enrollment**

NAU's growth in research activity has been exceptional over the past six years. As noted in the Enterprise Metrics Report, NAU has exceeded its goal for research expenditures by over \$20 million and our trajectory is strong for the future. The strategic investments in core areas of research excellence have a direct benefit to graduate students, particularly to those looking to enroll in world-class Ph.D. programs that feature mentoring and instruction from leaders in a given field.

To support the continued growth of graduate student enrollment in high research programs, NAU has a robust program of awards to recruit and retain these students, through Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs), where students work under the direction of research active faculty in research labs and centers supported by grant funding. The current minimum-level GRA stipend a full academic year is \$12,000 for Master's and \$15,000 for Ph.D. students, with many GRAs receiving additional funding through federally funded research assistantships that exceed \$25,000. This support enables students to access a quality education and focus specifically on research endeavors, in close collaboration with world-class faculty. In addition, NAU has launched initiatives to grow this resource base further, by incentivizing the inclusion of GRAs through faculty-led grant proposals, reevaluating the distribution and deployment of teaching assistantships across the university, and providing enhanced recruitment incentives, such as the Presidential Fellowship Award, which augments stipends by \$9,000 per year for outstanding incoming Ph.D. students in order to increase our national competitiveness. Currently, there are more than 40 Presidential Fellows at NAU and the program continues to grow. To facilitate the

recruitment and retention of Native American graduate students, the Louis H. and Betty J. Quayle Scholarship provides up to \$8,000 per academic year in funding for Native American graduate students. This year, 13 students received the award, up from 11 students in 2017. Graduate students are able to pursue their academic degrees under mentorship provided through research centers and institutes, including the Pathogen and Microbiome Institute (PMI), the Center for Ecosystem Science and Society (ECOSS), the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI), the Center for Health Equity Research (CHER), and the Merriam-Powell Center for Environmental Research (MPCER). Recent strategic faculty hires have contributed to our recent rise in National Science Foundation National Research Rankings, with NAU most recently ranking 196 (up from 201) among all institutions and 93 (up from 96) among all institutions without a medical school. In total, high-research faculty at NAU have mentored over 200 graduate students in their research teams, helping to raise NAU's profile, the quality of its research, and the recruitment and retention of graduate students. These milestones have multiple benefits, allowing NAU to attract and retain exceptional faculty through nationally renowned research centers, enhance experiential learning and undergraduate and graduate student research opportunities, enhance recruitment efforts, particularly among high-achieving graduate students, and, finally, strengthen programs that funnel directly to high-demand fields, contributing to the development of a highly educated workforce for Arizona and bolstering our state's economy.

### Graduate Enrollment Growth

Through the many strategies outlined above, NAU's graduate programs continue to grow. Our enrollment efforts have seen excellent results in recent years, including for Fall 2020. Despite overall declines in enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NAU has remained strong in graduate enrollment. The table below summarizes the trajectory of graduate enrollment university-wide:

<b>NAU Graduate Enrollment Trend</b>							
<b>Campus Location</b>	<b>Fall 2014</b>	<b>Fall 2015</b>	<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Fall 2017</b>	<b>Fall 2018</b>	<b>Fall 2019</b>	<b>Fall 2020</b>
Flagstaff	1,610	1,772	1,807	1,746	1,886	1,934	1,870
Online	1,293	1,366	1,376	1,542	1,532	1,596	1,774
Community Campuses	873	694	622	647	559	650	631
Yuma	94	79	57	36	18	43	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,870</b>	<b>3,911</b>	<b>3,862</b>	<b>3,971</b>	<b>3,995</b>	<b>4,223</b>	<b>4,339</b>

Overall, graduate enrollments have grown over 12%, with particularly large gains in Flagstaff and Online enrollments (16% and 37% growth, respectively). This reflects the targeted work across the university to expand Flagstaff graduate enrollments, particularly in research-oriented fields, and online graduate enrollments across a range of fields that help best meet workforce demands and connect with students in a flexible manner.

Similarly to the advantages conferred for transfer student enrollments, our participation in WICHE and their Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) allows NAU to offer an affordable path to earning a graduate degree for students in 16 member states and territories. As graduate education continues to grow at NAU, we are looking to leverage our membership in WICHE and to broaden the reach of an affordable NAU education to a wide region. WRGP

states provide a strong base in which to recruit, and NAU's ability to offer both an in-person experience in Arizona and meet students in their home states through NAU Online, at a lower overall cost, is a significant competitive advantage.

Complimenting NAU's growth in graduate enrollment is the diversity of NAU's graduate student enrollments. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education's* annual list of top 100 producers of graduate degrees ranks NAU highly in a number of categories, including the following highlights:

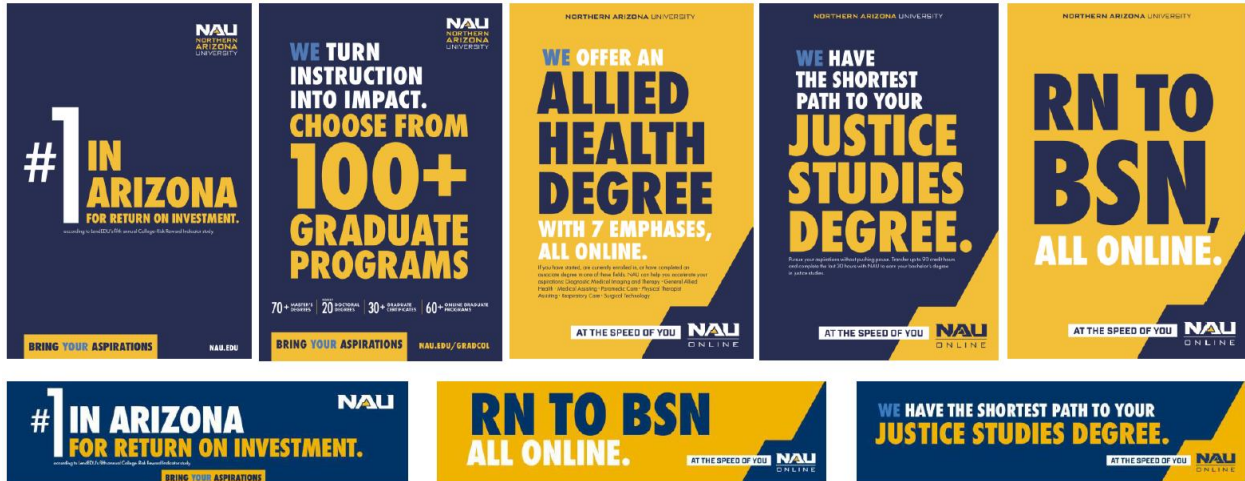
- #2 overall in Native American master's degrees in education
- #4 overall in Native American master's degrees in *all disciplines combined*
- #8 overall in Native American master's degrees in health professions
- #13 overall in Hispanic master's degrees in health professions
- #39 overall in total minority master's degrees in education

The degrees awarded trend among NAU graduate students reflects growing enrollments and the retention and academic success efforts that keep students progressing toward graduation. In the last three years, the number of graduate degrees awarded has increased by 7% and is expected to continue to grow in line with overall enrollment.

Moving forward, NAU can draw on strong graduate enrollment figures that are reinforced by continued enhancements to marketing, outreach, targeted program growth, faculty recruitment and research excellence, and brand awareness and reputational growth. For NAU overall, the growth and diversification of graduate program offerings and enrollments are a key step to ensuring long-term sustainability and an appropriate mix of revenue. In addition, graduate programs fill a critical role as part of NAU's strategic identify, fostering a connection to workforce needs, advancing new knowledge and research, and contributing to the success and attainment of a broad cross section of students.

### **Overall Brand Awareness and Marketing Campaigns**

For both transfer and graduate enrollments, the support of University Marketing has been a key enhancement over the last three years used to help promote brand awareness, drive market research, and develop targeted marketing campaigns. This work is highlighted in the launch of the "Bring Your Aspirations" brand campaign and the localized efforts to link with programs. Below is a sample of recent localized advertising campaign samples, that have focused on the value of an NAU degree, graduate education offerings, accelerated degree options, high workforce connections, and flexible delivery options. These highlight the ways in which NAU has leveraged Marketing expertise to go hand-in-hand with program development and enrollment strategies.



In the first quarter of FY21, University Marketing increased customized, program-specific brand campaigns from 20 to 50+ distinct programs. The goal of this effort is to target advertising specific to locations based on market research around demographics and high demand programs, maximizing the return on investment for NAU. Many of the programs highlighted in the campaign are at the graduate level or of particular interest to transfer students. In the Phoenix metro area, for instance, significant focus has been placed on raising awareness of NAU's online offerings through billboards, bus stop signage, and digital marketing.

In addition, University Marketing has worked closely with colleges throughout the university and currently has completed program briefs for more than 27% of all undergraduate, graduate, minor, and certificate programs. By having quality program briefs, advertisement templates, and program websites available for all programmatic offerings, NAU will be positioned to provide accurate, impactful information to prospective students and drive and track market interest across programs to further enrollment efforts and program positioning across the university.

## Summary

Overall, NAU's strategic approach to meeting goals relating to transfer and graduate enrollments has focused on streamlining and improving processes, targeting new markets, ensuring academic programs are meeting demands and providing opportunities to students, and undergoing continuous assessment of effectiveness across these strategies. For transfer students, existing undergraduate programs are diverse and offer excellent opportunities in a range of fields. As noted in the report focusing on academic organization, NAU continues to assess and strengthen its overall academic portfolio with key adjustments that include the new College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences. With a strong reputation and history in serving and educating undergraduate students, our focus has largely been placed on recruitment, financial support, and process improvement, particularly in areas that traditionally pose challenges to transfer students like credit evaluation and equivalencies. These measures are supported by an aggressive outreach and partnership program with Arizona community colleges, where early awareness and easy processes for students will enable more direct transfers in-state to NAU. In addition, high value out-of-state markets, particularly California, have been the focus of expanded outreach and partnership efforts. New investments in recruitment staff who specifically focus on transfer

student enrollment highlight our institutional commitment to meeting this goal and helping transfer students earn undergraduate degrees at NAU.

On the graduate side, improved business processes and academic structural changes have similarly been a focus. Academic program offerings at the graduate level are monitored very closely to ensure appropriate alignment with student interests, workforce demands, and future program sustainability.

We look forward to continuing to grow in these crucial areas that support diversified overall enrollment and progress toward key institutional goals.