Northern Arizona University 2007 Self-study Executive Summary
For continued accreditation by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

“Universities are entering a period of revolutionary change that will restructure nearly everything we do. Not only can we not rest on our accomplishments, but we must rethink some of the very strategies and ideals that brought us to this point, preserve those parts of our tradition still viable, and begin to sharpen our mission and focus.”

—John D. Haeger, President, Inauguration Speech, September 6, 2002

Introduction

Since Northern Arizona University’s last North Central Association Self-study in 1997, the world has undergone tremendous change. Instant communication, new technologies, advances in medicine, internationalized business, and shifts in demographics are transforming societies at a global level. This period of unprecedented change requires new ways of thinking and problem-solving that are at once individual and collective in nature—often transcending long-standing, traditional boundaries. *This time in history, sometimes dubbed “the knowledge age,” presents unprecedented challenges and opportunities for higher education.*

Like universities across the country, Northern Arizona University is rethinking and reformulating its strategic direction in response to this rapid pace of change. Recognizing that the key to meeting challenges is innovation in education, the University is keeping pace by aligning its infrastructure to match its mission, and by developing policies and practices to support change. Conserving its dedication to stewardship and accountability in creating learning environments, the University community encourages a model of innovation to improve education, to help stimulate economic development, and to address social issues and needs.

This Executive Summary provides highlights of the University’s Self-study Report, which was submitted for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The full report is available at nau.edu/accreditation.
OVERVIEW
Northern Arizona University is a comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university that has a continuing commitment to professional programs including those in education, the health professions, environmental sciences, sustainable technologies, business, hospitality, and selected areas of the bio-sciences. The University is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a large, comprehensive, doctoral, high undergraduate, primarily residential university with a high level of research activity.

AN INCLUSIVE SELF-STUDY PROCESS
Northern Arizona University’s Self-study process was formally launched in April 2005. Since that time, representatives from across campus have been gathering evidence to support continued accreditation and inform the University’s many constituents of accomplishments and capacities for future performance. The process chronicles the University’s journey over the past ten years and demonstrates how its diverse mission serves as its greatest strength.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 1997
- Grew research expenditures to over $50M annually
- Increased ethnic minority enrollment to 24% of total enrollment
- Reorganized to support enrollment growth and academic programs
- Increased Distance Learning enrollment by 60%, offering over 65 programs
- Strengthened focus on student learning outcomes

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1997
During the past decade, American universities have had to respond to growing competition, changing constituency needs, and demands for greater accountability. Public universities did this while meeting increasing costs and decreasing appropriations. In response, Northern Arizona University has established an infrastructure that more strongly aligns actions with outcomes to better respond to emerging trends. Changes in leadership and newly established foundational practices provide continuity that fosters inclusion, collaboration, and viability.

Some of the most significant changes include the following:
- Reorganized leadership for greater effectiveness in operations and services
- Developed a new comprehensive program to assess student learning outcomes
- Fostered and promoted an environment of diversity for faculty, staff, and students
• Implemented an inclusive strategic planning process aligned with budgeting and accountability measures
• Created new administrative positions in research and international initiatives to address new opportunities in emerging technologies and global outreach
• Implemented new and emerging technologies for more effective teaching and learning
• Increased degree program offerings reflective of emerging trends in workforce development both on and off campus
• Expanded Distance Learning to allow for greater student access to higher education
• Increased public awareness through comprehensive marketing and communications efforts
• Constructed new and renovated state-of-the-art facilities to provide the most sophisticated teaching and learning environments
• Created a new general education program (Liberal Studies) to provide students with essential skills and knowledge to participate in and contribute to a global and dynamic world
• Engaged in innovative collaborations and partnerships that are both socially and economically successful
• Developed new hiring and professional development strategies to address compensation and provide greater opportunities for faculty and staff growth
• Improved faculty and staff salaries
• Created the Gateway Student Success Center to strengthen advisement for first-year students
• Increased enrollment and student services to better facilitate student success

FAST FACTS

Founded in 1899
20,500 undergraduate and graduate students
37 statewide locations
95 baccalaureate degree programs
47 master degree programs
8 doctoral degree programs
18 accredited professional degree programs
**Criterion One: MISSION AND INTEGRITY**

**CRITERION 1:** Northern Arizona University operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involved the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

The integrity of Northern Arizona University functions is grounded in policies established by the Arizona Board of Regents and executed through established University structures and practices. The University’s mission, inclusive strategic planning and budgeting process, and representative involvement in cross-functional groups (both internal and external) demonstrate the University’s maturation in executing its vision, mission, values, and goals across constituencies.

**Steps for Continuous Improvement**

1. Ensure attention is given to planning and balancing the University’s mission on the Flagstaff campus and throughout the state.

   **PROGRESS:**
   
   • Northern Arizona University received more than $4 million in 2006–2007 to expand health professions both on the Flagstaff campus and via statewide locations.
   
   • Northern Arizona University hired a new Associate Vice President and Campus Executive Officer for Yuma—establishing a branch campus to respond to community needs.

2. Ensure attention is given to updating and aligning the University’s publicly articulated mission documents throughout the organization and across constituencies.

   **PROGRESS:**
   
   • The Conditions of Faculty Service document has been revised extensively by the administration and the Faculty Senate.
   
   • New Web resources associated with the University Web site offer a new way to build continuity within units and across departments—enhancing awareness and communications.

3. Ensure the University enhances its integrity by improving its ability to provide transparent and accountable reporting to students and the public.

   **PROGRESS:**
   
   • The new strategic plan embeds accountability into goals and initiatives and tracks performance through explicit accountability measures.
   
   • Improved administrative software and data warehousing allow much greater capabilities for reporting and updating information on the University’s Web site.

In fall 2006, the Associated Students of Northern Arizona University (ASNAU) described the University in this manner: “Northern Arizona University has a mission that is internalized in the mindset of students that participated in the education of a Lumberjack. This mission is that the student is an individual and not a number. The administration, faculty, and staff of Northern Arizona University believe and adhere to this principle. Northern Arizona University prides itself on small class sizes; accessibility to members of administration, faculty, and staff; and individualized educational attention to the needs of students.”

*Source: Arizona Students’ Association Statewide Student Tuition Proposal, p. 16*
CRITERION 2: Northern Arizona University’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Northern Arizona University is well positioned to meet the social and economic demands of Arizona’s growing population. The University is staking a pathway to the future that will allow it to be more entrepreneurial in its endeavors to serve state and global communities through learning, discovery, and service. The University’s robust strategic and budget planning process systematically involves campus leaders, employees, students, and other stakeholders in developing goals and priorities.

Steps for Continuous Improvement
1. Extend strategic and budget planning cycles to lower levels within the University.
   
   **PROGRESS:**
   - Division strategic plans were integrated into the 2005-2006 planning and budgeting cycle.
   - In 2006-2007, the University adopted a standard format for division strategic plans that more closely corresponds to the format of the University’s overarching plan.

2. Identify and implement metrics to measure progress on strategic goals on an ongoing basis. Over time, the University will develop metrics for all goals.
   
   **PROGRESS:**
   - The strategic plan links goals to initiatives and metrics.
   - In 2006-2007, division strategic plans include metrics to gauge progress toward goals.

3. Increase the links between strategic planning and performance goals for University leadership and provide associated evaluation guidelines.
   
   **PROGRESS:**
   - Division vice presidents and high-level leaders within divisions now have performance goals.
   - In 2007, leadership evaluations will consider progress towards performance goals.

4. Track investments and their effects to enhance accountability and achievement of goals.
   
   **PROGRESS:**
   - Starting in fiscal year 2007, strategic investments will be tracked.
   - Annual reports of accomplishments and outcomes will be expected.
CRITERION 3: Northern Arizona University provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

At Northern Arizona University, the educational experience is enhanced by integrated teaching and learning practices that foster learning, discovery, and engagement. The University is continually improving its programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels to serve its constituencies and prepare students for the future. The quality of these programs, illustrated by student outcomes and assessment data, fulfills the University's mission. Faculty development and support for research-focused teaching and learning combined with dynamic co-curricular programs, programs designed for diverse learners, and multiple academic support services illustrate how the University nurtures achievement and success for all learners.

Steps for Continuous Improvement

1. Ensure more systematic use of assessment for curricular improvement.
   **PROGRESS:**
   - Curriculum change proposals include reports of relevant assessment findings.
   - Curriculum committee workshops involve faculty in focused dialogues about curriculum and assessment.
   - Closing the “assessment loop” is a top priority for the Office of Academic Assessment and University Assessment Committee.

2. Expand academic support to students in gateway courses and improve student success in courses that have historically shown high rates of failure and attrition.
   **PROGRESS:**
   - The University expanded its Supplemental Instruction program in 2006 with additional expansion scheduled for 2007.
   - The Class Linked Academic Support program launched in 2006, providing leadership for expanding academic support and improving student outcomes.
   - Class Linked Academic Support is collaborating with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics to develop a model of course-based academic support for entry-level mathematics courses.

3. Strengthen academic advisement for students at risk or in transition.
   **PROGRESS:**
   - The University is piloting the use of the Student Readiness Inventory to identify and respond to students likely to benefit from particular services.
   - The Rapid Alert Program tracks students’ academic performance in high D-failure-withdrawal courses and intervenes to offer assistance.
4. Expand learning communities to cultivate greater student engagement and synergy between curricular and co-curricular learning.

**PROGRESS:**
- Expansion of learning communities is a top priority for Residence Life.
- A Learning Community Advisory Council was established in 2006.
- A plan for expansion of living learning communities sets a goal of 800 resident participants for fall 2007.
- Increased collaboration with faculty and academic leaders has supported the enrichment of learning community programming.

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<tr>
<th>Graduation Rates</th>
<th>Educational Trust Similar Peers List</th>
<th>NAU Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-Yr Graduation Rate (FTFT Cohort)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-Yr Graduation Rate (FTFT Cohort)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-Yr Graduation Rate (LD Transfers)</td>
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<td>56%</td>
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<td>4-Yr Graduation Rate (UD Transfers)</td>
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<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
<th>Educational Trust Similar Peers List</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-Year Retention Rate (FTFT Cohort)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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*Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2005-06

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<tr>
<th>Graduating Senior Survey Satisfaction Results</th>
<th>Percentage of Satisfied Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Overall Experience: 53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>NAU Faculty/Quality of Instruction: 51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Preparation For a Career: 76%</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Academic Advising: Major: 73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Academic Advising: Lower-Division: 72%</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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Criterion Four: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

CRITERION 4: Northern Arizona University promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

The complex issues facing today’s societies require creative thought and practice, while effective solutions are often realized through broad and varied collaborations. Learning and discovery are at the heart of Northern Arizona University’s mission and are the most salient commitments of its faculty and staff. The University’s rich history and culture demonstrate that it values life-long learning and supports inquiry, creativity, and practice for students, faculty, and staff.

Steps for Continuous Improvement

1. The University continues to increase utilization of assessment results for continuous improvement. Recent changes in University curriculum requirements create further opportunities for assessment of student learning.
   PROGRESS:
   • Curriculum change proposals include reports of relevant assessment findings.
   • The Liberal Studies Review Committee has embraced a multi-pronged strategy for program assessment, including using the Collegiate Learning Assessment.
   • The new first-year seminar program will be launched in Fall 2007.
   • Academic program reviews incorporate study of assessment plans and results.

2. The University continues enhancement of research and graduate education by raising the individual profiles of each endeavor, by revitalizing the Intellectual Property Committee to meet policy standards, and by moving forward to implement the recommendations of the Research and Graduate Education Task Force.
   PROGRESS:
   • The Research and Graduate Education Task Force conducted a study of research and graduate education at Northern Arizona University and has recommended that the University focus research on four key areas that align with the mission.
   • The University has invested over $90 million in the research infrastructure over the last six years.
   • The University garners more than $53 million in external funds to support research, instruction, and public service.
   • Leadership for research and graduate education will be provided by a Vice President for Research and a Graduate Dean.
CRITERION 5: As called for by its mission, Northern Arizona University identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways that both value.

The future of higher education lies in the ability to act as “Stewards of Place” to understand and respond to constituency needs. Further, those understandings must translate into actions that enrich program and research efforts, allow for the inclusion of others, and maximize resources and talent to ultimately produce solutions.

Steps for Continuous Improvement

1. The Arizona Redesign of Higher Education estimates that an additional 15,000 student will need access to higher education via Distance Learning in the next few years.

   PROGRESS:
   • Numerous relationships have been forged or reaffirmed with community college partners. The recent Memoranda of Understanding with Maricopa Community and Yavapai Colleges are examples of how the University is collaborating to serve a growing student population.
   • Under the direction of the new Associate Vice President and Campus Executive Officer, the Yuma branch campus is planning changes to better serve the lower Colorado River region.

2. The University has undergone extensive internal leadership changes to reinforce and improve community engagement and dialogue.

   PROGRESS:
   • Vice presidents of Extended Learning and Advancement and other University leaders promote engagement with constituencies.
   • The Director of Community Relations has expanded University and community events and dialogue.

3. Northern Arizona University has deepened its commitment to stewardship and partnerships to benefit the region and its communities.

   PROGRESS:
   • University leadership is actively involved in statewide efforts to improve P-12 education through service on the Governor’s P-20 Council, the State Board of Education, and the Committee for Teacher Quality and Support.
   • The University plans to expand programs in the health professions and sciences.
   • The growth of environmental research and educational programs addresses regional environmental problems and promotes sustainable technologies and practices for community development.
Conclusion

THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
Since the last NCA Self-study, the world has undergone tremendous change. This is an exciting time of instant communication and heightened global awareness. It is also a time of challenges and opportunities that are at once individual and collective with far-reaching implications. Northern Arizona University evolved in this new era as a dynamic learning community prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. By its very mission, the University has been able to implement stronger governance and administrative structures, better leverage assets, and promote the effective leadership, inclusion, and collaborations necessary to advance the University mission in a changing world.

In the future, Northern Arizona University will:

• Employ an “enterprise” model of action that combines mission with innovation to educate, spur economic development, ensure institutional viability, and foster successful partnerships that will manage change and shape the future.
• Expand its research mission to develop solutions and actions that serve the public good via new ventures and partnerships, and to strengthen the foundation of curriculum and learning.
• Provide Arizona’s growing population with access to a higher education through a multi-campus university where existing and new sites will combine high-tech with high-touch for greater student-centric learning.
• Expand programs and services to increase accessibility and opportunity for students who need more flexibility, and to eliminate barriers to achieving a higher education.
• Use strong accountability measures at all levels of functionality through a sophisticated strategic planning process that charts a well-conceived strategic course.
• Place increased emphasis on student retention and graduation rates through assessment and intervention strategies that ensure positive student outcomes.
• Be a leader in educating teachers, engineers, and health care professionals to meet workforce development needs in Arizona and elsewhere.
• Strengthen its service and commitment to Native American students and their communities.
• Support an environment of inclusion where diversity initiatives promote understanding and opportunities, and serve as a model for other universities.
• Execute international initiatives that build relationships and ensure its place as a global partner and player in education, research, and service.
• Fulfill its obligation as “Stewards of Place” by working with community representatives in education, service, and through entrepreneurial acts of engagement.
• Maximize resources to support the mission, increase the quality of the Northern Arizona University experience, and sustain the viability of the University.
• Support a campus culture that stimulates creativity, encourages professional development, and recognizes and awards achievements.