



Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

April 30, 2020

Dear Lumberjacks,

I am so proud of the response that NAU and the Flagstaff community has had to a health crisis of global and unprecedented proportions. Together, we have worked to flatten the curve of COVID-19 and reduce risk to students, faculty, staff, and the community.

As the spring semester concludes and we celebrate our graduates, the time is right to turn our focus toward plans to welcome students to campus in Fall 2020 and resume in-person classes. We take this step with the utmost concern for our students' safety in mind, but also with the acute understanding that the severe impact to our economy and the uncertainty that has interrupted our students' lives has reached a tipping point. There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration, with the overall objective of mitigating future risks while reviving our local, state, and national economy, and getting people safely back to the daily activities that define our university and community.

With this backdrop, and in consultation with state and federal leaders and health officials, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Arizona Department of Health Services, we will begin immediately putting the safeguards in place that will allow us to welcome our students, faculty, and staff back to campus. While risk factors cannot be eliminated entirely, we believe we can decrease the risk to health and safety through a variety of measures—steps that other universities across the country also are adopting in their plans for fall 2020 campus openings.

These measures include instituting physical distancing policies in all public access areas and classrooms, implementing safety measures and health protocols in our residential and dining facilities, and finding additional physical space to accommodate our larger classes in order to ensure appropriate physical distancing. Adopting state-of-the-art testing and contact tracing, as well as implementing appropriate isolation protocols when necessary, will be part of our comprehensive plan. Our planning also will take into consideration our statewide students and education delivery on our community campuses, where we are working closely with our partners to ensure facilities are safe and meet the instructional needs of our students across Arizona. In addition, we will leverage the investments we have made to upgrade our online instruction to provide virtual opportunities for student learning and engagement, and hybrid strategies to enable more effective classroom spacing and scheduling.

NAU has a responsibility for the health and safety of our campus community. We will stress-test our health and safety protocols to ensure that we are following best practices as recommended by state and federal officials and health experts. At the same time, NAU's mission is to shape and build lives and provide broad access to education. In doing so, we provide a level of social and economic mobility that our students—many of them the first in their families to attend college—may not otherwise enjoy. This enhanced quality of life extends to our community, reflected in our billion dollar-plus economic footprint that provides a tremendous benefit to our home communities in Flagstaff and Coconino County. We are at an inflection point, where the lack of employment opportunities, a sense of personal dislocation and powerlessness, and uncertainty about the future must be addressed—wisely, comprehensively, and, at the same time, with due speed.

I believe we can strike this balance. We will be judicious, targeted, and prudent in our decision-

making process, and guided by the best available information and in consultation with a wide range of our partners and stakeholders, including the CDC and Arizona Department of Health Services. Our decisions will prioritize the health and safety of our campus and community, while maintaining our focus on delivering a high-quality education that meets the aspirations and expectations of our students. Throughout, NAU will continue to be an engaged, constructive, and positive partner in the life of our hometown community.

This is a highly fluid situation and I will continue to communicate as plans evolve. I look forward to having a campus once again alive with the vibrancy, enthusiasm, and sense of possibilities that come with having our students here with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita", written in a cursive style.

Rita Hartung Cheng
President