

U.S. HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
Christy Farley, Vice President, Government Affairs and Business Partnerships
Northern Arizona University
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and invited guests:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the work of Arizona's universities and our very real connection to economic and workforce development.

Since its modest beginning with 23 students in 1899, Northern Arizona University has grown to more than 26,600 students attending four major campuses and 29 education sites throughout Arizona.

NAU's main campus in Flagstaff positively impacts the northern Arizona community in incalculable ways. The university is the area's largest employer, providing good-paying jobs to individuals who have made Flagstaff and the surrounding area their home. Our faculty and staff are truly an engaged part of the community, purchasing goods and services, paying taxes, serving on community boards and volunteering.

Institutionally, NAU is a significant partner engaging in extensive enterprises that address community and statewide needs. The award-winning High Country Conference Center is a public-private partnership among NAU, the city of Flagstaff and Drury Hotels; genomics research has achieved international recognition with the Keim Lab and TGen North; a new MOU with Flagstaff Medical Center facilitates research on infectious diseases and population health; local, state and federal governments work with NAU experts on land management and forest health; and the university partners with local entrepreneurs for small-business opportunities.

Of course, NAU's foremost mission is to provide our students with an outstanding undergraduate residential education strengthened by research, graduate and professional programs, and sophisticated methods of distance delivery. Choices abound in higher education, with students deciding not just where to go but how to matriculate: in a traditional campus setting, online, in hybrid courses or at branch campuses. Northern Arizona University offers all of these options and more, reaffirming our dedication to quality, affordable education.

Statewide education is delivered through innovative models on three campuses, NAU-Yuma, NAU-Yavapai and the Phoenix Biomedical Campus in partnership with the University of Arizona. NAU also utilizes 29 community campuses, primarily in partnerships with community colleges, online education and our new Personalized Learning Initiative. All of NAU's options provide opportunities for individuals who can't take advantage of a traditional on-campus college experience.

NAU's Personalized Learning is a progressive higher-education model that we began in late spring 2013. It features a competency-based curriculum that is geared for adult learners in particular. Prior learning competencies are assessed and credits awarded. Faculty mentors from the specific fields of study contact students at least weekly to help guide learning. Assessments are measured through rigorous testing that includes writing-intensive projects and at least one

presentation. Credits are accumulated based on a student's demonstration of competencies rather than seat time. Personalized Learning is high-tech and high touch.

The cost for a Personalized Learning program is \$2,500 per six-month segment with individual students demonstrating competencies as quickly or slowly as they are comfortable. The distinctive concept challenged accrediting and government agencies at first, but the program's demonstrated quality and financial-aid challenges were overcome in summer 2013. Currently Northern Arizona University's Personalized Learning Program has 122 active paid students, 63 of whom are utilizing financial aid. Of these, 44 have Pell Grants, 26 have loans of more than \$2,500, 15 have loans of less than \$2,500 and the total amount awarded to date is \$420,756.

Three specific degree programs—Computer Information Technology, Small Business Administration and General Liberal Studies—follow the themes we hear from the business community and employers, who want employees who can adapt, communicate, think creatively, and are self-starters and self-learners. Personalized Learning is dynamic and adaptable, responsive to workforce demands. There are no “legacy” programs or deep university history ties. NAU is teaching students how to continuously adapt to their changing workplace, advance and help their employers advance.

Also answering employer demands is Northern Arizona University's partnership at the Phoenix Biomedical Campus, which began seven years ago when NAU embarked on a new initiative to help meet the needs of a local and national shortage of healthcare professionals. While all the Arizona universities and community colleges were addressing nursing shortages and the University of Arizona was expanding its College of Medicine, NAU offered the only public physical therapy program in Arizona.

NAU heard from Arizona healthcare providers regarding the need for additional allied health programs. NAU joined the University of Arizona on the Phoenix Biomedical Campus to educate students in three allied health fields in an interdisciplinary education model, which include Physician's Assistant, Physical Therapy and soon Occupational Therapy.

NAU operates in collaboration with the College of Medicine-Phoenix sharing space, faculty and some of the same courses to train doctors, physician assistants and physical therapists in interdisciplinary teams creating team-based case management and patient support. NAU's graduates in the allied health fields are sure to secure high wage jobs and fill the state's needs.

Enrollment trajectory for NAU's programs at the downtown Phoenix campus is from 49 current students to 355 students in six years.

It's an exciting era in higher education and at Northern Arizona University. Through innovative thinking, creative use of technology and old-fashioned hard work, NAU will continue to offer pathways for Arizona citizens and well-qualified graduates for Arizona employers.

Thank you.