

To: Lyndel Manson, Chair, Arizona Board of Regents
From: José Luis Cruz Rivera, President, Northern Arizona University
CC: Arizona Board of Regents
Date: August 1, 2022
Re: 2021-22 Report: Annual and Multi-Annual Incentive Goals



I am pleased to submit the enclosed reports to the Arizona Board of Regents pursuant to action taken during the September 29-October 1, 2021 meeting related to the item titled “Proposed Amendments to the Presidents’ Contracts and Notice of Appointment for the Executive Director,” as documented in Attachment B1 “President Cruz Rivera’s Proposed Annual and Multiple-Year At-Risk Compensation Goals.”

Attached herein are final reports on each of the three (3) *Annual At-Risk Compensation Goals (2021-22)* and a report of progress toward the five (5) *Multiple-Year At-Risk Compensation Goals (2021-2024)*. Each report on the annual goals is structured as follows:

- An **executive summary**, presenting a high-level statement of achievement describing how the incentive goal was met and how it will be maintained to ensure NAU can continue to advance the mission of the enterprise strategic plan, as it pertains to ABOR’s Strategic Goals.
- Additional **numbered sections** that describe in detail the context, processes, plans, results, and future considerations associated with each goal, demonstrating how the incentive goal was met.
- Throughout, **footnotes** are provided with relevant hyperlinks to university communications, webpages, and other public documents to support and provide in-depth information to statements made in the report. Additional exhibits are included where appropriate.

The update on multi-year goals describes progress toward meeting each of the incentive goals over the course of reporting year 2021-2022.

In this, my first year as President of NAU, I am deeply appreciative of the clarity of direction provided by the Board, from the Presidential Search through to today, which has given our university an opportunity to engage in the important work documented herein that serves the people of Arizona.

I look forward to any questions or comments the Board may have related to the reports and the work accomplished at NAU, as we seek to drive transformative economic mobility and social impact for students and the communities they represent through the delivery of equitable postsecondary value. I look forward to our in-depth discussions at my annual review meeting on August 25, 2022.

Goal #1: Leadership Team & Administrative and Deliberative Structures

2021-22 Achievement Report | President José Luis Cruz Rivera, August 1, 2022

1 Executive Summary

Incentive Goal #1

President Cruz Rivera will submit a report that documents the assembly of a high-quality, collaborative, mission-driven, and effective leadership team for NAU, that delineates administrative and deliberative structures, and that clearly articulates processes for decision-making and consultation.

Statement of Achievement

During the period under evaluation, NAU's leadership team—built on a strong foundation of existing excellence, talent, and expertise—has been reenergized; bolstered through appropriate personnel actions; and restructured to ensure the form of the university's senior leadership team fits its function to maximize benefits to the institution. In close parallel, NAU has also undergone a comprehensive review of leadership, advisory, and deliberative structures, with a focus on distinguishing between *university* and *shared* governance; establishing clear standards and expectations for representation across faculty, staff, and student groups on university advisory bodies; and creating systematic pathways for input and consultation as they relate to university decision-making.

NAU now has in place a dedicated leadership team, optimized organizational structures, and a strong consultative framework. The exceptional individuals that comprise the President's current leadership team have helped secure the conditions for a successful first year of NAU's 17th Presidency, as demonstrated by rapid execution of bold, mission-driven initiatives such as the Access2Excellence financial aid program¹, the design and launch of a new strategic plan (*NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*)², a commitment to the teacher-scholar model for faculty excellence, a modern suite of workplace policies and practices (New NAU Workplace initiative)³, the establishment of the Equitable Value Fund⁴ in support of student success initiatives, the approval of a new Faculty Senate Constitution⁵, and numerous other strategic and operational successes.

This is an essential foundation for future sustained success and speaks not only to the excellence of the leadership team, but also to the broad coalition of support throughout the university community that has been built through comprehensive and authentic efforts to enhance trust, transparency, and engagement. In NAU's 2017 reaffirmation review by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)⁶, a core component was "met with concerns" due to observed shortfalls in communication between leadership and the university's staff, faculty, and students, and a lack of effective shared governance at the university. These concerns contributed to significant, longstanding morale and campus climate issues. Thanks to the systematic and active engagement by the President and university leadership in addressing the morale and structural issues surfaced during the

¹ <https://nau.edu/legacy/admissions/access2excellence/>

² https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/197/0613_742018_OOP-Elevating-Excellence-Brochure-FY22_9x9_ADA-FINAL.pdf

³ <https://in.nau.edu/human-resources-cas/general-nau-workplace/>

⁴ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/An-update-on-NAUs-efforts-to-become-Arizonas-leading-engine-of-opportunity.pdf>

⁵ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Faculty-Senate-Constitution.pdf>

⁶ https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/148/2018/07/NAU_HLC_Final_Report-ek.pdf

HLC review and the Presidential Transition⁷, the stage has been set to truly realize a bold and boundless future for NAU.

Indeed, the following quote from the executive summary of NAU's June 2022 HLC Year 4 Assurance Review⁸ supports the above statement of achievement:

"...The embedded monitoring report included with this assurance argument provided evidence that under the leadership of its new President, NAU has effectively addressed concerns of the 2017 Comprehensive Review Team which assigned monitoring of Core Component 5B (now 5A) and the HLC Staff Liaison who, in 2019, assigned continued monitoring. NAU has made substantial and measurable improvement in communication between senior administration and faculty, staff and students, and has developed a system of shared governance in which areas of authority and responsibility are clearly delineated."

2 Leadership Team

The assembly of a high-quality, collaborative, mission-driven and effective leadership team was achieved through a thoughtful, purposeful process that started during the Presidential Transition. This process included asking each member of the president's executive team to develop a report describing the division under their purview, the challenges and opportunities they were facing, and suggestions for short-term actions the new president could take to better position the individual and their unit for success. The reports were then reviewed and each leader was asked to respond to specific questions in writing or in person.

After reflecting on several rounds of these interactions and the information relevant stakeholders provided about specific leaders during the transition process—thousands of inputs were collected from campus visits, a university-wide survey, and open and frequent email exchanges—it was apparent that most of the existing leaders were among the top in their fields nationally, but had not necessarily been positioned to lead to their full abilities within and across divisions in the existing leadership structure.

It was also apparent that some changes were in order, prior to the start of the 17th Presidency. To this end, a rigorous internal search process⁹ was implemented to yield talented interim candidates for two key positions: Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs. Due to vacancies in two other positions within the President's direct reporting structure—the Vice President for Research (VPR) and Vice President for Native American Initiatives (VPNAI)—additional interims were identified through internal search processes (VPR) or consultation with the outgoing president and relevant stakeholders (VPNAI)¹⁰.

Thanks to demonstrated excellence in the performance of their duties, most of these leaders have been reappointed through the university's standard processes as full (non-interim) vice presidents¹¹, in recognition of their contributions to NAU and in the interest of continuity. Notwithstanding the excellent work of our interim

⁷ <https://news.nau.edu/presidential-transition/>

⁸ https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/148/NAU_Year4_Assurance_Review_June_2022.pdf

⁹ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/191/2021/06/May-24-Presidential-Transition-Update-Process-for-Interim-Leadership-Appointments.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/June-15-Announcing-interim-leadership-appointments.pdf>

¹¹ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Announcing-Vice-President-searches.pdf>

provost, due to the evolving nature of the role and in response to input from the faculty senate related to the importance of conducting a national search for such an important position, NAU will launch the corresponding search in Spring 2023.

Additional positions were created to meet specific organizational needs in advance of the Fall 2021 semester—Vice President for University Strategy, Chief of Staff, and Chief Economic Advisor to the President—and filled with talented individuals who had been contributors throughout the Presidential Transition and who emerged during the internal search processes¹².

Moreover, in response to the resignation of the Vice President for Capital Planning and Campus Operations¹³ and the Vice President for Advancement¹⁴, seasoned senior leaders internal to the university assumed these responsibilities on an interim basis.

Recently, a Vice President for Economic Mobility and Social Impact¹⁵ was recruited to NAU to drive signature initiatives related to delivering the university’s mission to all Arizonans. In addition, based on extensive input from the university community and significant reflection, a Cabinet-level Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer will be recruited to coordinate the university’s numerous excellent—but sometimes siloed—diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives¹⁶. This role reflects national standards in business and education to have a dedicated executive leader tasked with advancing institutional DEI leadership, planning, coordination, and implementation.

As the university evolves and adapts to best deliver on its new vision and mission as articulated in *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*, the leadership team composition, roles, and organization will continue to be evaluated. Further adjustments to reporting structure will continue to be considered, with the end goal always focused on operational efficiency, exemplary coordination across all dimensions of the leadership team, and effective delivery of a bold and ambitious educational, scholarly, and service mission that powers economic mobility and social impact for the people of Arizona and beyond.

In closing, NAU’s leadership team as it exists today demonstrates the key characteristics necessary for success: a shared ethos reflecting the university’s renewed commitment to trust and transparency; collegiality; focus on mission; and expertise within each sphere of influence.

3 Administrative and Deliberative Structures

In an effort to empower leaders’ decision-making and spur cross-divisional collaboration, and with trusted personnel in place as a result of the changes noted in the previous section, the following adjustments were made to the President’s leadership team reporting structure and organization¹⁷:

¹² <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/New-leadership-appointments-in-the-Office-of-the-President.pdf>

¹³ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Announcing-a-transition-in-leadership.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Announcing-a-transition-in-leadership-1.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Announcing-the-Office-of-Economic-Mobility-and-Social-Impact.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Announcing-the-search-for-a-Vice-President-Chief-Diversity-Officer.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Optimizing-our-Organizational-Structure.pdf>

- Elevating the Provost to Executive Vice President (EVP) in recognition of the centrality of the academic mission and identifying a clear institutional second in command.
- Elevating two experienced leaders to Senior Vice President (SVP) roles and organizing multiple Vice Presidents (VP) under each, creating clusters of highly interdependent and collaborative units with more localized expertise guiding their direction:
 - University Operations Cluster: Finance, IT Services, Human Resources, Capital Planning, and Campus Operations.
 - University Engagement Cluster: Government Relations, Community Affairs, Advancement, Alumni Engagement, and University Marketing.
- Forming two distinct internal leadership teams:
 - The President’s Council comprised of the EVP/SVPs and select VPs to provide strategic direction and advisement to the President.
 - The President’s Cabinet comprised of all members of the VP-level team to coordinate execution of university operations and bring cohesion to cross-divisional initiatives.

In making these adjustments to reporting and organization, the President’s leadership team is now structured to be nimble and responsive, empowered to collaborate closely with direct peers, and designed to allow the President to steer institutional direction at the strategic level while relying on talented leaders at the Cabinet level to drive forward sweeping initiatives with speed, coherence, and coordination.

Throughout the Presidential Search and Presidential Transition, a key concern expressed by the NAU community was the lack of transparency and trust in university leadership. While engaged in extensive listening and learning sessions, it was clear that this was due largely to the to the opacity of decision-making frameworks, lack of clarity in the roles of representative groups in university governance and shared governance, inadequate communication, and outmoded and unclear structures for consultation, advisement, and deliberation.

With this context, an early goal of the 17th Presidency was to directly address trust and transparency through clear communication and consultative leadership, while developing a robust strategy for addressing structural issues. The following measures were implemented beginning early in the Presidential Transition process and resulted in immediate improvements to morale and brought clarity to leadership decisions¹⁸:

- Frequent communications from the President focused on the *why* behind institutional decisions.
- Regular updates on Presidential activities (see, *Notes from the President*¹⁹) to bring transparency to leadership activities.
- Setting a clear agenda and timelines for engagement with the Faculty Senate through focused 45-day taskforces, education on shared and university governance roles, the collaborative development of a new Constitution of the Faculty²⁰ that was adopted in Spring 2022, and the endorsement of a Freedom of Expression²¹ statement that commits the institution to the free exchange of ideas.
- Empowering the Executive Vice President and University Provost, as the university’s chief academic officer, to create and convene new consultative bodies in academic affairs that reflect the diversity of

¹⁸ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Information-regarding-university-leadership-and-advisory-structures.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://news.nau.edu/category/notes-from-the-president/>

²⁰ <https://in.nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2022/05/Constitution-of-the-Faculty.May-2.2022.pdf>

²¹ https://in.nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2022/05/Freedom_of_Expression_Statement_May_2_2022.pdf

voices throughout academic leadership and the need for regular engagement and input from faculty leaders.

- Open lines of communication with faculty, staff, and student leadership and representative groups, and a shared commitment across the President’s leadership team to engage these stakeholder groups in understanding institutional changes and seeking consultation and advisement on appropriate matters.
- An emphasis on seeking consultation and input from stakeholder groups, particularly representative leaders of student, faculty, and staff organizations, in advance of key actions. Examples include the consultative process for interim appointments, the development of a new admissions pilot program, and the structure of current and future Cabinet-level search committees.

Building on this foundation, in Spring 2022 a key goal was to form new, thoughtfully composed and broadly representative advisory groups. The following groups have thus far been developed as the university’s signature representative bodies, designed to bring awareness and coherence to university-wide decision-making and serve as advisory and consultative boards for key topics. Thanks to their diverse membership that represents the leadership groups of students, faculty, and staff at NAU, they also serve as a forum in which topics can be directly elevated to university leadership.

- **University Advisory Board (UAB):** the lead advisory body for the university, comprised of the President’s Cabinet; presidents of the undergraduate and graduate student governments, faculty senate, and staff advisory council; and representatives from academic leadership and university-wide diversity commissions.
- **University Budget Advisory Board (UBAB)**²²: structured similarly to UAB in terms of representation, UBAB is chaired by the SVP & CFO and is specifically designed to address financial and budgetary transparency. Given the longstanding tension at NAU regarding institutional financial decisions, this group provides advisement and input based on a transparent and fully-educated viewpoint of the university’s revenues and expenses and strategic alignment of new expenditures.

With *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* approved by the Board of Regents, a new **University Strategic Planning Advisory Board (USPAB)** will be convened in Fall 2022 to inform strategic planning efforts throughout the university to harmonize those with the overall institutional direction and priorities.

Further, in reflection of the university’s now standardized approach to consultation and representation with student, faculty, and staff leadership bodies, significant university-wide taskforces, such as the Physical Master Plan Steering Committee, and Cabinet-level search committees, such as those for the VPs for Advancement and Capital Planning and Campus Operations, include a nominated representative from each stakeholder group. And, the President has committed to a consistent approach to annual engagement with each of these leadership groups to ensure that the action agendas and priorities of both university leadership and student, faculty, and staff leadership are understood, with a focus on areas where collaboration and partnership can produce mutually beneficial results that contribute to institutional advancement and health.

Finally, the implementation of these principles and organizational structures at the Presidential level has been encouraged and reflected throughout the organization. Consultation and communication structures within

²² <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Updates-on-NAUs-financial-outlook-and-compensation-adjustments.pdf>

Academic Affairs have undergone a complete transformation, with trust between faculty and academic administration restored, an exceptional group of Deans in place (including external candidates from successful national searches), refreshed advisory bodies that reflect the depth and breadth of academic leadership and that engage in meaningful development and implementation of programs, policies, and practices, and much more. All of these developments have stemmed from Presidential leadership that has prioritized trust and transparency and mandated that the leadership at the top be modeled throughout the organization.

Goal #2: Differentiated Pricing and Aid Strategy for Fall 2023

2021-22 Achievement Report | President José Luis Cruz Rivera, August 1, 2022

1 Executive Summary

Incentive Goal #2

President Cruz Rivera will lead the restructure of pricing and financial aid, along with necessary concomitant marketing and recruiting practices, promotional positioning, and attendant materials and communications to drive revenue and differentiate NAU in the market ahead of the Fall 2023 recruitment cycle.

Statement of Achievement

In July 2021, NAU undertook an ambitious agenda to design an educational attainment- and equity-driven pricing/financial aid strategy that would differentiate NAU in the market, clearly articulate the value proposition of the university, and simplify affordability/accessibility messaging to prospective students and parents. This bold aspiration was balanced with an essential need to ensure that the financial health of the university was maintained and enhanced to secure long-term sustainability.

Over the past few years, NAU had engaged in a number of enrollment and pricing related studies, including an internal Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan, the annual ABOR tuition setting processes, and advisement from external enrollment, pricing, and marketing consultants (Human Capital Research Corporation, Williams & Company, and Lipman Hearne, among others). Taken together, these efforts to assess market trends and identify sustainable pricing programs and financial aid formulas have helped to broadly shape the university's strategy.

A core challenge, however, remained - to coordinate existing workstreams, integrate all inputs—enrollment, aid, pricing, sustainability, marketing, and brand positioning—and launch a differentiated pricing and aid strategy in time for the Fall 2023 recruitment cycle that would demonstrate NAU's value proposition to students and families, address the broader strategic context facing higher education in Arizona, and align with the university's vision to be an engine of opportunity for the state.

As a result of concerted university-wide efforts with the clear vision developed through *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*¹, focused on economic mobility and social impact to meet the attainment needs of the state, the new institutional pricing model and financial aid strategies are mission-aligned, student focused, and access-oriented. They are responsive to the strategic context enumerated above, complemented by holistic adjustments to admissions requirements, and supported by a revised marketing campaign that speaks to the excellence, value, and opportunity NAU provides. In addition, these changes have been positioned and launched with significant internal and external support that provide a strong foundation for success in promoting NAU's value proposition and delivering on the promise of equitable postsecondary value.

The key accomplishments that have contributed to this goal are listed below:

¹ https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/197/0613_742018_OOP-Elevating-Excellence-Brochure-FY22_9x9_ADA-FINAL.pdf

- **Access2Excellence2 (A2E) initiative:** Beginning in Fall 2023, NAU will provide a tuition-free college education for every undergraduate Arizona resident with a household income of \$65,000 or below. In addition, NAU will continue to be the lowest cost of attendance institution in the state, regardless of a students' household income.
- **Admissions Pilot³:** Beginning in Fall 2023, NAU will remove a longstanding barrier to admissions by aligning university admissions standards with Arizona high school graduation requirements. As with A2E, this is a mission-driven change that seeks to broaden access and increase attainment, providing a clear message to students and parents that a college education is possible.
- **Provisional Brand Campaign:** Launched in Fall 2021, NAU created a revised and differentiated provisional marketing campaign that speaks to the bold aspirations and boundless possibilities offered by an NAU education. This brand refresh has focused on excellence, distinctiveness, and transformative opportunities, and serves as a bridge from previous institutional brand campaigns to a new, revitalized vision and differentiated value proposition informed by *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*.

Implementation and Impacts

Implementation of A2E supports NAU's long-term financial health. The program uses existing scholarship and financial aid resources and makes slight adjustments to awarding formula to support the tuition-free guarantee. This is made possible by sunsetting the outmoded Pledge four-year tuition guarantee, which locked in a revenue ceiling, giving NAU greater flexibility in pricing to provide value to students, invest in enhancing the excellence of academic and student support programs, and meet institutional financial goals.

NAU's pricing and positioning offers a powerful and compelling platform for recruitment among NAU's enrollment management team throughout the state. As A2E messaging is integrated into recruitment practices, it will be complemented by additional holistic efforts, such as the ABOR-supported Family Access, Communication, Transition, and Support (FACTS) program, that provides bilingual, culturally responsive whole-family recruitment practices to Native and Hispanic communities in Arizona.

In developing recruitment messaging with diverse focus groups, NAU received overwhelmingly positive responses to tuition-free messaging associated with A2E, highlighting the importance of a transparent statement of value and return on investment from attending college. Additionally, A2E and Admissions changes have been supported by a robust media campaign that has garnered positive local, state, and national attention. Highlights include support by Greater Phoenix Leadership and other business and education leaders for both endeavors; national profiles, publications, and presentations that include recognition by EAB⁴ and the Gates Foundation, partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)⁵, and keynotes presentations at national higher education convenings that highlight NAU's efforts at the leading edge in access-focused higher education practices; significant investment

² <https://nau.edu/legacy/admissions/access2excellence/>

³ <https://news.nau.edu/admissions-pilot-program/>

⁴ <https://eab.com/insights/podcast/enrollment/northern-arizona-tackling-access-affordability-gap/>

⁵ <https://www.highereddive.com/news/one-year-in-momentum-builds-from-the-postsecondary-value-commissions-work/623566/>

by ABOR and the NAU Foundation and the creation of a new Equitable Value Fund⁶; and record total of private philanthropic support for FY22 spurred by NAU's differentiated mission that is centered on access, attainment, equitable postsecondary value, and taking its place as Arizona's engine of opportunity.

The integration and convergence of these programs that have been implemented in the last year demonstrate a coherent approach to tackling the strategic context of higher education in Arizona and shaping NAU's place within this complex, competitive, and dynamic environment. Each component noted above was developed with significant analysis to inform decisions, and all have evaluative structures built into their implementation plans to ensure monitoring of progress and outcomes. As NAU pursues its vision of being the nation's leading institution in delivering equitable postsecondary value to students and the communities they represent, this suite of practices in pricing and institutional positioning serves as a foundation for realizing this lofty goal and will substantively change the attainment landscape in the state of Arizona.

2 Access2Excellence and Admissions Pilot Development

NAU's goal is to be Arizona's leading engine of opportunity and driver of social impact, by removing barriers for students to attend college and complete high-quality, affordable postsecondary credentials that will support their lifelong success.

Given the imperative to increase college-going rates and attainment in Arizona, NAU has sought to drive change quickly. Beginning in Summer 2021, the university's leadership team engaged in an intensive study of how to leverage existing resources and adapt institutional policies to refocus the university on access, attainment, and excellence. Targeting an implementation for the Fall 2023 entering class, NAU announced in Spring 2022 two high-impact changes that are emblematic of its commitment to equitable postsecondary value:

- **Access2Excellence:** providing a clear pathway to an exceptional college education and addressing affordability head-on, NAU now guarantees that qualified Arizona students from households making \$65,000 or less (the current state median income) will attend NAU tuition-free.
- **Admissions Pilot:** through revised admissions standards that align with Arizona high school graduation requirements, NAU has removed a longstanding roadblock that has undermined the college-going aspirations of countless talented, diverse students. Now, more than 50,000 students whose high schools do not offer courses previously required for admission will know that if they achieve a 3.0 GPA, they will be assured admission to NAU.

To deliver Access2Excellence and the Admissions Pilot, NAU pulled together a leadership team with broad expertise in strategic planning and operational execution that spanned enrollment management, scholarships/financial aid, finance/budget, economic analysis, curriculum and academic support, university marketing, and university strategy. Their charge was to implement equity-focused changes that would increase college-going rates, support the success of students enrolling through these programs, and secure the institution's long-term financial health to continue to deliver exceptional academic programs.

⁶ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/An-update-on-NAUs-efforts-to-become-Arizonas-leading-engine-of-opportunity.pdf>

The message both programs send to students, families, and communities is bold and transformative; however, the adjustments made by the university to achieve them have been thoughtful and incremental. An extensive review of scholarship criteria and financial aid awarding, coupled with an access-first change in philosophy, informed the adjustments in awards and aid packaging. A2E not only broadens access overall by offering a tuition-free education to students under \$65,000 household income, it also is a commitment to continued support for *all students*—including highly meritorious students and those from households above \$65,000/year—as NAU continues to be the lowest cost of attendance pricing in the state of Arizona. Ultimately, A2E focuses on a clear message of affordability that demonstrates to students and families that college is affordable, accessible, and an exceptional investment in their future.

The admissions pilot program is informed by a detailed analysis of academic success and a clear gap between university admissions criteria and high school course offerings. NAU has found that GPA is the best predictor of student success—not high school coursework. Through a policy change authorized by ABOR in Spring 2022, NAU now removes course barriers that are outside of students’ control and gives them assured admission based on performance in the courses their high schools offer.

As NAU approaches implementation in Fall 2023 for both programs, its institutional research and enrollment management units will closely monitor the success from these students to evaluate program success and to identify potential student needs for additional resources and support.

An important note is that concurrent with the rollout of these programs, NAU is also assuming full responsibility for the students with lower high school GPAs who previously had been part of the College Success Program (CSP), an academic support partnership with Coconino Community College (CCC). In the past, students enrolled in the CSP were not counted in retention statistics for NAU, resulting in inflated measures of retention and time to degree (CCC took on any retention losses, while NAU took on graduation successes). With this change, NAU will work to counter a possible reduction in retention rates as we more accurately account for students enrolled and educated at NAU. Our Institutional research team and leaders are keenly aware of this change and will ensure that the impacts of the A2E program and the Admissions Pilot changes are not confounded in any analysis or reports, so that all components can be appropriately reviewed and any adjustments to academic support and/or policy can be considered and implemented in a targeted manner in future years based on program-specific data and outcomes.

3 Marketing NAU’s Distinctive Excellence and Exceptional Value

Through these initiatives, NAU plans to increase the number and diversity of Arizona residents with high-quality postsecondary degrees and certificates. The beneficial results for the state are extensive: reduced unemployment and underemployment, increased wages, enhanced civic engagement and voter participation, and improved physical and mental health—and a more educated populace will secure conditions that support continued economic growth and competitiveness in Arizona.

A crucial component in delivering on this promise is to ensure a marketing, recruitment, and state and national positioning agenda that clearly demonstrates the exceptional value and ease of access to a college education at NAU; celebrates the university’s distinctive excellence and the transformative outcomes realized by its

graduates; and positions NAU at the forefront of the national conversation on higher education's impact in driving economic mobility and social impact for individuals and communities.

Given the prioritization of an integrated approach to delivering these programs, NAU's institutional pricing and positioning team was embedded with marketing leadership. Several key considerations brought through this lens included prioritizing transparency and clarity; elevating NAU's overall brand through this initiative; celebrating the excellence of NAU's academic programs, scholarly agenda, and community impact; integrating parent and family communication on postsecondary value; and the like.

As NAU approached the launch of A2E and the Admissions Pilot, the university was also reshaping its brand identity within the market through a provisional brand campaign, *Boundless*⁷. The new campaign served as a highly visible bridge from previous brand identity to a new, refreshed, revitalized NAU, shaped by the currently in-development strategic roadmap, the priorities of the Presidential Transition, and the need for an elevated, excellent, and differentiated identity within the higher education marketplace. The campaign was the product of more than a dozen focus groups, representing stakeholders from inside and outside the university, that helped refine and sharpen a creative approach that honored NAU's legacy of excellence and positioned the university for a bold and boundless future ahead—one that was compelling to diverse audiences and heavily focused on Arizona student recruitment. A competitive audit of University of Arizona, Arizona State University, and Grand Canyon University branding efforts was conducted to ensure that NAU's new approach was truly differentiated from in-state universities and could speak to students in heavily recruited markets.

The results of this campaign were exceptional and include four Platinum MARCOM awards, bestowed by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals in a highly competitive field (6,500+ entries from 41 countries vied for these honors). The awards recognized the excellence of *Boundless* on the following dimensions: Creative Brand Campaign⁸, Creative Concepting and Validation⁹, Phoenix Suns Legends District Billboard¹⁰, and Brand Campaign Book¹¹. In addition, *Boundless* also received Gold and Honorable Mention level for two other projects, bringing the recognition to six total awards for NAU's new brand identity.

A similarly robust approach was used in the development and launch of A2E and its integrated marketing plan. Recognizing the substance of this change for NAU's recruitment and enrollment efforts, NAU's marketing team helped drive a comprehensive process for message testing among focus groups. Overwhelmingly, focus group participants were swayed by the clarity of the tuition-free message. Rather than forcing students and families to undergo an extensive process of applications for financial aid and scholarships to arrive at an actual price, NAU frontloaded the "sticker price" in A2E messaging to deliver on this universal recommendation.

Finally, the rollout plan for A2E, was developed with an eye toward media reception and brand enhancement. At the Presidential-level, this consisted of a national agenda demonstrating leadership on equitable postsecondary value, with recognition from EAB, the Gates Foundation, IHEP, a keynote speech at the American Academy of Arts & Sciences Higher Education Forum, a nod to NAU's innovative practices by the American

⁷ <https://news.nau.edu/boundless-together/>

⁸ <https://enter.marcomawards.com/entry/northern-arizona-university-provisional-creative-brand-campaign/>

⁹ <https://enter.marcomawards.com/entry/northern-arizona-university-creative-concepting-and-validation/>

¹⁰ <https://enter.marcomawards.com/entry/northern-arizona-university-phoenix-suns-legends-district-billboard/>

¹¹ <https://enter.marcomawards.com/entry/northern-arizona-university-brand-campaign-book/>

Council on Education, an appointed leadership and convening role an AASCU postsecondary value taskforce focused on regional and access universities advancing promising practices for postsecondary value, and more. A2E has already resulted in significant national attention of NAU and how thoughtful institutional changes in financial aid and scholarship administration can dramatically alter an access university's value proposition for the students and communities it serves.

At the state level, NAU engaged actively with media to promote the new program, securing robust support from Greater Phoenix Leadership and profiles in numerous statewide publications. This was quickly followed by an aggressive educational agenda by NAU's enrollment management team to ensure that high school counselors throughout the state in areas identified for high potential of A2E students were knowledgeable about the program and could help advise students that NAU was an excellent option. And continued reinforcement of NAU overall and A2E specifically is being supported by the FACTS program, which focuses on family recruitment and education in Hispanic and Native American communities.

4 Financial Sustainability and Assessment

As NAU prepares to enroll A2E and Admissions Pilot students in Fall 2023, the university is prepared to support those students on successful academic journeys. Their development has been grounded in fiscal sustainability and extensive impact analysis. All adjustments have been made with already available resources, program participation is ready for scale, and the single greatest pressure on NAU's enrollment revenue—the Pledge program—has been lifted. With upcoming adjustments to the ABOR tuition setting process, NAU will continue to be responsive to market needs and be able to clearly message its value, while regularly updating pricing to meet financial goals.

As noted above, on the assessment and program evaluation front changes to the CSP have the anticipated outcome of producing a lower overall retention rate for NAU, regardless of any admissions or pricing programs. However, this is a more accurate portrayal of NAU's educational capacities and student profile and will be built into future metrics and targets. As that recalibration is finalized, independent, internal assessment plans are being put in place to track the progress and outcomes of students admitted via A2E, the Admissions Pilot, or both. Based on existing data, these students track closely with successful populations and the university is well-prepared to support their success. Close monitoring will ensure that any future adjustments or programmatic investments are meeting real challenges students may be experiencing.

Overall, the suite of initiatives deployed over the past year set the stage for long-term success for the New NAU. A clear value proposition, a differentiated position in the Arizona educational ecosystem, a sustainable admissions pipeline and revenue structure, a plan for ongoing assessment, and a brand that has been enhanced and is increasingly recognized on the national stage are all significant achievements that elevate the profile and demonstrate the excellence and value of Northern Arizona University.

5 Exhibits

Exhibit #1

Twitter posts highlighting engagements from leaders in the state and nationally with NAU A2E release.



NAU **NORTHERN ARIZONA** UNIVERSITY

Access2Excellence



Posts highlighting engagement from leaders in the state and nationally on **NAU A2E**



José Luis Cruz Rivera ✓
@NAUPresident

Access to Excellence! @NAU to provide a tuition-free, world-class college education to AZ residents with household incomes of < \$65K – assuring tuition will be fully covered by scholarships & financial aid for half of all AZ households. ➡ All the details: nau.edu/a2e



Arizona Board of Regents

8:55 AM · 4/28/22

71 Retweets 42 Quote Tweets 221 Likes



Greater Phoenix Chamber @phxchamber · Apr 28

The Chamber applauds @NAU - President & CEO @TSandersGPC's alma mater - on their new program, giving many more Arizona students access to world-class secondary education.



Arizona Commerce Authority @azcommerce · May 12

@NAU is eliminating an access barrier for thousands of high-achieving Arizona high school students, making higher education more attainable! bit.ly/3FI4Qv7



Helios Ed Foundation @HeliosEdFnd · Apr 28
 Amazing announcement from @NAU! This will make a college education accessible to more students and increase the number of Arizonans with a degree. #Access2Excellence @NAUPresident



azcentral.com
 NAU will offer free tuition to thousands of Arizona students starting in...
 It's "a message that no other university in Arizona can share right now — perhaps others will follow our lead," President José Luis Cruz Rivera...



Gates United States @GatesUS · Jun 2
 We're thrilled to see @NAU announce a bold **tuition-free** opportunity for AZ residents with household incomes of \$65,000 or less — meeting the needs of approximately half of all AZ households. Learn more: bit.ly/3NclPsl



Imagine Bell Canyon @IBCPreK8 · May 9
 Have you heard about the NAU's **Access2Excellence (A2E)** program?! This exciting, new program is going to help A LOT more students gain a college education!

Learn more today: bit.ly/3whhq0p

NAU President Cruz Rivera ...

Access to Excellence! @NAU to provide a tuition-free, world-class college education to AZ residents with household incomes of < \$65K – assuring tuition will be fully covered by scholarships & financial aid for half of all AZ households.



Education Forward Arizona @EdForwardAZ · Apr 28
 Incredible news from @NAU for Arizona students! Northern Arizona University will be **tuition-free** for AZ residents with household incomes of < \$65K. Learn more 🌟

José Luis Cruz Rivera @NAUPresident · Apr 28
 Access to Excellence! @NAU to provide a tuition-free, world-class college education to AZ residents with household incomes of < \$65K – assuring tuition will be fully covered by scholarships & financial aid for half of all AZ households. 📌 All the details: nau.edu/a2e



Danny Seiden @dbseiden · Apr 28
 Big announcement today from @NAU & @NAUPresident on their new program to help provide qualified Arizona students with **free tuition!** @NAU is rising to meet the challenge that AZ families are facing in this era where every dollar matters. 🌲 #LumberjackCountry #arizona #tuition

azcentral @azcentral · Apr 28
 NAU will offer free tuition to thousands of Arizona students starting in 2023. Here's who qualifies azcentral.com/story/news/loc...



IHEP @IHEPTweets · Apr 28
 We applaud @NAU for its commitment to equitable #PostsecValue! Inside @NAU's **Access2Excellence** initiative is a tuition-free opportunity for #Arizona residents with household incomes at or below \$65,000. Learn more: news.nau.edu/access-2-excel...



The Education Trust @EdTrust · May 7
 Congratulations to @NAU for launching the **Access2Excellence** initiative — a new tuition-free opportunity at @NAU for AZ residents with household incomes of \$65,000 or less. Learn more: news.nau.edu/access-2-excel...



AASCU Policy @AASCUPolicy · Apr 28
 Congratulations to @NAU for launching the **Access2Excellence** initiative on campus—a tuition-free opportunity for AZ residents with household incomes below \$65,000. Should generate a conversation about broadening state-investments in higher ed. Learn more: news.nau.edu/access-2-excel...



Kyrsten Sinema @SenatorSinema · May 7
 This is awesome news! @NAU's **Access2Excellence** program fully covers tuition for every Arizonan with a household income of \$65,000 or less. 🌟

More information: nau.edu/a2e.

NAU @NAU · Apr 28
 Introducing the @NAU Access2Excellence initiative
 NAU will provide a tuition-free college education for EVERY AZ resident with a household income of \$65,000 or below – assuring tuition will be fully covered by scholarships and financial aid.
 📌 nau.edu/a2e



Exhibit #2

Overview of NAU's Boundless Brand Campaign images and placements.

BILLBOARDS ACROSS ARIZONA

Supported by real stories at nau.edu/boundless-together



SKY HARBOR DIGITAL SIGNAGE

Rotating creative

Digital slides rotating around Sky Harbor (7)



Escalator display



Baggage claim display



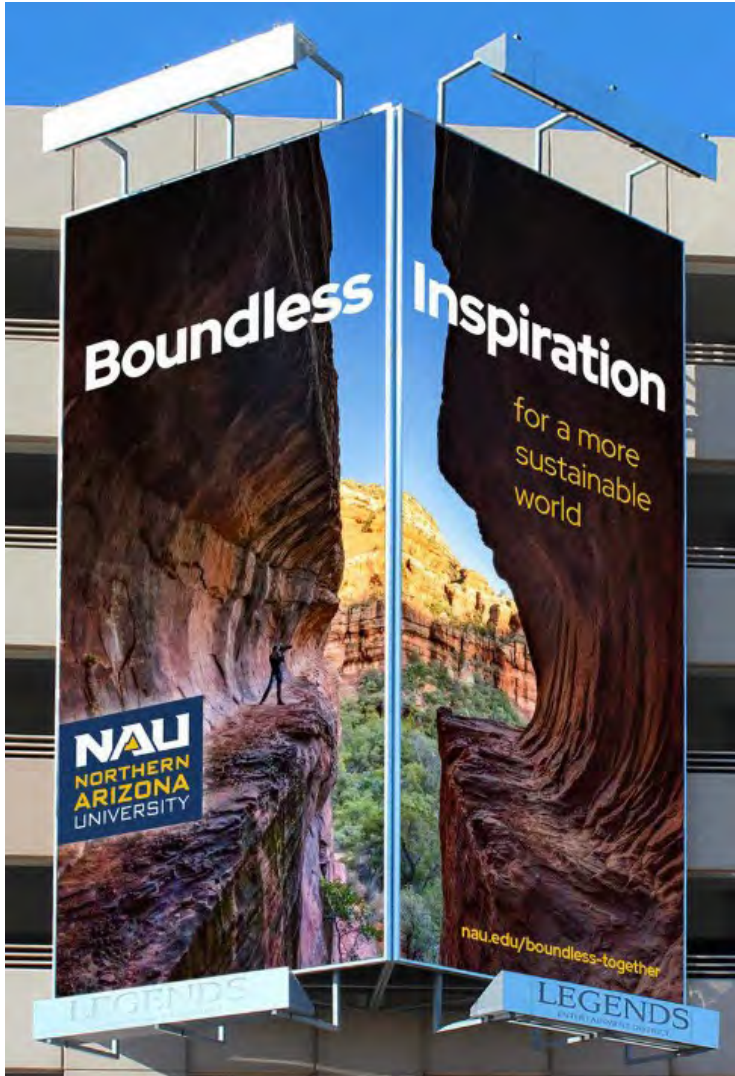
PHOENIX-AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

Digital signage at Mesa and
Chandler high schools



PHOENIX AND TUCSON LIGHT RAIL WRAPS

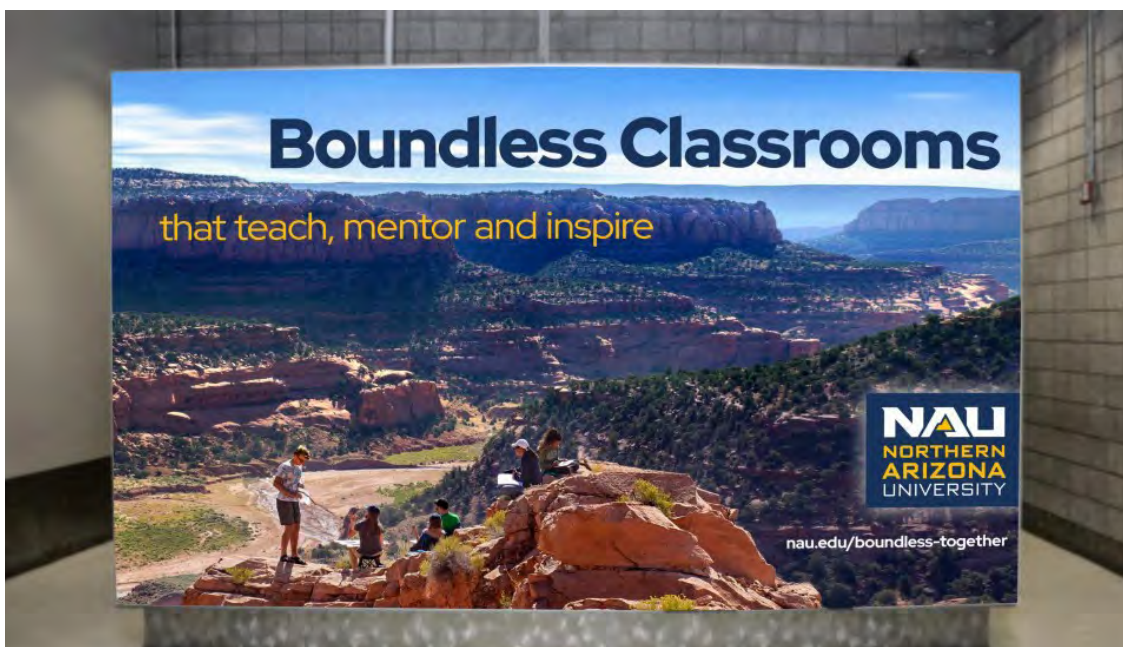




PHOENIX SUNS

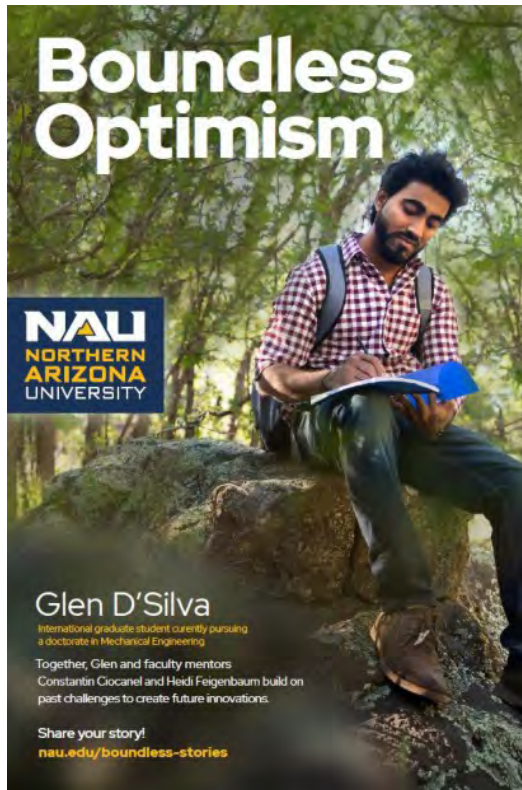
Legends district signage
outdoor signage (at left)

Concourse spectacular in-
arena signage (below)



FLAGSTAFF CAMPUS BUS SHELTER POSTERS

Highlight students and faculty mentors to bring in the "Together" theme



Goal #3: Mission Differentiation of the New NAU

2021-22 Achievement Report | President José Luis Cruz Rivera, August 1, 2022

1 Executive Summary

Incentive Goal #3

President Cruz Rivera will develop a set of institutional goals and objectives through a collaborative process that leads to a clearly differentiated and distinguished NAU brand position within the Arizona and broader higher education landscape. The report on this goal should include a clear articulation of the value proposition for NAU, an initial set of strategic imperatives, NAU's optimal, focused, regionally- connected and -embedded scholarly, research and creative agenda, and the concomitant marketing strategy and corresponding intended brand positioning.

Statement of Achievement

Through an intensive and extensive collaborative process that began with the Presidential Transition and culminated with ABOR approval in June 2022 of transformational set of institutional goals and objectives: *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*¹. With this new strategic plan, NAU has developed a clearly differentiated and distinguished brand position within Arizona and the broader higher education landscape.

From the beginning of the Presidential Search, recentering NAU's traditional strengths and distinctive excellence, articulating its vision and differentiating the university in Arizona's higher education landscape, and building a broad base of support that would enable the advancement of bold initiatives were clear:

"...The board seeks a candidate with a sincere commitment to NAU, including its dedication to student success; excellence in academics; research; intercollegiate athletics; development; and alumni. The position requires a candidate with outstanding interpersonal and collaboration skills necessary to cultivate and strengthen relationships with multiple stakeholders including students and faculty, alumni, members of the broader community, affiliates, policymakers, business partners and more to support NAU's mission and Arizona's public university enterprise. The candidate must be able to develop a clear vision for the university and possess the ability to implement that vision in today's changing higher-education market."²

Through a nine-month development process, in which all members of the university community and many key partners locally, regionally, and nationally served as vital contributors, NAU has brought into sharp focus a new vision, mission, and commitment; articulated its core strategic priorities and their constituent components; and clarified the distinct and differentiated value proposition NAU brings to the state and its students and families, communities, and businesses.

Ultimately, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* is a blueprint that honors the past, articulates our value proposition, and gives laser-like focus to the future goal of having NAU be a nationally-recognized engine of opportunity that powers economic mobility and social impact for all. NAU will provide high-value educational credentials to all

¹ https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/197/0613_742018_OOP-Elevating-Excellence-Brochure-FY22_9x9_ADA-FINAL.pdf

² https://www.azregents.edu/sites/default/files/public/NAU-president-search/NAU_Presidential_Search-Brochure.pdf

Arizonans, develop affordable, equitable, and accessible pathways to broaden participation, close achievement gaps, and improve post-college outcomes to power economic mobility and social impact for the state, preparing students for future success and prosperity.

Aligned with the strategic imperatives outlined in NAU 2025, the redistribution of NAU's TRIF investment clearly demonstrates the commitment to a distinctive scholarly agenda, the centrality of the teacher-scholar model to NAU's faculty practices, and a focus on student participation in high-impact practices (such as research) that support exceptional workforce and post-graduate outcomes.

Additionally, NAU launched in Fall 2021, a revised and differentiated provisional marketing campaign that speaks to the bold aspirations and boundless possibilities offered by an NAU education. This brand refresh has focused on excellence, distinctiveness, and transformative opportunities, and serves as a bridge from previous institutional brand campaigns to a new, revitalized vision and differentiated value proposition informed by *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*.

2 Strategic Context and Differentiation Imperative

The economy of the State of Arizona is booming and projected employment opportunities in high-wage, high-demand fields are glowing. But without bold intervention, many Arizona residents will be left behind. Because even as the state is among the top in the nation in economic growth, it is at or near the bottom in educational attainment—at a time when nearly two-thirds of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education. The statistics are sobering: today, only 39% of 25-64-year-olds in Arizona have earned an associate's degree or higher. The educational attainment level of historically underrepresented groups is even lower. And things will not get better without bold intervention from institutions of higher education, as data suggests that only 17% of ninth-graders in Arizona will earn a postsecondary degree by 2029.

While this outlook is bleak on the surface, the potential reward for effectively responding to this strategic context is significant. Recent studies suggest that the social and economic gains of increasing educational attainment to meet the national norms has the potential to double Arizona's economic growth rate. Making progress toward this aspirational state is crucial, but requires a clear plan, concrete objectives, a mobilized community, a value proposition that is understood by a broad cross-section of the state, and initiatives and programs that directly address weaknesses in Arizona's access and attainment pipeline.

Against this backdrop, NAU has an imperative to fill a key area within the state's educational ecosystem. Differentiated from Arizona State University and the University of Arizona, NAU is uniquely situated in Arizona's higher education landscape to broaden access and serve as a leading engine of opportunity for the state.

3 Collaborative Development Process

At the beginning of the fall 2022 semester, the strategic roadmap process was launched, with a clear call to action establishing the imperative for mission differentiation in relation to the current higher education

context³. In order to facilitate the process, a core committee⁴ was charged with spearheading an accelerated strategic planning effort that would directly tackle the challenges the university faced, rise to the needs of the state, and engage the entire university community in bringing a collective vision into sharp focus. To accomplish this, a draft listing of the university's strategic priorities was developed and facilitative teams, comprised of university leaders and student, faculty, and staff representatives, were convened to lead work on defining the goals and objectives related to each priority area⁵.

Over the next nine months, the 35 members of the facilitative groups, directed by the core steering committee, developed four separate drafts of the strategic roadmap^{6, 7, 8, 9}. In each iteration, a feedback phase was used to gather comments and input from both internal and external constituents, which were then integrated into the subsequent draft. Throughout, this iterative refinement led to a crystallization of the university's value proposition—achieved through broad community support and participation. Dozens of meetings and public forums were convened, and thousands of survey responses and emails were submitted, resulting in more than 10,000 points of input on the strategic priorities and components that have been distilled in the ABOR-approved strategic plan: *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*.

This is truly a reflection of the priorities of all NAU and an aspirational roadmap for how the past can be honored and a bold and boundless future for the New NAU can be achieved, responsive to the strategic context and equipped to deliver value to all in our state.

4 New NAU Charter and Strategic Priorities/Components

NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence is designed with a clear sense of purpose and vision for the university, laid out in the New NAU Charter.

- The **Vision** statement is bold: “NAU aims to be the nation’s preeminent engine of opportunity, vehicle of economic mobility, and driver of social impact by delivering equitable postsecondary value in Arizona and beyond.”
- The **Mission** statement is clear: “NAU transforms lives and enriches communities through high-quality academics and impactful scholarship, creative endeavors, and public service.”
- The **Commitment** statement is unequivocal: “NAU will educate, support, and empower students from all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences to reach their full potential and contribute to a more just, equitable, inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable future.”

³ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/NAUs-strategic-roadmap-Advancing-equity-in-and-delivering-value-from-higher-education.pdf>

⁴ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/How-NAU-will-structure-the-Strategic-Roadmap-process.pdf>

⁵ <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/Facilitating-the-work-of-the-Strategic-roadmap.pdf>

⁶ [Draft #1 release](#)

⁷ [Draft #2 release](#)

⁸ [Draft #3 release](#)

⁹ [Draft #4 release](#)

Taken together, these underline the university's imperative to power access for all. Because for NAU, the ultimate goal is to ensure that students and the communities they represent experience postsecondary value because they are provided equitable access and support—that is, meeting students where they are—to complete quality, affordable credentials that offer economic mobility through career-readiness and prepare them to advance a more prosperous and just society. This is an area of clear need in Arizona, it is an area where NAU has the foundation and the opportunity to grow, and it is the value proposition that will guide the university's continued excellence.

With this organizing framework, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* contains seven broad priorities that encompass all dimensions of the university's work. Under each are components that serve as objectives which, if met, will result in the realization of those priorities. They are as follows:

- Academic Excellence
- Student Success
- Commitment to Indigenous Peoples
- Impactful Scholarship
- Mission-Driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff
- Community Engagement
- Sustainable Stewardship of Resources

The strategic priorities will give structure to high-impact initiatives and programs moving forward. And while the priority areas are broad, the components ensure that there is specificity and differentiation in each, making the vision and priorities for NAU clear. For instance, in Impactful Scholarship, NAU will leverage and expand upon its distinctive excellence in numerous spheres of research, scholarly, and creative endeavors. Importantly, it will do so with a keen attention to the teacher-scholar model—one that recognizes the student-first ethos of NAU and that informs the scholarly talent pool that the university will recruit—and ensure that there are ample avenues for student participation that will enrich and better prepare NAU graduates for lifelong success in their chosen field.

Thus, the plan is integrated and highly convergent, with components in each priority area interlocking with other priorities/components. It is not siloed, the goals are attainable because they are complementary, and it has cohesion behind the organizing vision.

Given the context in which this process was undertaken, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* is necessarily an aspirational document rather than an operational manual for action. That is important due to the internal needs of the university—a clear, collaborative vision that can inspire action—and the external pressures in education—establishing a vision that is unique and differentiated that can then be pursued.

With these institutional goals and objectives, NAU will advance the mission of the enterprise strategic plan, as it pertains to ABOR's Educate, Achieve, Discover, and Impact goals.

5 Integration of Efforts

As *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* has been brought to fruition, the university has already enacted significant policy and practice changes, as well as targeted institutional investments, that demonstrate a commitment to rapid and transformative action. Specific examples below highlight the precedent for rapid action that aligns with the stated goals of the university, and serve as exemplars of how future strategic initiatives can be executed quickly, with broad support and sweeping impact:

NAU 3-Year TRIF Plan (approved Fall 2021)

NAU has reoriented its TRIF investment plan and philosophy to align with a revised vision for the integration of impactful scholarship, student learning, and access and workforce development. In contrast to past TRIF proposals that heavily emphasized research investment in faculty for hiring and startup support, the new TRIF proposal is holistic:

“...Northern Arizona University (NAU) will use TRIF funds to foster integrated and complementary educational and research activities that create exceptional impact and value for our diverse students, leading to the betterment of Arizona’s communities...allocations of TRIF funds in this three-year plan will be distributed across three primary efforts: Access and Workforce Development (A/WD, ~40%), targeted areas of research excellence (~30%), and a competitive process for seed funding (~30%) to support and incentivize the development of new and expanded workforce development programs that enable access, as well as research projects that support the intersections between research and experiential learning opportunities for our diverse student population.¹⁰”

The redistribution of NAU’s TRIF investment clearly demonstrates NAU’s mission prioritization, the commitment to a distinctive scholarly agenda, the centrality of the teacher-scholar model to NAU’s faculty practices, and a focus on student participation in high-impact practices (such as research) that support exceptional workforce and post-graduate outcomes.

Boundless Creative Campaign (implemented Fall 2021)

In concert with a pivot to the university’s vision that was in the early planning stages, NAU undertook the process of creating a new brand—one that more accurately portrayed the mission-centered priorities, spoke to the values of students and families, and clearly differentiated NAU in the competitive higher education marketplace. The new campaign served as a highly visible bridge from previous brand identity to a new, refreshed, revitalized NAU. Ultimately, a final brand identity will build upon the work of the Boundless campaign and moving forward, with full adoption of *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*. The philosophy, development framework, and product of the provisional Boundless campaign—crafted with numerous stakeholder focus groups and celebrating the differentiation, excellence, and opportunity an NAU education represents—gives a strong foundation for future brand identity efforts.

Differentiated Pricing and Financial Aid Strategy (implemented Spring 2022)

The results of NAU’s comprehensive pricing and financial aid strategy are enumerated in the Goal #2 report enclosed as part of this year’s annual review process. The outcomes are closely aligned with Strategic Priority #2, Component #1:

¹⁰ https://public.azregents.edu/News%20Clips%20Docs/TRIF_Three_Year_Plans.pdf

“Student Success: NAU will broaden access to more Arizonans by providing equitable, affordable, and seamless pathways to higher education, resulting in a student population that reflects the state and complements our exceptional out-of-state and international student populations.”

Now, as NAU enters the Fall 2023 recruitment cycle, it can clearly demonstrate its distinctive value proposition through the following programs:

- **Access2Excellence:** providing a clear pathway to an exceptional college education and addressing affordability head-on, NAU now guarantees that qualified Arizona students from households making \$65,000 or less (the current state median income) will attend NAU tuition-free.
- **Admissions Pilot:** through revised admissions standards that align with Arizona high school graduation requirements, NAU has removed a longstanding roadblock that has undermined the college-going aspirations of countless talented, diverse students. Now, more than 50,000 students whose high schools do not offer courses previously required for admission will know that if they achieve a 3.0 GPA, they will be assured admission to NAU.

National Positioning and Leadership (highlights, Spring 2022)

NAU’s strategic planning process, the bold adoption of equitable postsecondary value as a mission-driven north star, and the actions already taken in alignment with these values have garnered significant national attention. As the university aspires to be *“the nation’s preeminent engine of opportunity, vehicle of economic mobility, and driver of social impact,”* the early engagement by national higher education organizations, boards, and foundations demonstrate that NAU’s reputation, leadership, and influence are on the rise. In Spring 2022 alone, NAU has been recognized in the following forums:

- Presidential testimony at a House subcommittee on the value of Hispanic Serving Institutions for national educational attainment and economic mobility¹¹.
- Nationally recognized leadership alongside the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) in taking action to advance equitable postsecondary value in the United States¹².
- National profile by EAB on how NAU is tackling the access and affordability gap¹³.
- Presidential appointment to an AASCU Postsecondary Value Taskforce that convenes 14 institutions from across the country in a community of leadership and practice, with NAU serving as the lead convener.
- A keynote speech at the American Academy of Arts & Sciences Higher Education Forum, highlighting *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence* and the Access2Excellence initiative as a model for strategic prioritization to address equity and attainment.
- Early partnership and use as a case study by the American Council on Education as a model for new Carnegie Classifications around economic mobility.
- Significant investment by ABOR and the NAU Foundation in NAU’s newly created Equitable Value Fund; secured investment from the Lumina Foundation; multiple ongoing proposals with national higher

¹¹ <https://news.nau.edu/cruz-rivera-testimony/>

¹² <https://www.highereddive.com/news/one-year-in-momentum-builds-from-the-postsecondary-value-commissions-work/623566/>

¹³ <https://eab.com/insights/podcast/enrollment/northern-arizona-tackling-access-affordability-gap/>

education foundations to secure additional support that will spur transformational program development and implementation focused on broadening access, increasing attainment, and improving post-college outcomes.

6 Realizing the New NAU and the Road Ahead

Moving forward, the next year will be crucial for NAU to advance signature efforts to achieve the goals of *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*. But that work will commence from a position of strength and a track-record of existing success. Because, even while the plan was under development, the university was quickly developing and implementing programs that are aligned with the vision and will contribute to its long-term success. For instance, in the last year alone, NAU has already achieved the following successes, all closely aligned with strategic priorities and foundational to future success:

- Access2Excellence initiative that will directly address affordability challenges and the public messaging of NAU’s value proposition to Arizonans.
- Admissions Pilot implementation, which will broaden participation through an alignment of admissions standards with Arizona high school graduation requirements.
- New NAU Workplace and investments in faculty and staff compensation, retention, and recruitment.
- Intensive in teacher-scholar hiring throughout the academic enterprise.
- Recalibrated TRIF resources to optimally focus access and workforce-driven programming and support; transformative learning programs; and impactful research programs that are regionally-connected and -embedded, capitalize on distinctive excellence, and facilitate high-impact engagement of students.
- Record private philanthropic support for NAU and unprecedented public support from the Arizona Board of Regents and NAU Foundation.
- Smart and sustainable physical master planning and sustainability/climate action processes launched.
- Creating a new Office of Economic Mobility and Social Impact to organize and advance broad efforts to achieve the university’s mission through a holistic, cross-divisional, statewide action plan.
- More than \$2 million invested in high-impact programs spearheaded by members of the President’s Cabinet leadership team.
- A \$2 million call for proposals from the entire NAU community to contribute immediately to the success of NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence through grassroots efforts by faculty and staff.

These achievements highlight the foundation already in place and the energy of the NAU community to drive action. And of particular import is the public and private investment in the New NAU vision that has been achieved to-date.

Looking ahead, NAU will continue to take an integrated approach to achieving its strategic goals. This includes a thoughtful and holistic approach to internal and ABOR metric and target setting, so that the university is closely monitoring its progress against meaningful measures that are driven by its mission. Continued adaptations to its marketing and public positioning efforts to clarify the value of NAU to Arizona, recruit students, and garner support from the public and private sector. And the development of a second phase of transformative

institutional initiatives that will drive strategic advancement—all tethered closely to the new vision and the metrics and marketing plans that will measure and complement their success.

Year 1 Update on Multiple Year Goals (2021-2024)

2021-22 Progress Report | President José Luis Cruz Rivera, August 1, 2022

1 Broadening Participation

Goal #1

Develop and implement a plan to expand the number of students from working class families enrolled by NAU, increase overall graduation rates, and narrow completion gaps for working class, first-generation, and minoritized groups, as a means to enhance NAU's contribution to equitable postsecondary value.

Statement of Progress

NAU has made significant strides over the last year toward this goal, with multiple signature initiatives developed and launched that have focused on the imperative to broaden participation in postsecondary education among working class, first-generation, and minoritized groups. Of particular note are the following two programs that directly address broadening college access for these populations:

- Beginning in Fall 2023, NAU will provide a tuition-free college education for every undergraduate Arizona resident with a household income of \$65,000 or below through the **Access2Excellence (A2E)** initiative. In addition, NAU will continue to be the lowest cost of attendance institution in the state, regardless of a student's household income thanks to its revised pricing, scholarship, and financial aid packaging strategy.
- Beginning in Fall 2023, NAU will remove a longstanding barrier to college participation through an **Admissions Pilot** initiative that aligns NAU admissions standards with Arizona high school graduation requirements. As with A2E, this is a mission-driven change that seeks to broaden access and increase attainment, providing a clear message to students and parents that a college education is possible.

The specific details of these initiatives are enumerated in the enclosed report on **Annual Goal #2**.

In addition, NAU is working with the statewide Arizona Community College Coordinating Council (AC4) to firmly establish NAU as the state's preferred partner with community colleges for traditional and non-traditional student completion pathways. Advances in this area include proposals for data sharing and information system integration, transfer and reverse transfer articulation agreements, and shared services that will bolster opportunities for AC4 members to recruit students and enable NAU to seamlessly help them complete four-year degrees. Significant progress has been made by a signature taskforce between Coconino Community College (CCC) and NAU toward reimagining the CCC-NAU partnership, as well as exceptional partnerships with Arizona Western College (AWC) and Pima Community College (PCC). NAU expects to expand and systematize the partnerships with all AC4 members over the coming years to support four-year degree attainment and completion by transfer students.

To provide crucial financial support and sustainability for efforts designed to increase college participation, close achievement gaps, and improve post-college outcomes—contributing to equitable postsecondary value for students and communities throughout the state—NAU has successfully secured a transformative set of investments from ABOR and the NAU Foundation, totaling \$30 million, specifically designed to contribute to this

work. NAU is also actively soliciting additional funding to bolster this Equitable Value Fund (EVF) seed investment from numerous public and private supporters throughout the nation. Already, this funding is being designated to student success initiatives that include the expansion of a successful mentoring program to all Arizona resident students that will launch in fall 2022, as well as several other programs currently in development for fall 2023.

Finally, as the university seeks to advance equitable postsecondary value in Arizona, a new strategic plan, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*, has been adopted and implemented to guide and organize mission-driven actions. Furthermore, the university has been profiled nationally for exceptional actions in pursuit of equity by numerous higher education organizations, media, and advocacy groups in recognition of the nationally leading work accomplished in just one-year of the New NAU.

2 Allied Health Programs

Goal #2

Develop and submit a plan for implementation of statewide expansion of NAU's Allied Health Programs and traditional NAU programs to include programs in Maricopa County, Pima County, Yuma County and distributed learning centers outside these three counties.

Statement of Progress

NAU has an established record of building and growing Allied Health programs to support the needs of communities and individuals throughout Arizona. From 2012-2021, overall enrollment in Allied Health fields at NAU have increased by more than 1,500 students. Thanks to substantial investments from the state's New Economy Initiative, NAU is poised to exceed this growth trajectory in the next five years, and, in so doing, expand its statewide presence significantly to help meet student, community, and workforce needs throughout the state.

NAU's 2027 Allied Health expansion plans, which were shared with ABOR in spring 2022, include the following highlights:

- Nine (9) new sites for Allied Health programs, including in Yuma, Phoenix, Prescott Valley, Tuba City, and Tucson.
- 1,600 additional students enrolled in Allied Health programs by 2027, representing an increase of more than 180% over current enrollments.
- NAU's exceptional Physician Assistant and Physical Therapy programs will both expand to Yuma, expanding critical training in two high-demand fields to southwestern Arizona.
- Overall, nursing enrollments in existing and new sites will increase by more than 230% by 2027 in locations that include Flagstaff, Phoenix (Phoenix Bioscience Core and North Valley), Tucson, Prescott Valley, Tuba City, Yuma, and hybrid/online.

As NAU engages in this aggressive expansion plan, the key considerations that are essential for success are accreditation, faculty and staff hiring to support program delivery, infrastructure and facilities upgrades to meet educational needs, securing a robust portfolio of clinical placements for students, and building workforce partnerships. Progress has been made across all dimensions, but these will continue to be a point of emphasis to ensure NAU can realize its expansion goals.

Further, to help lead these initiatives, NAU has hired an exceptional Dean to lead the College of Health and Human Services, as well as an Executive Director for the School of Nursing. Both bring expertise to essential leadership roles that will shape continued planning and implementation.

Meanwhile, NAU is building out capacity for a robust and holistic approach to revisioning its statewide footprint for traditional academic programs. Key developments over the last year include an academic program review and statewide taskforce that have evaluated strengths and weaknesses related to NAU's existing portfolio, and opportunities to expand degree and credential offerings through educational delivery sites. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation of NAU Online and its differentiated position and opportunities to complement statewide programming is poised to launch soon.

Finally, based the vision articulated in NAU's strategic plan, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*, and the imperative to expand access throughout the state through diverse program offerings and entrance points, NAU has established a new Office of Economic Mobility and Social Impact that will focus on strengthening and building out the university's statewide footprint to better meet the demographic, social, economic, and workforce needs of Arizona residents through a system-like approach. Specifically, this signature university office will coordinate, manage, and facilitate the strategic, policy, and analytic work that will be essential to meeting the challenge of expanding opportunity and delivering differentiated educational portfolios where students and communities need them most—and spearheading integrated implementation plans across academic, enrollment, and student support teams.

3 Diversity Strategic Plan

Goal #3

Develop and implement an operational plan to advance each of the five strategic priorities outlined in the University's Diversity Strategic Plan.

Statement of Progress

NAU placed substantial focus on shaping and refining an overall strategic vision through the strategic roadmap process that led to *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*. Details of this work are articulated in the report for **Annual Goal #3**. A more cohesive institutional direction will help inform implementation of the Diversity Strategic Plan (DSP), which has continued to be advanced, but will now become a key area of focus following the university-wide strategic planning process's completion.

While DSP implementation is a priority for the upcoming academic year, a wide range of unit-level actions over the last year have helped secure a strong foundation and have made significant progress toward this goal. Highlights include a suite of recruitment and retention programs throughout academic units to support underrepresented students, the creation of two Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Advisors to the Provost to

coordinate academic HSI efforts focused on student success, robust faculty recruitment efforts that include the implementation of a cluster hire initiative, and crosscutting work by the university's burgeoning Diversity Fellows program that integrates a liaison across divisions to advise on and coordinate DSP-related initiatives, among others. In addition, an executive-level Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) leadership team has been assembled to provide high-level leadership to DEIJ initiatives and spearhead a university-wide accounting of all DSP-related activities that have been implemented or are in development to help documenting the depth and breadth of actions completed over the last academic year.

Moving forward, the university will be hiring a Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), with a search launching in fall 2022. This position will serve as the lead coordinator and driver of strategic DEIJ work at NAU, including building out the nascent Center for University Access and Inclusion, enhancing the Diversity Fellows program, and leveraging the DSP inventory of actions to expand promising practices and implement new initiatives.

4 Latinx Communities

Goal #4

Develop and implement a plan to increase the University's profile and visibility within the Phoenix, Statewide, and National Latinx communities.

Statement of Progress

As a recently designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), NAU has taken significant strides to consolidate its position through intentional efforts in recruitment, student support, and academic program. In tandem with direct efforts enrolling and supporting Latinx students at NAU, the university is broadening its visibility, influence, and leadership at a state and national level through a variety of campaigns.

For instance, thanks to the value-driven initiatives of NAU, the President was asked to testify in front of the House Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee on the importance of investing in HSIs. The testimony highlighted both the importance and impact of all HSIs, and also NAU specifically as an institution poised to take a national leadership role in shaping how HSIs and other Minority Serving Institutions can leverage federal resources to generate transformative outcomes for students. In addition, the university's recognitions for advancing equitable postsecondary value through initiatives like A2E and the Admissions Pilot have garnered national attention and point toward how NAU will seek to serve all Arizonans, as well as the state's growing Latinx population to advance economic mobility and social impact.

At the state level, NAU is cultivating partnerships across many Latinx leadership groups to build support for the revitalized mission focused on student access and success. Partners include the Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Chicanos Por La Causa, Helios Education Foundation, as well as numerous individual businesses, school districts, and local governments. This summer, President Cruz Rivera was notified that his leadership in education in just one year will be recognized by the Pete Garcia Victoria Foundation with a higher education leadership award at the foundation's annual awards banquet in September 2022. In addition, the university has implemented several Latinx-focused marketing campaigns within the state, including placements with Phoenix Rising FC, with specific campaigns around Hispanic Heritage Month, a HSI-specific marketing campaign developed with NAU's Latinx stakeholder groups and Sensis (a multicultural marketing agency) to speak to the

values of statewide Latinx communities and reflect the opportunities available at NAU, an exploratory initiatives in multilingual microsites and digital ads that would bring greater visibility to NAU within Spanish speaking communities. Finally, with the launch of the ABOR-supported Family Access, Communication, Transition, and Support (FACTS) program in fall 2022, NAU will reach a broader cross-section of the state's Latinx communities through bilingual, culturally responsive whole-family recruitment processes, enhancing enrollment opportunities and raising the university's visibility among this important demographic.

All of these efforts set a strong foundation that NAU will capitalize on moving forward to concurrently solidify its HSI status, enroll and support Latinx students, promote the university's value and opportunities among the state's Latinx communities, and build a broad base of support among Latinx communities, businesses, and influencers in Arizona and throughout the nation who recognize the university's leadership in delivering equitable postsecondary value.

5 Native American Communities

Goal #5

Develop and implement a plan to further enhance NAU's profile as a national leader in the service of Native American students and the communities they represent.

Statement of Progress

NAU is engaged in a portfolio of efforts to realize its goal of being the nation's leading institution serving Native American and Indigenous students and communities, driven by a revitalized commitment to Indigenous Peoples in the new strategic plan, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*. In the last year, the university has begun campaigning with key partners to secure funding for an expansion to the Native American Cultural Center (NACC), which is the central gathering place and cultural hub for Native-serving efforts on campus. This includes a federal funding request and laying the groundwork for the Navajo Nation Council to engage in considering the expansion for funding.

In addition, NAU has advanced several significant fundraising efforts for academic and student support, research and scholarship, and community engagement, with an endowed chair and funding for the Institute for Tribal and Environmental Professionals (ITEP) highlights of a successful fundraising year. Large institutional proposals are in advanced talks with other external foundations that can help advance NAU's efforts to serve Native students and propel its delivery of equitable postsecondary value.

The university's focus on student success is crucial for Native students, who have seen some declines in enrollment and retention over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. NAU is ramping up academic support efforts and partnerships with San Carlos Apache College, Dine College, and Navajo Technical University are being bolstered to enhance transfer and graduate student enrollment opportunities at NAU. Further, the A2E initiative is a valuable recruitment and retention opportunity for NAU beginning in fall 2023, as many Native students living on the Navajo Nation in close proximity to the Flagstaff campus will be eligible for the program, with cost barriers being lifted as they pursue a college degree.

As external funding opportunities mature, NAU will finalize a strategic portfolio of internally and externally funded initiatives to drive the advancement of its Native-serving mission over the next year.