

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Item Name: Northern Arizona University's Revised Mission and Strategic Plan NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence

Action Item

Requested Action: Northern Arizona University asks the board to receive NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence, NAU's revised strategic plan, and adopt NAU's revised mission.

Background

NAU's previous Strategic Plan was adopted by ABOR in September 2018 as part of the NAU Operational and Financial Review. During the Presidential Search process in 2020-2021, ABOR prioritized a leadership profile that would re-envision NAU's institutional mission and vision, which would be rearticulated with shared input from the university community in a new strategic plan – and that effort would be a core goal of year-one of the 17th Presidency.

Discussion

In AY2021-2022, under the leadership of NAU's 17th president, NAU engaged in a comprehensive process to update its guiding strategic document, informed by the university's legacy of excellence, its identity in Flagstaff and throughout the state, the aspirations of its community, the need for a distinctive mission in the Arizona higher education ecosystem, and the strategic context facing higher education throughout the nation. The process was directed by the Strategic Roadmap Steering Committee, a group of university leaders who coordinated efforts and convened seven working groups around strategic priority areas for the university. Each working group was composed of a lead facilitator, a student, a faculty member, a staff member, and a designee/subject matter expert appointed by the lead. Consistent with a commitment to nurture a collaborative approach based on trust and transparency, NAU engaged internal and external constituents in an accelerated but comprehensive engagement process that consisted of the following elements:

- Robust and frequent communications shared via university-wide email and posted on the NAU Strategic Roadmap portal;
- Three (3) phases of engagement on the Strategic Roadmap draft document, with each being iteratively edited and refined by the working groups and Steering Committee based on input from the university community. Engagement consisted of email, survey, public listening sessions, meetings, and crowdsourcing. More than 10,000 points of feedback were received;

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- Engagement with external stakeholders in Spring 2022 on the refined Draft #3 of the Strategic Roadmap, including with Regents, members of the NAU Foundation and Alumni Association Boards, and others; and
- The University Advisory Board reviewed and endorsed NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence on May 2, 2022, advancing the strategic plan to a motion to adopt by the Arizona Board of Regents in June.

Presented here today, NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence is a three-year strategic plan designed to accelerate NAU's work in advancing equitable postsecondary value through a bold and clearly defined vision for the university's future. The timeframe is structured such that the strategic plan can evolve iteratively in short cycles, with ongoing phases of visioning, implementation, assessment, and revisioning to keep our university on track, engaged, and energized to deliver upon our mission, while remaining flexible to the evolving strategic context in which we operate.

The strategic plan contains The New NAU Charter with revised mission and vision statements and an institutional commitment statement. It outlines NAU's seven Strategic Priorities that touch on all dimensions of the university's work and mission and enumerates 29 components that compose the priority areas. The Strategic Priorities are as follows: Academic Excellence; Student Success; Commitment to Indigenous Peoples; Impactful Scholarship; Mission-Driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff; Community Engagement; and Sustainable Stewardship of Resources

President Cruz Rivera will make a presentation and engage in a strategic discussion with the board. He will describe the comprehensive development and engagement process, highlight NAU's strategic priorities, and preview some initiatives that will be pursued in the coming years to advance this work and position NAU to deliver on its mission in a sustainable and impactful manner.

The image features a dark blue-tinted aerial view of the Northern Arizona University campus, with mountains in the background. A yellow banner in the top left corner contains the university's logo. A white outline of the state of Arizona is overlaid on the image, with the main text centered within it.

NAU
NORTHERN
ARIZONA
UNIVERSITY

NAU 2025

**ELEVATING
EXCELLENCE:**

A Bold and Boundless
Future for All



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT Dr. José Luis Cruz Rivera

I am pleased to present **NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence**, Northern Arizona University's roadmap for delivering a bold and boundless future for all. The strategic priorities described herein represent a robust synthesis of the NAU community's thoughtful engagement and bold aspirations for the future, and it reflects the evolving challenges and opportunities that we face as an engaged public institution of higher education. To equitably serve students and communities from all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences, our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice is infused throughout this guiding document. We will capitalize on NAU's 122-year history of distinctive excellence as an engine of opportunity to drive social impact and economic mobility for the people of Arizona and beyond.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JLCR".

José Luis Cruz Rivera, PhD
President



The New NAU Charter

Vision

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.

Mission

NAU transforms lives and enriches communities through high-quality academics and impactful scholarship, creative endeavors, and public service.

Commitment

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.



Strategic Priority

Academic Excellence

NAU's high-quality academic programs, general studies curriculum, and the teaching excellence of our faculty will foster students' knowledge and competencies necessary for professional success, informed civic engagement, global citizenship, lifelong learning, and the promotion of a more just and sustainable future.

Components

- NAU will **position our students for postgraduation success** by offering a broad portfolio of high-quality academic programs with learning outcomes and perspectives that are responsive to the workforce and social needs of Arizona and beyond.
- NAU students will **participate in high-impact learning opportunities** that promote academic excellence, build mentorship relationships, and prepare them for career and life success as Lumberjack alumni.
- NAU will **offer faculty and staff professional growth opportunities** designed to enhance teaching excellence and foster learning environments that support the success of all students.





Strategic Priority

Student Success

Grounded in a student-centered institutional culture of care, NAU will provide accessible and affordable educational opportunities, with tailored support services that enable students to complete their academic credentials and realize transformative outcomes from their collegiate experience.

Components

- 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.
- NAU will **increase enrollment statewide and in online programs** to better serve students wherever they live and learn.
- NAU will **improve retention rates and increase educational attainment** using effective approaches that are tailored to student needs and focused on **closing gaps in retention and completion** across student populations.
- NAU will **improve student momentum and postgraduation success** by supporting students' economic, physical, and mental well-being; fostering a strong sense of belonging at NAU; and providing robust support for academic success, leadership development, and career preparation.



Strategic Priority

Commitment to Indigenous Peoples

In recognition of the unique sovereign status of Native Nations and the sacred land on which the university was built, NAU will continue its intentional support for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff; develop university-wide culturally responsive educational opportunities and programming; and build mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous communities that will position NAU as the nation's leading university serving Indigenous Peoples.

Components

- Through Indigenous Peoples-focused coursework and programming, NAU students and employees will **gain knowledge and understanding of the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and Indigenous Peoples'** cultures, arts, contributions, self-determination, and traditional ways of knowing.
- NAU's enhanced strategies will **support enrollment, retention, and educational attainment** of Native American and other Indigenous students through community-based pre-college pathways and recruitment, culturally responsive programming and pedagogy, and dedicated campus environments that support the success of Indigenous students.
- NAU will **promote and support Indigenous community-driven research, scholarship, and creative activities** across disciplines.
- NAU will exercise best practices to equitably **recruit, retain, and support Indigenous faculty and staff** throughout the institution.
- In partnership with Native Nations and local communities, NAU will **support mutually beneficial community-driven partnerships, engagement, and service.**



Strategic Priority

Impactful Scholarship

NAU's teacher-scholars will engage in impactful research, scholarship, and creative activities to provide transformative learning opportunities, engage our diverse students and communities, advance disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, and contribute to solving problems of regional, national, and global relevance.

Components

- NAU will leverage the teacher-scholar model to **increase the number and diversity of students engaged in mentored research, scholarship, and creative activities** by broadening access to transformative learning opportunities.
- In partnership with local and regional communities, NAU will **engage in research and service activities** that promote and enhance quality of life, community engagement, and economic opportunity.
- NAU's areas of distinctive and emerging excellence in research will **advance knowledge and innovation to help solve issues of regional, national, and global relevance.**
- NAU will **support and recognize excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activities** that contribute to disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, with a focus on contributions that advance the university's mission.



Strategic Priority

Mission-Driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff

NAU will implement employment practices to support the recruitment, retention, development, and promotion of a highly qualified, mission-driven, diverse workforce. NAU's commitment to individuals from all racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, national origins, disabilities, age, veteran status, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientations, gender identities and expression, and lived experiences strengthens our institutional workforce culture that incorporates diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the pursuit of excellence and the promotion of student success.

Components

- NAU will **develop and implement equitable policies and practices** to enhance the recruitment, retention, professional development, and evaluation of highly qualified, mission-driven faculty and staff with diverse academic pursuits, experiences, and talents that support, enhance, and connect with the diversity of our student community.
- NAU will **support faculty and staff economic, physical, and mental well-being** to foster a healthy and fulfilled workforce and a mission-driven workplace.
- NAU will **foster a culture of shared responsibility** for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice-centered institutional practices to support our community in pursuit of excellence.
- NAU will **promote student success** with mission-driven faculty and staff collectively supporting the needs of all students through meaningful relationships and experiences, tailored support, accessible environments, and pedagogical excellence.



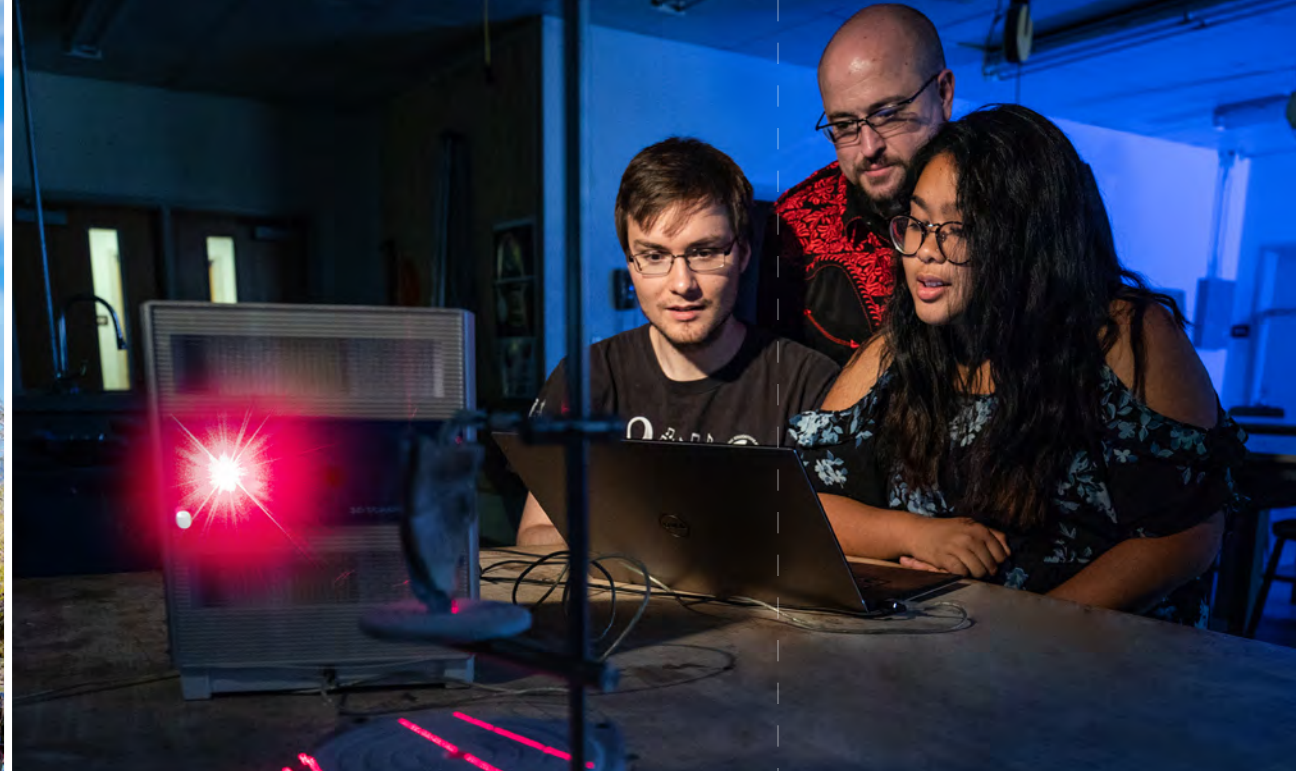
Strategic Priority

Community Engagement

NAU will engage locally, regionally, and globally with public and private partners to foster mutually beneficial relationships that enhance our students' educational experiences, contribute to broad social impact, and increase individual, communal, cultural, and economic vitality.

Components

- NAU will **enhance and celebrate its culture of community engagement** by building new and expanding existing mutually beneficial partnerships to promote civic responsibility, contribute to the public good, and advance knowledge and service throughout Arizona and beyond.
- NAU's academic programs, public service, applied research, and scholarly contributions will **have a beneficial economic and social impact in communities** across Arizona and beyond.
- NAU will **build a robust statewide network** for internships, teaching practicums, and clinical placements that prepare students for the workforce and support Arizona's businesses and communities.
- NAU will **increase and enhance alumni engagement and service**, facilitate opportunities for alumni leadership, and foster meaningful connections between alumni and students.
- NAU's Flagstaff campus will **serve as a regional cultural hub** through its rich arts and cultural experiences, athletic events, and scientific and technological activities to enhance community engagement and economic opportunity.



Strategic Priority

Sustainable Stewardship of Resources

NAU will effectively utilize our physical, technological, and financial resources in support of our vision and mission, with a commitment to the responsible use of environmental resources, innovative use of technology, and mission-driven financial investments and philanthropic activity.

Components

- NAU will **develop and implement a Sustainable Smart Campus Master Plan** that effectively reimagines how we utilize and continually improve our physical resources to optimally deliver all aspects of our mission within the context of our New NAU Workplace initiatives, a commitment to safety, and ongoing prioritization of exceptional student learning, service, and support.
- NAU will **develop and implement a Climate Action Plan** that responsibly achieves carbon neutral operations by 2030 and provides educational, research, and community engagement opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff.
- NAU will create an exceptional working and learning environment by **providing advanced technological infrastructure and service** to propel institutional advancement.
- NAU will **diversify revenue streams** to accelerate institutional priorities by advocating for public investments, partnering with public and private organizations, expanding our relationship with the NAU Foundation and other philanthropic organizations, and pursuing grants, contracts, and additional revenue streams.



Strategic Roadmap Facilitators

Strategic Roadmap Core Team Facilitators

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Academic Excellence

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Mission-Driven and Diverse Faculty and Staff

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Sustainable Stewardship of Resources

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Joseph Whitney
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NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1899, Northern Arizona University is a higher-research institution providing exceptional educational opportunities and outcomes in Arizona and beyond. NAU delivers a student-centered experience to its nearly 30,000 students in Flagstaff, statewide, and online through rigorous academic programs in a supportive, inclusive, and diverse environment. As a community-engaged engine of opportunity, NAU powers social impact and economic mobility for the students and communities it serves. The university's longstanding history of educating and partnering with diverse students and communities throughout Arizona is enhanced by its recent designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Dedicated, world-renowned faculty and staff help ensure students achieve academic excellence, experience personal growth, have meaningful research and experiential learning opportunities, and are positioned for personal and professional success. Located on the Colorado Plateau, in one of the highest-ranked college towns in the country, the NAU Flagstaff Mountain Campus is truly a jewel of the Southwest.

Land Acknowledgement

Northern Arizona University's Flagstaff Mountain Campus sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.