

# PERSONALIZED LEARNING AT NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

## PLACING THE STUDENT IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

“We think personalized learning can bring back the joy of learning that's been lost for years because [students] were in a system that simply wasn't meeting their needs. Most people enjoy learning when they can go at their own pace, focus on their interests, and feel like they are achieving things in a timely manner.”

FRED HURST, NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

### AT A GLANCE:

**Targeted Degree Program:**

Bachelor's degree (multiple disciplines)

**Organization:** Public, four-year university

**Opening Date:** Spring 2013

**Enrollments as of January 1, 2015:** 688

**Anticipated Enrollments in First Five Years:** 7,500

**Tuition Model:** Flat six-month subscription rate

**Geographies Served:** Arizona

**Targeted Students:** Adult, traditional, first-generation, low-income, Native American, and Hispanic populations

**Partner:** Pearson

### HALLMARKS:

Year-round enrollment

Flat-rate tuition with unlimited course access

No fees: all books and course materials are included in tuition

Pre-tests provide credit for prior learning

Self-paced, competency-based model

Multiple modalities for course content (lecture, multimedia, textbook, simulation)

One-to-one mentors for student support

Contextual approach that integrates practical, disciplinary, and liberal arts outcomes

Focus is on developing innovators who will become leaders in the knowledge economy

At Northern Arizona University (NAU), two-thirds of students are traditional undergraduates. They are recent high school graduates. They live on or near the main campus. They attend lectures and engage in small-group discussions with their peers. Another one-third of NAU students earn their degrees in traditional online classes, enrolling in a set number of units each semester.

For an increasing number of Arizonans, however, that traditional model is simply too costly and ineffective. To reach them, the university launched a Personalized Learning program in spring 2013 that uses more than 90 online courses and a flat-rate “subscription” model of tuition to offer bachelor's degrees that are more accessible, flexible, and efficient for adult and nontraditional learners.

The program started with degrees in small business administration, computer information technology, and liberal arts. Each program pro-

vides NAU liberal studies requirements and a language or science option. Each degree program has a clear set of modules and learning outcomes defined by NAU faculty, but the route from start to finish is completely flexible, letting students choose which modules to tackle first. Students can also choose the best approach for their unique learning styles; one student might choose to download and watch a lecture, while another might work through an interactive simulation.

Along the way, mentor faculty work with students to provide feedback, suggest specific resources, or simply provide support if a student is struggling with an academic concept or with balancing their studies with their work.

The program's emphasis on personalization doesn't end with the learning plan. Central to NAU's Personalized Learning model is the belief that students—particularly students with prior workplace expe-

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# STUDENT SUPPORT MODEL

## FACULTY MENTOR:



Ensures student success by working directly with students on a one-to-one basis; will have content and/or advising experience

## SUBJECT MATTER FACULTY:



Subject matter experts who tutor students in specific subjects

## LEAD FACULTY:



Publish and curate course content and lead assessment efforts

## EVALUATORS:



Provide feedback on student work and help support assessment efforts

rience—shouldn't be forced to progress through a program in lockstep with their peers. Because many of the target students bring in previous course credit, it is evaluated and applied when possible and when it contributes to the student's progress and learning. Faculty mentors also review students' résumés and other documentation to help students predict where they might progress more quickly and use their experience and prior knowledge to test out of lessons.

The entire program is based on a pre- and post-test model where students have the opportunity to "test out" of a lesson at the outset of the learning module. Pre-tests also ensure that students dive immediately into the areas where they need work rather than reviewing areas where they already show mastery. For advanced students, this translates into cost savings as they move more quickly through courses throughout the years. (NAU's subscription model

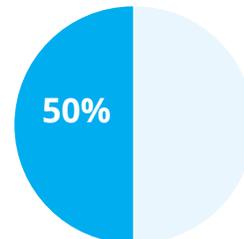
means that students can access unlimited courses during their enrollment.)

Ultimately, the goal is to develop a program that's not merely efficient but also empowering, helping learners take control of how, what, and when they learn best.

### Intended Outcomes:

- By the fifth year, 75 percent of students will graduate within six years
- Enrollment of 7,500 subscriptions or more by year five
- Financial sustainability within five years

### PELL-ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:



### PRICE TO STUDENTS PER YEAR:

\$5,000

### COST PER FTE PER YEAR:

\$5,000

### DELIVERY:



### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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