



March 11, 2021

Dear Lumberjacks,

Three weeks ago, Rima and I had the opportunity to visit with many of you and your representatives when we participated in a blizzard of meetings on campus, in Phoenix, and throughout the Flagstaff community. At the time, I had just been named as the sole finalist after an incredibly rigorous national search for the 17th President of Northern Arizona University. We were most grateful for the warm reception we received everywhere we went and the outpouring of kind messages that followed us back home via email and social media posts.

A lot has happened since then.

For instance, late last week, Rima and I were thrilled to learn that our offer to purchase a house, in which we look to build a life as proud members of the Flagstaff community, was accepted. And, yesterday afternoon, the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) formally approved my presidential contract with an official start date of June 14, 2021.

My son Álvaro and I are now on our way to Flagstaff on a short personal visit to follow up on the purchase of our family home, and together, we look forward to visualizing further what our life in this truly special community will look like—a life we are eager to launch alongside NAU's extended family of faculty, students, scholars, and advocates. Please wish us luck as we seek to close on this house, which we feel is ideally located and designed to allow for many campus celebrations in the years ahead.

I also write to you today to share what the presidential transition will look like—in the hope that you will help not only inform, but also shape the contours of what will ultimately be our collective 17th Presidency. The significant elements of the transition are described below.

NAU Presidential Transition Core Administrative Team

One of the main challenges of a presidential transition is ensuring effective communication and high-quality execution of internal and external events. To meet this challenge, we need a small, strong, core administrative on-site team that can take responsibility for creating, prioritizing, and managing my schedule of activities. And, the team must do so as I wind down my work as Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost of The City University of New York and work with my family to move from Manhattan to Flagstaff successfully. To this end, I am pleased to inform you that the following NAU colleagues have agreed to serve as my core administrative team during the transition.

- **Laurie Dickson**, Vice Provost for Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation and a Professor of Psychological Sciences will serve as the core team lead and will be responsible for coordinating all internal and external transition-related activities. She will be my main point of contact and chief on-site spokesperson throughout the transition.

- **Kimberly Ott**, Associate Vice President for Communications, will oversee the development and implementation of all transition-related communication plans and will work closely with NAU and ABOR staff to ensure transparent and effective communications with all relevant stakeholders.

- **Brian Register**, Director of President's Office Operations, will manage the scheduling and coordination required to keep all elements of the transition plan moving smoothly and effectively.

Please join me in thanking Laurie, Kim, and Brian for their willingness to take on this responsibility even as they attend to the heavy workloads of the roles they already play in advancing NAU's mission.

Presidential Transition Communications

A critical first step and ongoing priority throughout the transition is the development and implementation of a communications plan that sets a robust foundation for the start of our University's 17th Presidency. All elements of this work will privilege the values of transparency and inclusivity. Elements of the communications plan, including campus visits and virtual town halls, will be captured and disseminated via a Presidential Transition Portal that will go live on Monday, March 15, 2021. The portal, as well as the email address presidential.transition@nau.edu, will allow for bidirectional communication with internal and external members of the campus community. Feel free to reach out to me and the Core Administrative Team via this email throughout my transition to NAU.

Presidential Transition Commission

One of the first tasks I will work on with the Core Administrative Team is the identification, invitation, and appointment of a representative Presidential Transition Commission. The composition of the commission will be informed by conversations and counsel from individuals, committees, and organizations throughout our campus and community, and it will have diverse representation from key stakeholder groups, including faculty, staff, students, key administrators, community leaders, alumni, and others. The Commission will be chaired by Laurie Dickson and its members will help me better understand the culture, needs, aspirations, challenges, and opportunities facing NAU and the communities our university serves. The Presidential Transition Commission, which will sunset on June 14, 2021, will also help inform how best to invest my time and energy during the transition and the first six months of our 17th Presidency. We expect this Commission's members to be announced on or before Monday, March 22, 2021 and to include, for continuity, some members of the Advisory Search Committee, and other important stakeholders.

"Hitting the Ground Learning" Events and Organizational Discovery Activities

As mentioned above—and with the eventual input of the Presidential Transition Commission—I am working with the Core Administrative Team on a series of campus and virtual events that will provide me the opportunity to interact with a broad cross-section of the NAU and Flagstaff communities before the official start of our 17th Presidency. The process will include formal and informal one-on-one meetings, group conversations, and virtual town halls. These events will allow me to learn more about your stories, aspirations, and priorities for the advancement of NAU's mission. Currently, we are planning at least three two-day campus visits and a few virtual town halls in March, April, and May. When on campus, my presidential transition office will be in Cline Library. We will arrange for open office hours and scheduled in-person meetings, following university COVID-19 protocols. The dates of my campus visits will be announced soon and full schedules will be published at least one week before the corresponding visits.

An essential part of my commitment to "hitting the ground learning" at NAU will be to get a quick, yet thorough, understanding of all significant issues occurring during the transition period and beyond that may have a long-term financial or political impact on the university. To this end, I will be working directly with members of the Executive Team, College Deans, Department Chairs, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and other senior leaders across the university and ABOR. This will provide me with important insight about all current and emerging academic, enrollment, financial, structural, legal, and political matters of significance involving the university and its ability to move its agenda forward.

As you can see, we have lots of work to do, together. But I am heartened to know that I can count on your support and active participation. Just as I stated a short few weeks ago in my [welcome message](#) to the campus and the community it serves and represents, I am excited by the prospect of working side-by-side with you as we seek to chart the path and blaze the trail to that bold and boundless future that awaits us at Northern Arizona University.

Here's wishing you and yours the best today and always.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "José Luis Cruz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the last name.

José Luis Cruz
President-designate