



Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

June 4, 2020

Dear Lumberjacks,

I am pleased to share the progress we have made in our plans to return to fall classes on the Flagstaff campus. Additionally, we continue to work with all of our community college partners throughout the state regarding fall re-opening plans to serve our statewide students.

As has been the case since the outbreak of the pandemic, our priorities continue to be centered on:

- Maintaining the well-being and health of our university family
- Limiting and mitigating health and safety risks
- Continuing to achieve our customary high level of academic excellence
- Ensuring our institutional stability and financial sustainability

We are being thorough and careful in our approach, as mitigating risks to the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and our local communities is vital. We continue to consult with public health officials, local and state leaders, and health experts in the Flagstaff and the NAU community as we refine our plans to resume in-person campus operations.

Early Start and End to the Fall Semester

One key mitigation strategy is to begin the fall semester earlier than usual and finish in-person classes by Thanksgiving. Our goal is to take advantage of a period of expected lower COVID-19 case rates, exceptional weather for encouraging outdoor activities, and lower rates of student travel prior to any potential resurgence of the virus. To ensure we continue to provide our students with a world-class education, the first day of classes for the fall semester will be Wednesday, August 12, and we will end before Thanksgiving. We will share specific details about the semester, including the schedule for finals and commencement, soon.

Planning for Health and Safety Protocols in the Fall

Work groups are currently developing plans to enable teaching and learning, student life, research and creative activity, operations, and events and engagement to resume in as normal a manner as possible. Modifications to safeguard the health of our community, our families, and our neighbors are being made. We are taking a variety of steps, including mandatory education of faculty and staff, enhanced sanitation and cleaning practices, the distribution and use of masks in common areas, physical distancing, and, in coordination with county and state public health officials, the development of effective protocols for testing and screening.

Our work plans include:

- **Physical Distancing.** Implementing guidelines for maintaining appropriate space.
- **Academic Excellence through NAUFlex.** Adopting a proven approach to academic instruction, NAUFlex supports safety and physical distancing with a fully immersive classroom experience available in-person and online. Each classroom will have the capability to stream classes, offering our students the flexibility to engage in a quality and highly personal experience with safety top of mind.

- **Housing and Dining.** Providing students with a safe and positive living and learning environment is a top priority. We are developing strategies and procedures to reopen dining venues and allow students to return to the residence halls. This includes implementing physical distancing throughout common areas and dining venues, enhancing cleaning protocols, and analyzing residence configuration options. Our residence halls will be open with a mix of single and standard occupancy to decrease density and increase our ability to maintain the appropriate space needed for physical distancing.

- **Innovative Use of Technology.** We are exploring the use of technology to minimize wait times and enhance physical distancing opportunities for student services and facilities, such as campus recreation, kitchens, and laundry facilities.

- **Prioritizing Health and Well-Being.** We will continue to prioritize Campus Health and Counseling Services to ensure students have access to proper medical and mental health support services.

- **Mandatory Health and Safety Training.** We are developing a mandatory course on mitigating health and safety risks for all faculty and staff.

- **Personal Hygiene and Prevention Measures.** Training and education for students on health and safety, physical distancing, and appropriate use of face coverings will be critical in maintaining a safe environment. This will include welcome kits for students with personal hygiene material, such as a reusable face mask and hand sanitizer.

- **Cleaning and Other Safety Practices.** Stringent and timely sanitation and cleaning standards will be instituted for all high-traffic areas and buildings. Hand sanitizer will be available in convenient locations in all buildings, and health ambassadors will be present in high-traffic buildings to provide advice on appropriate distancing practices and ensure these practices are adopted.

- **Screening, Testing, and Contact Tracing.** We are working on protocols for our campus community that will enable us to test, contact trace, and quarantine when needed.

- **Community Responsibility and Engagement.** We will educate our students on how best to enjoy the environment around them, which will enhance their campus experience and at the same time minimize risks. This includes taking advantage of the amenities of our great Flagstaff community while employing appropriate physical distancing practices. We will continue to collaborate and communicate with state and local health officials, city and county leadership, and local businesses.

My thanks to the many teams working on these important measures that will allow us to provide our students with the quality academic and personal experience that brought them to NAU while mitigating risks to all members of our community. I would also like to thank our faculty and staff for their flexibility, ideas, and the spirit of teamwork that has helped inform our work.

We look forward to having our Lumberjack family together in the fall, on our Flagstaff campuses, online, or at one of our statewide campuses. We will continue to build upon these foundational measures, in keeping with the latest direction from health authorities, and share additional actions as they are adopted.

Stay safe, and go Lumberjacks!

Sincerely,



Rita Hartung Cheng
President