



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
Dr. José Luis Cruz Rivera

October 12th, 2023

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)  
2401 Walnut Street  
Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Sustainability Colleagues,

RE: AASHE STARS Reporting for Northern Arizona University

On behalf of Northern Arizona University (NAU) I am pleased to submit our institution's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) report to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). We are thrilled to share the outcomes of our recent efforts and what has been a watershed year for sustainability at NAU. Starting in January 2023, I appointed our inaugural Chief Sustainability Officer, elevated the capacity of the office of sustainability, and provided significant seed funding to support our efforts.

Through our strategic plan, *NAU 2025 – Elevating Excellence*, NAU strives to “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.” We are unwavering in our environmental stewardship, adoption of sustainable practices, use of high-impact teaching and research, and commitment to Indigenous Peoples—all of which contribute to the robust culture of sustainability throughout our university community. Participation in AASHE STARS reporting enables us to evaluate our advancements, identify areas for enhancement, and align ourselves with AASHE's recognized best practices and benchmarks. Our NAU team diligently compiled the requisite data and documentation for each section of the STARS assessment to provide an accurate and comprehensive reporting of our sustainability initiatives, programs, policies, and performance measures.

Over the last two years, NAU has taken significant steps to address the climate crisis, including the declaration of a climate emergency and a resolute commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Building on our rich legacy of climate research, environmental and social justice academic programs, and a record of innovation and leadership in driving climate and sustainability solutions, we are dedicated to expanding the impact of sustainability practices at our university and beyond.

Acknowledging the immense scope of the climate crisis, we recognize that inaction is unacceptable. Each individual is exposed to the consequences of climate disruption and environmental injustices. Thus, our pledge is rooted in pragmatic realism, demanding a resolute institution-wide commitment, allocation of appropriate resources, and the courage to confront formidable challenges head-on to achieve success.

In January 2023, Dr. Erik Nielsen joined NAU's leadership team as our inaugural Chief Sustainability Officer. Dr. Nielsen leads a core team in the Office of Sustainability, chairs the University Sustainability Advisory Board, and facilitates collaboration across divisions. This enables us to make deliberate strides toward carbon neutrality through teaching, research, infrastructure improvements, operational investments, and policy changes—all of which are cohesive and directed toward realizing our 2030 carbon neutrality goals. To further support these endeavors, we recently hired a Sustainability Data Analyst, an Energy/Water Manager, and a Conservation Behavior Program Coordinator. To support the implementation of our Climate Action Plan, a Green Seed Investment Fund was established, with an initial \$500,000 budget to be invested in priority energy efficiency measures supported by the University Sustainability Advisory Board. This fund seeks to leverage existing funding, external grants, and student Green Fund Investments to maximize its impact.

We extend our gratitude to AASHE for establishing and maintaining the STARS reporting framework, as well as for the invaluable support provided throughout the reporting process. Additionally, we express our appreciation to the entire AASHE community for their unwavering commitment to sustainability and their relentless pursuit of positive change in higher education.

Thank you for considering our submission, and we eagerly anticipate the results of our STARS assessment. Should you require any additional information or have any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [President@nau.edu](mailto:President@nau.edu).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JL Cruz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

José Luis Cruz Rivera, Ph.D.  
President