



February 22, 2022

Dear Faculty and Staff:

Navajo Technical University and its administration is committed to the needs of the Navajo Nation and to the education of Navajo youth. Embedded into Navajo Technical University is the principle that the university should improve people's lives beyond the classroom and campus, to all the residents of the Navajo Nation and beyond. Navajo Technical University, with its four sites in New Mexico and Arizona, is the embodiment of that idea. As a university we must be responsive, impactful, and accountable. Most importantly, we must listen. I attended the listening session on February 18, 2022, and heard your voices.

Navajo Technical University can become even more responsive to the needs, hopes, and dreams of our students, staff, faculty, and communities. Over the next few months, we will converge to set common goals to help us judge how well we meet them. Then, we will set strategies for how to achieve those goals. I invite you to be a part of the process and conversation by visiting our website at <http://www.navajotech.edu/about/63-about>. There you will find regular updates and opportunities to stay involved in the planning effort ahead. These efforts will continue, but clearly, we need to do more, and we will. The goal of sharing this information is to encourage discussion and input before the survey team's results and survey data is shared.

The goal for this listening session was to explore faculty/staff perceptions of our institution and to identify practices that may lead to increased faculty/staff satisfaction. The listening session and survey will serve to help Navajo Technical University and its people navigate a dynamic and often unpredictable future. It is critical that the voices of our university community remain part of our development, as our future and that of the Navajo Nation are inextricably interconnected. It is important to note that we are not sharing this to provide final, definitive observations or recommendations. I look forward to your input as we work to distill insights into areas where we are doing well, and especially as we work together on those areas where we still need to improve. We have engaged with RNL (Ruffalo Noel Levitz), a highly respected firm that specializes in university employee engagement research, to administer the survey. We ask for your support and understanding as we move forward in building a better world for our students and the Navajo Nation that we serve.

Thank you for your continued participation and for sharing your vision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elmer J. Guy', is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Elmer J. Guy, President

Listening Session Report

Listening Session Conducted February 18, 2022

As part of developing a new plan for Navajo Technical University (NTU), NTU recently held a listening session via zoom. This session was designed to hear the ideas of the NTU faculty/staff and determine how to be even more responsive to their needs. Of note, all the issues brought out during this discussion align with Navajo Technical University's strategic plan 2020-2025 which includes six priorities: Academic Excellence; Financial Services; Communication and Institutional Research; Infrastructure; Development of Instructional Sites; and Sustainability.

The responses from all participants (n=67) at the listening session were gathered and analyzed for issues that were raised in them. The issues were then categorized and totaled. The input from all participants at the listening session is presented in this report. NTU sent out an additional survey with results forthcoming, future listening sessions and engagement exercises to gather input from students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders are planned.

NTU during this first listening session of 2022 by meeting with faculty and staff generated ideas for greater levels of efficiency regarding: (a) what the university is doing well, and (b) what the university could do better.

Results of Listening Session

Participants were asked to identify and share positive university experiences and practices.

General: Question 1

What is working well at Navajo Technical University?

The top five issues raised under this question are as follows:

1. Healthy Work Environment
2. Supportive Environment
3. Subsidized Housing
4. Housing Close to Campus
5. Commitment to Students

The following are examples of responses:

A healthier work environment, the pace is healthier, allowed and supported to practice self care, flexibility to do our work in a healthy manner at healthy reasonable pace

NTU subsidizes housing for staff/faculty and can walk to work

Proximity to campus

Value of people who have been here long term, the history they bring and the love they bring to NTU this is something that is valuable.

Value for family and consideration for individuals. Patience and the way

As a student and employee, always felt at home here, I enjoy the people here, a feeling of family I like being at NTU

We have Navajo teachings, you can get higher education in a Hogan, in our homeland, within the sacred mountains.

This is vital for Navajo community, we come from home, we have ceremonies, and they are so integral to community. This opportunity to have higher education here at home and specializing in Dine Studies is not available anywhere in the world but here.

That is the most valuable thing to me at NTU.

The commitment of students to come to NTU, choose some place close to home and dedicated to their studies. Faculty and staff dedicated to make that happen in spite of the obstacles like the pandemic; despite disorganization and things not always working as well as they might. The engine of education is still working.

I am thankful for IT, maintenance and other faculty when I need it.

We have support when we need it.

People are helpful here when I reach out to them.

Thank you to all who are a part of the Skyhawk family. You all play an important role in our students lives and I appreciate all the help and assistance to students from academic advising and the first-year program. I ask to please help and guide our first-year students.

At Navajo Technical University, we are always looking to improve our performance, to better identify issues of concern and address our challenges. To guide the university participants were asked to let us know, what areas need improvement here at NTU?

General: Question 2

What needs improvement at Navajo Technical University?

First participants voiced a broad range of concerns categorized below then iterated top five issues.

Issues

Faculty/Staff feeling tokenized, not being recognized for their value and being adequately or appropriately compensated; feeling not heard and not supported.

Employees feeling exhaustion and burnout.

Supervisors have little support but are expected to support their teams.

Lack of funding is affecting the quality of NTU.

NTU is not attracting and keeping students.

Our general and high-tech infrastructure requires more investment.

Landscaping - upkeep is not a priority.

Lack of communication at all levels.

Broadband on campus and for students.

Website requires updating and loads too slow.

The top five issues raised under this question are as follows:

Enrollment/Retention

Consistency

Communication

Salary

Transparency/Accountability

Participants were then placed in seven groups each group consisted of up to ten participants, then asked to rank the areas of needs improvement from highest to lowest priority, some groups had issues tie for the priority.

The group results were:

Highest Priority	
Enrollment	5
Communication	2
Salary	2
Transparency	1
Consistency	1

Lowest Priority	
Consistency	3
Salary	2
Landscaping	2

Next, while in their groups the participants were asked to answer the following questions.

1. Which concerns were difficult to rank? And why?
2. Which concerns were easy to rank? And why?
3. Which concerns do you think will be hardest to address? And why?
4. Which concerns do you think will be easiest to address? And why?
5. Recall some interesting thoughts that surfaced through this discussion.

Answers to Breakout Room Questions:

Some groups did not comment, rather provided a one-word answer.

Breakout Room: Question 1

Which concerns were difficult to rank? And why?

The following are examples of responses:

All issues will be hard to address.

Consistency, we were also struggling with transparency and accountability.

We ended up combining our priorities; by following our Dine Philosophy; we discussed that with improved communication comes transparency.

Communication, there is an undertone as to why this is an issue; we think it is because we have no direct communication between faculty and staff; this breeds transparency; also the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Communication and Enrollment

Communication and consistency: these were for us hard to define; they are not concrete things;

Also, they were broad and everyone's responsibility at the university.

Salary is supported by enrollment; if we don't have good faculty salaries then we do not have anyone teaching the students.

Accountability

Communication and enrollment

Breakout Room: Question 2

Which concerns were easy to rank? And why?

The following are examples of responses:

Salary

Enrollment

Communication because each person wants to affect change positively.

Salary was easy because we want to make a living; it should be more competitive; this is a way of rewarding faculty that do a good job.

We said finances; money coming into NTU, we need to know where funds go and where are they spent.

Enrollment salary and transparency; enrollment is important; if we increase enrollment we can think about salary, etc.

salary – we live on that; if I came to campus every week of the year, I will pay \$5K in gas; that is 1/6th of my salary; we do not know what is going on, we are told that our priorities are aligned; where is the money is going?

We want trust and develop to good relationships; we need follow up, there is no follow up.

We bring money to school we bring 45% of grants this money goes directly to NTU, we just want to know what is NTU doing with the money?

Breakout Room: Question 3

Which concerns do you think will be hardest to address? And why?

The following are examples of responses:

We need time and space; we have a lot of questions about how money is being spent

Transparency is a concern; we are being cheated out of money that we worked hard to bring to the campus; we are told that these are in the strategic plan, what part of the strategic plan, why is what is in our strategic plan not updated? We need to communicate that better; why are people leaving? Why are students not coming?

Lack of Communication- who are the administrative assistants, adjuncts; professors, where are they? What site are they at?

Infrastructure, we see weeds, pools of water whenever it rains; recently a student lost a bumper when going over a pothole.

Communication: we want to know what is going on in departments? What are people doing in their departments? We get phone calls from the community asking about who is sponsoring this program, we do not know who to send them to because we have not heard about this program? We learn things about NTU from social media, why is that?

Enrollment- which ties into location, we have lack of housing, we have no student housing at the Chinle site

Communication: students need help, students are sent everywhere to resolve one issue; it is not clear where students get help.

We get no reply from emails; faculty do not get email responses from administration or other faculty. How can faculty communicate without reliable internet access on campus?

Breakout Room: Question 4

Which concerns do you think will be easiest to address? And why?

The following are examples of responses:

Beauty of Campus; one possible solution is to develop a horticulture program on site

Transparency and accountability; most schools have open policies on pay scale and faculty workload; We are always getting extra work as department chair but where is that in the salary; we do not have enough support

Enrollment was easy to address.

The programs that are being run have a lack of transparency. Who are the key motivators/players, e.g. for recruitment it is Brenda's job, which makes us realize that we are understaffed? We need transformational leadership, and this is everyone's responsibility, to be transformational in their jobs.

Breakout Room: Question 5

Recall some interesting thoughts that surfaced through this discussion.

The following are examples of responses:

People need to appreciate that they have a job here experienced a growth; enrollment needs to increase we cannot do anything without students.

Administration needs to be able to take constructive criticism; Administration should not be defensive; open to solutions.

We should be practicing our culture and ceremonies on campus.

On my last workplace, they had a consulting group come in to do communication training. The consultants showed us how we really are. We should consider bringing in a consulting firm to address the issue of communication.

The environment of campus was discussed; we have trailers around; it does not look good to have all the trailers. Our campus looks like an abandoned site with all of the trailers on campus.

We are not a public university, let us recognize our progress not we are not looking for perfection; we need to incentivize good work and recognition.

General Recommendations

Create a culture of accountability at every level of university leadership.
Support tangible actions and changes to address the findings from the data collected including from all faculty/staff meetings like convocation, surveys, and listening sessions.
Ensure role accountability for initiatives at the university level.
Expand data collection to capture the complexity and broad range of issues.
Increase enrollment through recruitment and retain a critical mass of students, faculty, & staff.
Develop process to address issues of concern.
Improve communications at all levels regarding concerns and successes.
Provide resources to support and expand programs.
Expand education for students, faculty and staff.
Be careful of not asking instructors and employees to do more and more.
Study what we're doing well and where our gaps are.
Promote a positive workplace culture through Faculty/Staff recognition
Improve student access to broadband.
Improve broadband services on campus.
Conduct evaluation of campus grounds, identifying high-impact areas that are in need of restoration.

NTU's Next Steps

Explore Feasibility of Proposed Recommendations
Engage Key Stakeholders
Prioritize Proposed Recommendations and Actions
Determine Appropriate Metrics
Establish Accountability
Secure Support to Advance Efforts and Implementation