

October 17th, 2024

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Meeting notes:

- **Discussion with the President:** President Cruz Rivera
 - **Financial Position:** President Cruz Rivera emphasized that NAU is in its strongest financial position ever, with a positive net position and significant cash reserves. He mentioned that last year, NAU's costs were \$704 million, while revenue was \$713 million, resulting in a \$9 million surplus. NAU currently has about 175 days' worth of cash on hand, placing it among the top tier institutions in the U.S. for cash reserves.
 - **Bond Rating:** NAU has a great bond rating, which will facilitate financing for improving the quality of physical spaces at a good rate. This strong financial health is reflected in a holistic metric that shows NAU's financial health is stronger than ASU's when scaled appropriately.
 - **State Funding Cuts:** Despite the strong financial position, President Cruz Rivera highlighted the fragility of this position due to state funding cuts. He mentioned that the state actually cut funding this past year, and the sustainability of current practices will depend on future state funding decisions.
 - **Adaptation Strategies:** To adapt to the lack of state investment, NAU may need to do things differently. President Cruz Rivera mentioned that they are doing everything possible to convince the state to invest in NAU, but they are also preparing to adapt to the financial challenges posed by the state's lack of support.
 - **Enrollment and Retention:** President Cruz Rivera discussed the positive trends in enrollment and retention at NAU. He mentioned that first-year enrollments are healthy, and retention rates have increased by 4 percentage points over the last three years. Graduation rates have also improved, surpassing the 60% threshold for the first time.
 - **First-Year Enrollment:** President Cruz Rivera reported that first-year enrollments are healthy, despite the FAFSA issues this year. Over the last three years, NAU has seen a positive trend in first-year enrollments.
 - **Retention Rates:** Retention rates have increased by 4 percentage points over the last three years. This improvement is significant and reflects the university's focus on retention efforts.
 - **Graduation Rates:** NAU's graduation rates have improved, surpassing the 60% threshold for the first time, reaching 61%. President Cruz Rivera expressed a goal to reach a 75% graduation rate in the future.

- **Fundraising Success:** President Cruz Rivera shared the success of NAU's fundraising efforts, with \$121 million raised in the last three years. He announced an upcoming comprehensive fundraising campaign and the largest cash gift ever to NAU, which will be used for the naming of one of the colleges.
 - **Fundraising Achievements:** NAU has raised \$121 million in the last three years, marking the best three-year period in its history. This success is attributed to the excitement and support from the philanthropic community, alumni, and friends of the university.
 - **Upcoming Campaign:** President Cruz Rivera announced an upcoming comprehensive fundraising campaign with a goal of \$300 million. This campaign will be bolstered by the largest cash gift ever to NAU, which will be used for the naming of one of the colleges.
 - **National Reputation:** NAU's national reputation is on the rise, as evidenced by the significant fundraising achievements. However, there is still a challenge in gaining appreciation and recognition within the state.
- **Employee Retention:** President Cruz Rivera expressed pride in the improved employee retention rates at NAU. He noted that retention is at its highest levels since the university began recording it, indicating a positive work environment and culture.
 - **Retention Improvement:** President Cruz Rivera highlighted that employee retention rates at NAU are at their highest levels since the university began recording them. This improvement is a positive indicator of the work environment and culture at NAU.
 - **Work Environment:** The improved retention rates suggest that NAU has made significant strides in creating a positive work environment and culture. President Cruz Rivera emphasized the importance of structural and cultural changes to make NAU the best place to work and contribute.
- **Career Progression for Staff:** A question from a satellite location addressed the need for a career progression plan for staff. President Cruz Rivera confirmed that there will be communication from human resources soon regarding a new structure for staff career advancement.
- **Community Relations:** President Cruz Rivera discussed the improved relationship between NAU and the local community. He emphasized the importance of communication and engagement with the community, which has led to a more positive perception of NAU.
 - **Initial Challenges:** President Cruz Rivera shared that the initial relationship with the local community was tense, as he experienced during his interview process. However, through continuous conversations and engagement, NAU has been able to address and correct misinformation.

- **Community Engagement:** NAU has made significant efforts to engage with the local community, including opening up the campus during wildfires and encouraging volunteerism among staff. These efforts have contributed to a more positive perception of NAU in the community.
- **Positive Feedback:** President Cruz Rivera mentioned that the Arizona Daily Sun ran a series of articles where most candidates for elected office had positive things to say about NAU's relationship with the community. This positive feedback reflects the improved community relations.
- **HR Business Partners:** Nicole Christian and Tracy Kraemer, HR Business Partners. Find your business partner [here](#).
 - **Role of Business Partners:** Nicole discussed their responsibilities in supporting employees and supervisors, including performance management, policy interpretation, and employee rights.
 - **Performance Elevated:** Tracy provided an update on the Performance Elevated program, which aims to improve performance management at NAU. She highlighted the new performance appraisal cycle and the resources available to employees and supervisors for performance conversations.
- **Open Enrollment:** Christina Kuhl, Assistant Director in [Human Resources](#)
 - **Open Enrollment Period:** Christina announced that the open enrollment period for benefits at NAU will be held from October 28th through November 15th. This is the yearly opportunity for employees to change their benefits without a qualifying life event.
 - **Changes to Plans:** Christina outlined the changes to the medical, dental, and vision plans. For example, the NAU Blue Cross Blue Shield plan will see an increase in employee premiums, deductibles, and co-pays. However, the out-of-pocket maximum will remain the same.
 - **Enrollment Process:** Employees can enroll in benefits through the Louie system by selecting the benefits tile and updating their elections. Christina emphasized the importance of reviewing and updating healthcare savings account contributions due to changes in deductibles.
- **Digitization Project:** Nix Mendy, Research Coordinator with [Cline Library Special Collections and Archives](#)
 - **Digitizing Moving Images:** Nix discussed the NEH grant project focused on digitizing moving images of the Colorado Plateau. They highlighted the challenges and opportunities of the project, including the lack of audio-visual expertise and the need for better documentation and preservation of films.