

Northern Arizona University Demands

November 23, 2015

Northern Arizona University Mission Statement

“Our students are at the center of all we do and all we hope to do. They are the reason why NAU exists. And one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a high-performing university is knowing we serve our students well. Their success is more than a mission statement, more than a goal- it’s a value, along with access, and quality, and the excellence of their experience.”
– (*Mission and Vision*, NAU Office of the President)

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the student activists of Northern Arizona University, are writing you today with deep concern. In our time at the university, we have noticed a deep contradiction between NAU’s mission statement and its treatment of students.

On multiple occasions, the University has failed to provide security and the proper resources for its most vulnerable students, has encouraged the racial tokenization of students and faculty, has encouraged the NAU Police Department to interfere with student activism, has allowed those involved in student activism to be harassed by University employees, and has allowed these students’ reputation to be slandered by other students and faculty members. By silencing the student voice, the university has directly damaged the mental and physical health of the students whom it claims to support, thus interfering with their academic success.

We are taking it upon ourselves to hold this university accountable. We too believe that NAU exists for its students; we too believe that it is an essential responsibility of this institution to serve its students well. If this university truly abides by the mission statement above and aims to provide students access to a quality higher education, then it must be willing and eager to work with us. For this reason, we have included a student organized list of demands.

We expect administration, including the Office of Student Life, President Rita Cheng, and the University Provost, to respond to these demands with an action plan by **January 19th, 2016**. If we do not receive a response, and our demands are not met, we will take appropriate nonviolent actions which will escalate until our demands are met. A response does not involve being redirected to various individuals who could meet our needs, but instead means that immediate action is taken on the part of the individuals who can incite change in the administration. We will not hesitate to contact media to publicize our movement and our demands, and bring to light the treatment of underrepresented students, faculty, and staff at Northern Arizona University. In the time between this release of student demands and the deadline we have given NAU’s

administration, we will document our actions throughout social media using the hashtags: #concernedstudent1950 #truebluenau #nautakeover #nauwhatsgood.

Sincerely,

Queers and Allies, student members of the Queer Activist Collective, Black Student Union, and PRISM

List of Demands

1. We demand that Northern Arizona University administration publicly acknowledge and formally apologize for endangering, harassing, and slandering queer and trans student activists. Specifically we demand apologies for the following:

Chris Schlarb, Senior Program Coordinator of the LGBTQIA Office of Resources Support, called the work supervisor of a student activist suggesting that said student not work during this year's Coming Out Monologues; under different conditions, this may have endangered this person's employment and left them without income. Chris has also told other student workers in the LGBTQIA Office that parts of last year's Queer Activist Monologue submission were untrue, resulting in the defamation of personal lived accounts.

Yoleidy Rosario, Assistant Director of Inclusion and Multicultural services, has repeatedly engaged with queer students in a manner unbefitting a representative of the university. While attending a Queer and Allies club meeting, she repeatedly interrupted the meeting, accused members of microaggressions, and whispered and took notes throughout the meeting. For many of the Freshman Students in attendance this behavior was their first impression of the LEADS Center. Yoleidy has also harassed Q&A members at the Coming Out Week tabling event, stating that she wouldn't work with Q&A because they were 'too angry' at their last meeting, and directed this to the students waiting to approach the table.

Bernadine Lewis, Director of Undergraduate Programs at W.A. Franke College of Business, shouted "excuse me" over the voices of queer student activists and referred to a nonviolent direct action group as less respectful than the KKK at the Coming Out Monologues. They stated that the KKK at least had the respect to wait until church services were over before they "disrupted" congregations. It is unacceptable for a university faculty member to compare a nonviolent queer activist group to a violent white supremacist terrorist group.

All parties affiliated with the decision to engage and request police at a queer student event with the intent to retaliate and enforce punishment/forced removal of students.

2. NAU administration must be in direct and open dialogue with the students it claims to serve. We demand that along with transparency, NAU must have a representative student

held position- this student must be attuned to the campus and community needs and receptive to student conversations. This position should oversee various offices and have the power to intervene when the needs of marginalized students are not being met. This position should be protected from any retaliation that may be present when advocating and representing various student needs. This position must be paid and will ensure student involvement and advocacy at the institutional level.

3. The inflammatory language used by NAU staff to label, stigmatize, and target students who openly express concerns about the way NAU has dealt with violence perpetrated on its campus has escalated the danger faced by students rather than addressing student concerns. The dysfunctional effect of this response from NAU staff cannot be understated, the antagonism from certain staff served to ostracize particular students and escalate antagonism between student groups that further endangered and jeopardized student lives. Specifically, a student found the words “go kill yourself” written on the window their car in a university parking lot. We demand that the University recognize the need for student and faculty feedback, as an essential part of creating a healthy and safe learning environment. Rather than retaliating against dissenting feedback in order to protect the public reputation of the university, threatening jobs and student funding, the university must engage in a mediated dialogue with student concerns. NAU administration must take responsibility in engaging with students and student activists in a productive and transparent dialogue, instead of perpetuating violence and risking the safety of students. We demand that NAU administration construct a space conducive to nonviolent conflict resolution, as well as a monthly open forum (with President Cheng and other administration present) to assess student needs and engage directly with student feedback. Further, it is apparent there is a disconnect between administration and the needs of its student body; this forum will directly bridge that gap.

4. We demand that NAU completely redesign their reporting process and conflict resolution procedure in order to better serve the needs of victimized students.

NAU must provide students with an effective silent witness program. Students will be able to use this program to anonymously report violence that has been done to them. Further, this program must exist separately from both NAU PD and the Office of Student Life. Those who oversee this program must have a comprehensive critical understanding of the university structure and processes, but must explicitly use this understanding to protect those who have been victims of violence. Under no circumstances should this program prioritize the university’s reputation; it must *always* be aligned with the victim’s best interests.

NAU must hold students who perpetrate violence accountable for their actions on and off campus. On multiple occasions, members of NAU fraternities have threatened and assaulted students and other individuals visiting Flagstaff. In several of these assaults, NAU fraternity members specifically and intentionally targeted people of color because of their race. This culture of violence was not absent in the time preceding the deadly shooting that occurred earlier this year and, had NAU been more proactive in preventing violent student behavior, this shooting may never have had happened.

NAU must report staff/faculty/students/departments who use racial slurs and ask black students to act as the spokesperson of their race in class, trainings, and other programs (i.e. Health promotions - did not feel the need for bystander training to combat racial discrimination)

The safety of the students is of higher priority than the university's public reputation: It is the responsibility of Northern Arizona University's administration to ensure that NAU's students, faculty members, and staff are aware of racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, queerphobia, and other forms of injustice that occur on school grounds. Because of this, we demand that acts against marginalized students are accurately and appropriately recorded, then widely reported to the NAU and Flagstaff community.

5. The process for reporting and responding to bias reports and hate crimes needs to be left in the hands of one office with specializations in trauma, disability, race, and the needs of queer and trans students, with adherence to the University's Safe Work and Learning Environment Policy.

NAU's bias reporting system is overly bureaucratic with many different offices handling bias reporting. This creates inconsistency among response from the University to incidents of bias and hate crimes, as these offices all operate differently and represent different interests. Further, through the language of a "bias incident," the University creates an environment in which the severity and systemic nature of discrimination and prejudice is diminished and unacknowledged. We demand an overhaul to the University's system for reporting hate crimes and bias incidents, as well as for providing support and communication with students who are the victims of hate crimes and bias incidents that prioritizes the safety and wellbeing of students over the University's reputation.

6. We demand that the University prioritize the safety and well-being of black students, and black student activists above the reputation of the University. Racism and other forms of discrimination should not be tolerated or swept under the rug like it has been many times in the past. Additionally, Northern Arizona University must address racism on campus and in the Flagstaff community to ensure institutional support for black students: just because it does not happen on Northern Arizona University's campus, does not mean that community and global events do not affect us physically, emotionally, and mentally. We further demand the protection of black student activists and the underrepresented faculty and staff who support these student activists; student activists who are our future leaders pave the way for positive change.

7. We demand that Northern Arizona University provides protection of staff and faculty who support activists and activism, and/or may be activists themselves. Staff and faculty should not have to face losing their job for encouraging and supporting their students, or for statements or action that calls for accountability from the University. There is a rich history of collaboration between professors and students in advancing social movements, and we will not stand for faculty, staff, and professors being silenced and threatened by administration.

8. It is the University's responsibility to provide and ensure the safety of its students. This includes students living in on-campus housing who do not have homes to return to following the end of the semester, or have extenuating circumstances regarding affording housing. Students of color, trans students, and students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to homelessness. We demand a need based Crisis Fund to be distributed in a non-meritocratic way. A student's academic performance should not determine their eligibility for University offered resources.

9. We demand that Northern Arizona University stop expanding its student population at the expense of local communities of color and other marginalized populations. The University's expansion perpetuates the gentrification of Flagstaff neighborhoods, displacing working class people and people of color. Regardless of certain statewide initiatives, the University's expansion should never be prioritized above local communities that NAU claims to support and hopes to welcome within the student body.

10. We demand the review of Northern Arizona University's contract with Sodexo — an organization that benefits from the pernicious prison industrial complex system that negatively impacts the black community and queer and/or trans* populations on a national and local level.

11. We demand the elimination of the tokenism of administrators, faculty, staff, and students to create "diverse" propaganda for Northern Arizona University that does not display the true nature of NAU's campus climate. Resources and programs such as workshops, panels and other various ally training must be designed and led by marginalized groups. We demand the consultation of black students and faculty during the implementation of diversity initiatives to create effective diversity training for all first-year students, transfer students, student athletes, student workers, faculty, staff, and administration.

12. Many students, staff, and faculty have expressed discontent and concern with the effectiveness and competency of the University's current Safe Zone Training in actually providing information and tools necessary for creating safe spaces and an atmosphere of respect for queer and trans students, students with disabilities (mental and physical), and students of color. We demand a paid multi-student review process of Safe Zone in order to cultivate environments which truly serve the needs of the University's most vulnerable students to its fullest and most immediate capacity. This multi-student review effort must be led by students directly impacted (students of color, students with disabilities, queer and/or trans students) This needs to include, but shall not be limited to, sensitivity training regarding race, culture and ethnicity, knowledge and understanding of disability, and training on the importance of pronouns and names that do not situate them as mere "preferences." Further, we demand that the new and improved Safe Zone training be mandatory for any person working on campus, including those who are not employed specifically by the University. This not only establishes respect and understanding between students and employees on campus, but also among employees as well.

13. We demand that there is no longer any active police presence at events that are designed to be safe spaces for marginalized populations. NAU administrators have repeatedly relied on police presence in spaces of marginalized groups as a means of control, which, rather than increasing student safety, actually puts students' safety at risk. At the 2015 NAU Coming Out Monologues, NAU PD was present in plainclothes and forcibly removed a queer, trans student from the building against their will. Later, in the University newspaper, *The Lumberjack*, this student was cited as being "belligerent" in the Police Beat, while videos and countless eyewitness accounts tell how this could not be further from the truth. Systemically, queer and trans students and students of color are at the highest risk of encountering violence and police brutality, and thus if NAU intends to create a safe space, the police absolutely cannot be present.

14. We demand an increase in faculty of color and trans and/or queer faculty positions in all departments representative of the nationwide population, including an increase in people of color, queer, and trans Resident Assistants, Resident Hall Directors, administrators, faculty, and tenured faculty.

NAU currently does not have a tenure track for the vital department and programs of Women's and Gender Studies and Queer Studies. These faculty members place equal amounts of dedication and time into their work as any other department and receive significantly less benefits and job security. We demand there no longer be a divide and marginalization between which programs are deemed "more important" and that resources are allocated appropriately and equally.

We demand that NAU create an Ethnic Studies requirement distinct from the cultural understanding; require every student to fulfill at least three Ethnic Studies credits to learn more about diverse populations of people and emphasize the importance of this knowledge as a life enhancement. NAU also must create an undergraduate Ethnic Studies Major; our history should not simply be an elective. The Ethnic Studies major and credit requirements should both be implemented by the Fall semester of 2016.

15. We demand that Northern Arizona University implement gender neutral bathrooms in all buildings on campus. NAU has currently attempted to implement such bathrooms. These restrooms are single-stall "family bathrooms" and do not promote gender inclusivity or an equal space for transgender or gender-nonconforming students. The signs on these bathrooms must be blatantly and directly gender-neutral (not family restrooms). Additionally, these restrooms must be accessible for students with physical disabilities. The office of LGTBQIA Resources and Support has demonstrated "bathroom take overs" during Trans* Awareness Week. These events consist of tabling and distribution of flyers. These flyers consist of information on what it means to be a good ally in the bathroom and how to make trans individuals more comfortable in gendered bathrooms. These flyers are damaging and make trans students hypervisible as well as promote stigmas as to what it means to "look trans". Transgender students are policed and marginalized on a daily basis by peers and faculty alike. The office of Resources and Support should not contribute to these stigmas and marginalization. Takeovers and assessing the needs of these students should be hosted by the students in need.

16. While the multiplicity of student organizations, departments, courses, and offices represent a wide range of different interests, perspectives, and experiences, we have determined that there is a lack of communication and dialogue among those with interrelated interests. LGBTQIA Resources and Support working nearly exclusively with PRISM has created feelings of divisiveness among student organizations, for example. PRISM is a student led and ran organization, not the face of the LGBTQIA resources and support office. Therefore we demand that all events by the LGBTQIA office should not be pawned off on PRISM, as PRISM does not represent anyone but the LGBT students of Northern Arizona University. We demand complete separation, as an organization, from the LGBTQIA resources and support office.

17. Students who spend energy transforming an unsafe, hostile working and learning environment on campus must be validated in their work. When it becomes mandatory for student survival to work toward student safety on campus, then academic responsibilities will be compromised as a direct result to this lack of safety. We demand that the sacrifices made by student activists be accounted for. Ethnic Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Queer Studies especially must accommodate student activist work because of these disciplines' roots within activism and their courses' commitments to critical thinking and inclusivity.

18. NAU's mission statement states that "Our students are at the center of all we do and all we hope to do. They are the reason why NAU exists. And one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a high-performing university is knowing we serve our students well. Their success is more than a mission statement, more than a goal—it's a value, along with access, and quality, and the excellence of their experience." If student success and well-being is truly the university's goal, there needs to be mandatory mental health training for NAU instructors that is sensitive to student mental/psychological health. This training needs to be a distinct and in depth program for instructors--separate from Safe Zone Training--that prioritizes making students comfortable participating in class and acknowledges self care, mental health breaks, and participation outside of class as viable and acceptable options for neurodivergent students.

19. The University's current policy to submit a name and gender change in the registrar is inaccessible and results in unnecessary "out-ing" of queer and trans students that comprises their safety and comfortability. While students have been able to get a "preferred name" change for their Jacks Card, this is insufficient as students names on rosters, BBLearn, and NAU still reflect the registrar. We demand that the University implement a streamlined process for students to be able to change their name and gender on BBLearn, the University's assigned gmail accounts, as well as within the registrar itself, that does not require documentation "proving" the student's gender.

20. Budget cuts resulted in eradication of disability resource busses. This is unacceptable. We demand that there be a reallocation of funds in order to reinstate

disability resource buses as well as other programs that directly support the safety, wellbeing, and success of marginalized students.