

EMBARGOED UNTILL 10AM THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2004

PROMINENT GROUP OF ARIZONA LEADERS FORMALLY PROPOSE ALTERNATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

(July 29, 2004) A prominent group of civic, educational, and elected leaders announced today their collective recommendations to redesign the Arizona university system in an effort to better serve students and the state of Arizona in the 21st century. The diverse group of co-authors includes former governors, several former regents, university presidents, legislators, and university alumni. The proposal comes in response to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) request for community input regarding structural and organizational alternatives designed to enhance the university system already in place.

"We sincerely appreciate the Arizona Board of Regents' willingness to consider alternative recommendations in this process," said Dr. Gene Hughes, who is also President Emeritus for Northern Arizona University and Wichita State University. "We have had a system in place that has served our state well for many years, and we are pleased with ABOR's desire to respond to rapid changes in socioeconomic conditions, population and the student body in order to best prepare for Arizona's future."

The proposal, which was submitted July 29th, stressed the strong synergies shared by Arizona State University and the University of Arizona as research extensive institutions centered in the two most populated areas of the state. However, the community leaders comprised of diverse political and professional backgrounds recommended the establishment of a new and independent board of trustees to oversee a new model of universities in Arizona. The recommended model is more reflective of systems such as Pennsylvania's, in which NAU would serve as the focal point (and a research intensive main campus) for a series of campuses and potential future institutions similar to the Penn State model, while ASU West could fulfill the role of a growing metropolitan institution.

"As the former President of NAU, I believe that it is time for NAU to take on a much larger role in the state of Arizona. This recommendation recognizes that NAU is prepared to lead a series of campuses around the state to best serve Arizona in the 21st century," said Clara Lovett, President Emerita of NAU and current President of the American Association for Higher Education.

The document outlines a strategy where NAU, and presumably ASU West, are able to be advanced independently and distinguished from ASU and UofA. Rhian Evans, Vice President of the NAU Alumni Association and former student regent, said: "An independent board of trustees will ensure that the vital roles of institutions beyond ASU and UofA are appropriately recognized and rewarded."

The idea of multiple boards is not new to higher education or the public policy debate in Arizona. "This is an idea whose time has come for Arizona," said Eddie Basha. He went on to say, "An independent board of trustees could focus tremendous time and energy on fostering a statewide higher education system that is second to none, and is responsive to Arizona's significant socioeconomic change."

Many state leaders over the last decade recognize the potential need for the redesign of the higher education governance structure. In the words of Fife Symington, "As a former governor, I and other state leaders have previously considered alternative models to the current higher education governance structure. The process initiated by the

Board of Regents should be commended because it is allowing a politically diverse group of education, business, and community leaders to offer a serious proposal that will better utilize the strengths of our current state's higher education system for decades to come." Symington went on to say, "As Arizona matures as a state it essential to allow institutions like NAU to assume increased roles and responsibilities that are more reflective of their current strengths, and this can be best accomplished with an alternative governance structure."

[COPY OF PROPOSAL ATTACHED]

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“The West deserves a society as great as its scenery.”
Wallace Stegner

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Dear Dr. Waits:

On June 3, 2004 the Arizona Board of Regents initiated a process to explore the question of how Arizona can be best served by its university (ABOR) system in the future. This current review, like its most recent predecessor from 1993, is driven by the expectation that demand for undergraduate and graduate education will increase dramatically during the next two decades. While a simple review of population and demographic statistics provides a snapshot of what the future student body might look like, **a thorough needs assessment (demographic and geographic profile of the future student body, anticipated preparedness levels, state educational needs, etc.) needs to be completed.** The regents have appropriately initiated this process, and obviously the findings of your work should inform subsequent discussions about how future demand for four-year degrees can and should be accommodated.

In opening the dialogue, the regents asked that they be presented with structural and organizational alternatives for their deliberations. In that spirit, the following plan is offered as an alternative to insure that:

- future enrollment and access demands are accommodated,
- quality undergraduate education is appropriately valued and rewarded,
- graduate education is readily available to Arizonans,
- access to premiere national institutions is maintained,
- valuable research endeavors are facilitated,
- scarce state resources are maximized,
- economic development and wealth creation is a “border-to-border” endeavor,
- partnerships with community colleges and K-12 are nurtured and expanded,
- Arizona is better prepared to meet the higher education demands of the future,
- governance of the higher education system reflects Arizona in the 21st century.

At the heart of any review of structure and organization should be an analysis of the governance structure. The initial proposal that kicked off this endeavor directly contemplates a substantial alteration of the current governance structure. **However, the initial proposals are bound by the existing paradigm of governance for universities in the state of Arizona. This paradigm was created in 1966, appropriately so, after the historical role of Northern Arizona University was elevated to full university status.**

Arizona, along with its universities, socioeconomic makeup and market demands has changed dramatically since 1966. While exploring many important issues, the initial proposals are ultimately constrained by the fact that the focus is on specific institutional roles within a 1966 structure, and in some cases would unfortunately duplicate the current efforts of the community

colleges -- rather than complement and build upon their strengths. **As demonstrated in 1966, as well as in other previous major reforms, Arizona has a positive history of making substantial changes in its higher educational system to accommodate changing populations and economies.**

In initiating the process, the Board of Regents recognized the differentiation and focus between the missions of the state's current public universities, and in particular the fundamentally different missions of the two research extensive institutions. **The single most effective way to insure mission delineation and focus is to formally separate the institutions and have them governed accordingly.** This kind of alternative governance structure has in recent times been contemplated by regents, the state legislature, business community leaders, and former Arizona governors. Now, with this process and the chance to review our past and contemplate the future of higher education, we can achieve fundamental change.

Arizona State University and the University of Arizona have similar missions. They are both research extensive institutions centered in the major metropolitan centers of the state. Both have considerable similarities in focus, ambition, extracurricular activities, economic impact, undergraduate and graduate portfolio, and these two research driven institutions should continue to be governed by the current board (ABOR) structure.

Northern Arizona University and ASU West (particularly if it is given independent university status) are distinctly different institutions from ASU and Uof A, with missions that focus on servicing the educational and community needs of the state first -- as opposed to a research extensive agenda. Both of these institutions (assuming ASU West is separated from ASU) could be better served by a new and independent board of trustees.

- For Northern Arizona University this means providing a premiere undergraduate education with excellence in research, economic development, and graduate education in selected areas, not only in Flagstaff but throughout the state in conjunction with local community colleges. NAU's targeted research portfolio often draws international attention. The roots of these areas of excellence in research, economic development, and scholarship, however, are often an outgrowth of "local" needs and concerns – thus providing significant opportunities for collaboration with other educational, state, and local entities.
- For ASU West this means a community-focused metropolitan campus that provides access to a quality liberal arts education for undergraduates, professional programs grounded in the liberal arts, and an array of graduate programs. In addition, ASU West has the beginnings of a targeted research portfolio, with a focus on community collaboration.
- Both institutions are committed to an ethic of service, and are prepared to service not only a growing student population but also a changing and diversifying student population. Each is uniquely positioned to address the state's critical needs for providing access to baccalaureate education to currently underserved communities.

Under this newly proposed structure, a newly created, independent board of trustees would be responsible for governing and advocating for Northern Arizona University, ASU West and future non-research extensive institutions.

- The NAU-Flagstaff campus would serve as the hub for NAU’s new statewide university level educational system (examples of this model include systems in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Maryland among others). Under the stewardship of NAU, the new board of trustees could focus on making policy decisions about whether NAU sites should evolve into centers, which in turn might evolve into campuses, such as NAU-Yuma and UA South, or a fully functional, separate university as with ASU West. Sites, centers, and campuses throughout the state would carry NAU’s name -- one university, geographically distributed. These campuses might ultimately become independent institutions reporting directly to the new board of trustees, along with ASU West and NAU, when appropriate operational and educational mass is achieved. A significant outcome of this model is the flexibility created for the State of Arizona to more effectively and efficiently “ramp up” or down to meet future population and demographic changes.
- **Under the direction of a focused board of trustees, the NAU partnership model would offer a robust set of undergraduate and graduate degree offerings with on-site, full-time faculty in co-located facilities with community colleges.** These sites could be built in anticipation of future growth, much like ASU West and ASU East were constructed, or they could evolve with demand as occurred in Yuma and with Arizona Western College.
- NAU would work with the state to build on the Flagstaff Campus’s current strengths and dramatically expand and enhance its partnerships, through numerous 2+2 programs offered on site in local communities. These partnerships throughout the state of Arizona would vary in size and scope, depending on demand. With the support of the governor, the state legislature, and direct partnerships with local community colleges, NAU could efficiently expand the NAU-Yuma model to other key locations within the state and assume responsibility for the UA South operation.
- **As an independent institution reporting directly to the board of trustees, ASU West will be able to sharpen its focus on promoting discovery and innovation; pursuing new knowledge; introducing insights and creative ideas through instruction; encouraging direct involvement in new fields of inquiry; investigating important community-based issues; and integrating with the community through service based on scholarship.**
- ASU West would continue to focus on its mission and commitment to the value of education without borders, and the idea that learning transcends fields of study, geography, and the age of students. ASU West will be better able to focus on developing a learning community that addresses the needs of a diverse metropolitan environment where learner-centered academic programs are offered, enhancing learning through teaching, service, and enrichment opportunities.

- Under a separate board of trustees, ASU West will not only be allowed to evolve and mature as an institution, but also will be encouraged to do so as a university. With direct reporting to a board of trustees, the hopes, ambitions and needs of ASU West alumni, students, staff, faculty business and community leaders would be better served and would be a primary focus of that board. As such, both ASU West and the state would be better equipped to provide access to programs defined by the traditions of liberal education that respond to shifting demographics, changing social needs, and the dynamics of employment and market requirements.
- Under the leadership of the new trustees, a review of the “needs assessment” currently engaged by the Board of Regents should be used to immediately identify where campuses may be needed to accommodate future growth. **The trustees would then need to work with the state legislature and governor, using current (NAU and the community colleges) and new resources (from the state) to create additional campuses beyond the current Yuma region (NAU-Yuma) and the proposed transfer of Cochise/Graham/Greenlee region (UA South) to the NAU system, and look to establishing new campuses in the Yavapai region, Mohave region, White Mountains region, and Pinal region.** An important outgrowth of this process will likely be a defining of the necessary “basic” higher education package for a community -- and how that can be tailored to fulfill the educational, research, and economic development needs as identified by the local community college and broader community.

The ability of the board of trustees to focus on the link to community colleges, through the NAU system, is ultimately very important for the state, as the trustees becomes the first body to concern itself with the entire higher educational landscape. As such, the trustees will be able to explore ways in which to capitalize on retention successes in lower division coursework at community colleges, and how community college expertise in developing and expanding diversity within higher education can be translated to the university setting. In addition, important higher education policy questions like joint admissions and timely, community-tailored curriculum development will not have to take the back seat to other issues and will be able to be addressed. Finally, a board of trustees focused on a system of higher education (rather than just universities) will enable NAU and community colleges to focus their attention on issues like developing and engaging in entrepreneurial partnerships for the delivery of upper division course work and identifying opportunities for the creation and placement of local research centers, as opposed to worrying about who might be encroaching on whose turf.

A realignment of universities under a new board of trustees creates a number of operating and presentation questions. Although the body and structure of the university is paramount, institutional names are extremely important and will likely be part of the dialogue in the near future. The issue, however, is appropriately resolved independently of this restructuring proposal. Future discussion of such a decision should be driven by the many stakeholders invested in the matter including alumni, faculty, staff, students, community, and legislators. Such an examination should be informed by the experience of other institutions that have already undertaken the task, and should at a minimum include the following elements: identity and heritage, position and reputation within higher education, perception within the state of Arizona and nationally, branding, and nomenclature (particularly as it relates to a proposed framework that includes a statewide branch-university system).

With a recommendation for a new board of trustees comes the responsibility for offering an alternative on how that board might be fashioned. The primary key to answering this question should be found in examining the mission of the new system. **As such, the board would need to have broad representation—perhaps 13 members, including the governor, chair of the Community College Presidents Council, chair of the Joint Meeting of the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, a student (rotated annually), a faculty member (rotated annually), and eight six-year appointments (with no more than two individuals from any single county, no more than four individuals from the same political party, at least two who serves/d as a member of an educational governing board, and at least four who are alumni from institutions under the jurisdiction of board of trustees).** The presidents, campus executive directors (or whatever title the campus leader may hold) and a representative from the classified and professional staff should serve as non-voting *ex officio* members.

In conclusion, the Arizona Board of Regents has initiated a very important process that opens a dialogue intended to provide the best possible university system for Arizona citizens. However, care should be taken to insure that the process gives full consideration to the best structure for our entire higher education system, and avoid being artificially constrained by a box that was created in 1966 for a state that (as the regents have appropriately pointed out) was vastly different from what we have today – much less what we expect in the future.

As we look forward to where we may be headed, it is also appropriate to look back at our journey. Flagstaff historian Platt Cline may have said it best in his book, *Mountain Campus Centennial*, **“As the junior of the three institutions and distant from the major centers of population and votes, more often than not [NAU] was looked upon by legislators and other officials as a poor relation. Only through the foresight and determined efforts of Flagstaff leaders had its establishment come about, and only through the continuing efforts of those same men and women, and their successors, did it grow and develop, to say nothing of beating back attempts to reduce its scope and even close its doors.”** While Platt was writing about NAU, much of the same can be said about ASU West and its evolutionary history and the political battles that have been fought and won to establish a much needed higher education presence in the flourishing west valley.

This is truly an opportunity to advance Arizona’s higher education system, and create a new system where stellar service and the provision of educational opportunity to the people of Arizona are valued and lauded, as opposed to being portrayed as diminished or portrayed as such.

As the regents move forward in their review they should continue to solicit and accept meaningful participation from stakeholders in our universities. In addition, while soliciting input is crucial, this matter is of such importance for the state that care should be taken to ensure all these voices are fully represented when the decisions are being made, and all these matters are considered in coordination with the state legislature and the executive branch.

Sincerely,

Eddie Basha
Former Regent

The Honorable Robert Blendu
State Senator

The Honorable Jim Carruthers
State Representative
Former Community College President

The Honorable Raul Castro
Former Governor, State of Arizona

S. Tom Chandler
Former Regent

Angela DeLa Cruz (Current President) and Dennis Meador (Immediate Past President)
On behalf of the NAU Alumni Association

Dr. Eugene M. Hughes
President Emeritus, Northern Arizona University and Wichita State University

Harry Hengl
Member, Northern Arizona University Foundation and NAUAA Past Presidents

Dr. Clara Lovett
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The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
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