



Location: Flagstaff, AZ
Focus Areas: Holistic

Northern Arizona University (NAU) is a public four-year institution that serves more than 29,000 undergraduate and graduate students on the main Flagstaff campus, across 20 statewide campus sites, and online educational modalities.



At A Glance:

- » Initiated new online supports including peer mentoring, connection building activities, a wellness mobile app, self-paced online career modules, and other academic support programs
- » Connected with cross-campus and external partners to maximize the impact of virtual services and resources

Approach Overview

As part of NAU's strategic efforts to serve such a diverse student population and an awareness that all students, regardless of modality, deserve an engaging, supportive student experience, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) developed a wide range of new initiatives that were underway prior to the pandemic.

In fall 2019, the DSA partnered with the College of Business to pilot an expanded use of a student engagement mobile app, called [YourPath@NAU](#). The tool was previously only focused on business students, but NAU negotiated the existing software agreement with the Suitable platform so that the DSA could utilize the platform more broadly for student engagement. The student engagement app gamifies and incentivizes multiple points of engagement with students. DSA has created "badges" that students can earn through attending multiple activities within a theme or focus area. Students who complete 3, 5, or 8 badges can earn incentives (raffle drawings, stress relief toys, t-shirts, water bottles, and more). The office of First-Generation Programs has created a specific set of milestones and [badges for first-generation students](#) through the mobile app. Points can be earned through participating in self-guided activities.

NAU leveraged its existing learning management system – Blackboard Learn with Collaborate Ultra, Bblearn, and SoftChalk add-ons – to deliver academic, tutoring, and career development supports to students virtually. The Career Development team used this technology to deliver its self-paced online career modules, called [Career Steps](#), which focus on professional skills, application materials, networking, internships, and interview skills. Prior to the pandemic, NAU also offered online peer mentoring services and utilized NAU's mobile app – [NAUgo](#), powered by Modo Labs– for highlighting featured events and sending personalized push notifications to students.

Under crisis conditions that required shifting all in-person supports into virtual environments, the DSA worked to continue existing supports and address all aspects of student need. A few examples of this include:

- » Leadership, Engagement, Activities, and Peer mentoring (LEAP) developed a virtual expo to introduce new students to clubs with video recorded introductions and virtual meeting rooms. LEAP also launched an entirely virtual Welcome Week for new students.
- » Campus Recreation created virtual recreational experiences including virtual group fitness, E-sports intramural league, and an interactive YouTube library.
- » The Health Promotion (HP) branch of Campus Health Services has worked with numerous campus partners, including faculty and DSA, to launch the Live Well NAU framework and offer virtual wellness workshops and live-streamed meditation events. HP also integrated virtual wellness programming and competencies from its online toolkit – [the NAU Resilience Project](#) – into the YourPathNAU app.
 - HP has worked closely with Residential Life to create COVID education and wellness information to be pushed out on social media channels. HP has also partnered with LEAP and Campus Recreation to offer virtual pro-social, substance free opportunities for students to connect during typically high-risk drinking times.
- » NAU's Student Counseling Services shifted to video-based tele-counseling, which enabled them to serve students across the state and online.
- » Career Development created a virtual Alumni Summer Workshop, added a virtual Resume Dropbox, and facilitated a virtual career fairs with online prep sessions.
- » Veteran and Military Services transitioned Veteran Orientation online and developed new virtual outreach processes for military dependents.
- » The DSA collaborated with the Academic Success Centers to scale out technology used for the Undergraduate Research Symposium in spring 2020 (OpenWater) for a virtual club expo to promote student engagement in summer 2020.
- » The DSA worked to address students' basic needs during the pandemic by providing COVID-19 micro grants (funded from philanthropic giving, student government fundraising, and a Course Hero Grant), course material vouchers, child care vouchers, and long-term laptop loans.

NAU's approach included thinking holistically about students, leveraging partnerships, and building upon existing resources and expertise:

“We really have touched on every part of the student experience, and I think that's what makes this unique.”

“Being able to implement at scale and quickly really was also a testament to our partnership with our information technology services team. We have such good working relationships already. They were ready and able and wanted to help us be successful.”

“We leveraged what we were already doing well, and that helped us scale more broadly. Use resources that already exist on your campus instead of trying to implement new platforms.”

Learn more at virtualsuccess.naspa.org