University of North Dakota Strategic Plan

Collaboration and Engagement Working Group – Final Report

Twenty-three committee members volunteered to assist UND in their response to the 12 questions and 11 concept areas outlined in the goals of the [Collaboration and Engagement](https://und.edu/about/strategic-plan/new-strategic-plan/collaboration-engagement.html) Strategic Planning working group. Given the depth and breadth of the committee charge, the initial focus was to assemble a committee that included members able to guide UND in establishing priorities and metrics with the requisite expertise and leadership experience in expanding and sustaining collaborations and partnerships in a myriad of areas. The committee membership includes opinion leaders from across ND and faculty and staff at UND with expertise and experience in cross-system collaboration and community engagement.

Membership included (1) elected officials representing state, tribal, and local entities (2) executive directors of state entities and agencies, (3) industry partners, (4) the ND State Board of Higher Education, (5) two former UND student body presidents, (6) staff from the UND Alumni Association, and (7) faculty and UND staff who represent a host of academic and service areas across campus. (8) two Co-Chairs with many years of experience at UND representing both faculty and staff. The committee included 14 alumni with several members holding both graduate and undergraduate degrees from UND. (See C&E Attachments online)

Tasks completed include:

1. Authoring a comprehensive SWOT analysis with all members providing input and personal conversations to secure input (See C&E Attachments online)
2. Conducted 12 focus groups securing information from 103 people (See C&E Attachments online)
3. Conducted individual interviews with two national rural health care leaders and two UND administrators. Secured feedback from the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) on rural outreach.
4. Analyzed data from the focus group and SWOT to identify five strategic themes that aligned with the 12 questions and 11 concept areas.
5. Formed working sub-groups based on the five strategic themes identified in the analysis that aligned with the committee charge to prevent mission creep. Those reports are included in Section 2.
6. Authored sub-group reports to include priorities, action items, and metrics
7. Provided extensive feedback on draft mission/vision/values document submitted by the strategic planning committee.
8. Co-Chairs met multiple times with the full Strategic Planning Committee and other Workgroup chairs to discuss overlap and findings.
9. The working group draft report was reviewed at the strategic planning leadership retreat where C&E key themes received very positive feedback.
10. The notes from the leadership retreat and final draft were reviewed again by the working group before final revisions and submission by the co-chairs.

Strategic themes that emerged during the course of this work: (1) *advancing workforce development*, (2) *expanding experiential student learning*, (3) *improving ease of access for all:* *exploring partnerships with less bureaucracy/removing the barriers to innovation, creating a “front door” to the institution*, (4) *building partnership through expanding alumni relationships*, and (5) *ensuring strong communication to nurture partnerships and collaboration*. Committee members were assigned to sub-groups based on interest and expertise with special gratitude to the five committee members (Ruit/Nelson/Johnson/Linder/Ford) who agreed to Chair a sub-group.

Those efforts identified three areas of strategic growth potential. They are collapsed below for expediency.

1. *The need for a* ***“front door to UND****” to advance future collaborations and engagements.*

Rationale: Interest exists in partnering and collaborating with UND however the heavy bureaucracy and slowness/tardiness in follow-through on requests results in limited opportunities, outcomes, and engagement. This was expressed in the SWOT and focus group with special concern for our lack of presence in western ND. Several focus group participants would like to see more of a UND presence in rural and tribal communities throughout ND by UND administration, faculty, and staff. As one focus group participant stated, “*things are pretty quiet in the west about UND.*” The “front door” will (1) improve the speed and ease of creating new partnerships with a rapid response network in place to capitalize on the opportunity to partner where interest exists, and (2) coordinate and reduce duplication of requests to partners. For example, if a relationship already exists in one college and another college sees an opportunity and initiates a conversation, they will coordinate. This will diminish the silos, unify communications, and ensure efforts are cross-system.

1. *The need for UND to be mindful of collaborations that* ***address the workforce needs*** *in North Dakota and beyond*.

Rationale: Several employers, including health insurance executives, local and state elected officials, banking executives, hospital and clinic administrators, government and non-government executive leaders and administrators, engineering company executives, educational leaders, behavioral health specialists, and researchers attended focus group meetings for the expressed purpose of requesting that we prioritize responding to workforce needs. A key component of this includes expanding experiential learning for students. That will be the “front door” to workforce development and include students – our future workforce. People commented that other campuses had more flexibility to be nimble in their response to workforce needs and professional development but that was not their experience with UND. In particular, the medical campus being built in Williston will need a health care workforce and they are encouraged that UND is responding to this need in preliminary visits.

1. *Improving communication with alumni and* ***harnessing their time and talent****.*

Rationale: This need was highlighted by the sub-group members, most of whom are alumni of UND, and was underscored in focus group notes. UND should encourage alumni to be more involved as community ambassadors, guest lecturers, presenters, thought leaders, recruitment specialists, etc. that utilize their talents and time and not just their financial contributions. All alumni in the sub-group and focus groups expressed their pride and commitment to UND. Continue to cultivate alumni collaborations and connections to deepen their sense of belonging to the University of North Dakota. Intentionally build upon the strengths of our alumni partnerships to contribute in measurable ways to the success of our students and the communities we serve.

# Strategic Priority 1: The “Front Door” to UND

***1.1 Create a more centralized or coordinated way to foster, facilitate, report, and record/track partnerships***

**Action Items:**

* Define ‘Front Door’, it could be virtual or physical. Identify a streamlined way for partners to engage with UND initially and continuously.
* Define “partnership” in the identification of what UND wants it to be (what is the win-win?), who are our target partners? A need exists to be aspirational in our efforts. Consider expanding partnerships with Tribal colleges, P-12 administrators and educators, industry, other higher ed. institutions in our state, etc..
* Review and record existing partnerships campus-wide. Determine if agreements/ documentation of partnership and responsibilities exist. Communication strategies should focus on common grounds and common terms with a shared mission and outcomes. Determine if this is already being done and if so, by whom.
* Potentially create a template document/MOU/A for the campus to use to enter into and exit from partnership agreements including sub-contractors (e.g. the service agreement template – standard clauses and protections) – faster and as needed, which is also a benefit to our partners

**Metrics:**

* Increase the number of people engaged in partnerships “front door” and measure their satisfaction. Closely monitor hits on web pages to guide interest. Provide necessary supports for web page development and maintenance that support partnerships and engagement. Share success stories far and wide. Inform all Alumni about UND Today and ask them to subscribe. Support a webpage that is Alumni Friendly.
* Increase the number of university/stakeholder interactions that lead to beneficial partnerships, across the campus, with all departments.
* Conduct a needs assessment internal to UND – what do faculty and staff perceive as needed collaborative partnerships? Where do relationships exist that are not highlighted? Where are opportunities to develop relationships (see Appendix 2 SWOT).

***1.2 Increase and enhance valuable partnerships and opportunities (e.g. internships, research or service endeavors, training/curriculum development, etc.)***

**Action Items:**

* Expand existing partnerships that are seen as strengths in the state (identified in the SWOT and focus group notes including EERC, CEM Research Institute, RIAS-AERO, Rural Health, SBDC, Rural Attorney, Grand Forks Air Force Base, ROME, InMed,)
* Personal relationships and “knowing someone” is a benefit, more often the external partner is willing to *jump through all of the hoops* to accomplish the task if they have a personal connection to the campus contact making the ask
* Revisit processes, procedures, and policies - determine if absolutely necessary, or just a practice of “checking a box”
* Standardize forms, and reduce the excessive chain of command with local approval – determine the rationale for all the requested signatures on the form.
* Develop terms/clause options depending on desired outcomes and decrease negotiations on agreements (e.g. EERC – IP terms)
* Address policies that do not allow flexibility to innovate or align with non-governmental partners. Hold periodic focus groups to determine and make adaptations.

**Metrics:**

* Reduced time to process and number of steps to completion/approval
* Qualitative assessments/feedback from partners on reduced administrative burdens, shortened timelines to process and implement
* Internal assessment of faculty, staff, and administrators on the timeline and bureaucratic burden
* Increased industry and government-funded partnerships including DOD.
* Increased industry and government-funded research including DOD

***1.3 Enhance internship opportunities for students and employers***

**Action Items:**

* Remove or reduce tuition on internship course credits – not an “on campus” activity. Examine fairness in faculty compensation since it is different than standard coursework (factors include when they enroll, cost of internship, summer session issues, faculty on 9-month contracts) (
* Reduce administrative tasks/burdens on employers: application, position objectives, position posting, mid and final evaluations, all take excessive amounts of time which deters employers from offering internship opportunities to students – they can have student employees for less work/time on their end, and same outcomes for all parties.
* Timelines and deadlines need to be more flexible, as the academic year is unique to institutions of higher learning. Provide flexibility on academic year/semester-based schedule, offer shorter opportunities for internships, or rotations between various placements for a semester to provide broader experience and learning (similar to clinical rotations)
* Standardize/centralize point of contact, systems, and documents, recognizing professional degree-granting departments must respond to accreditation standards in the placements. To the degree possible, colleges should not have different forms, and departments within colleges should not have different forms. Have a point person from each college to work with the central office, also monitor and assess metrics

*\*Additional point of discussion*: Increase local and state experiential learning opportunities that are geared toward keeping students in the Region and expanding the ND workforce. Programs such as Riipen help provide experiential learning, but are currently not focused on state-specific workforce shortages.

**Metrics**:

* Increased student engagement in experiential learning opportunities and internships
* Increased employer engagement in experiential learning opportunities and internships (potentially as a result of the above: improved ease and reduced steps and timeline)
* Assess internship needs in the departments and colleges, with follow-up on whether these partnerships have been created and facilitated

Strategic Priority 2: Addressing Workforce Development Needs Statewide *(combined with experiential learning)*

***2.1 Advance research and educational collaborations to address the health, educational, safety, cultural, and economic needs of our community, state, and region***

**Action Items**

* Strengthen and promote the liberal arts foundation provided at UND for all learners
* Establish a more unified or coordinated way to focus on needs assessment, data collection, and analysis to identify and address areas of greatest need, *e.g.,* health/behavioral health workforce, P-12 workforce
* Collaborate with state, regional, and local government/non-gov’t entities engaged in workforce development (e.g., ND Department of Commerce Workforce Development Division; ND Job Service Workforce Development Council; North Dakota Compass; ND Department of Public Instruction; ND University System; ND Department of Health, others as relevant) to establish partnerships, identify funding opportunities, and develop initiatives that create pathways to employment for UND graduates

**Metrics**

* Annual survey to state and local employers to determine UND’s response to workforce needs.
* Work collaboratively with state and local entities and measure success in partnerships by conducting both qualitative and quantitative research.
* Determine and measure unit-specific action items related to improving graduates’ pathways to local, state, and regional workforce needs
* Support faculty and staff engagement in direct involvement in workforce development.

***2.2 Deepen collaborations with P-12 educational providers on initiatives that support access to higher education, workforce development, and impactful community engagement***

**Action Items**

* Enhance responsiveness to training mandates identified by state entities (e.g., ND Department of Commerce Workforce Development Division; ND Job Service Workforce Development Council; North Dakota Compass; ND Department of Public Instruction; ND University System; ND Department of Health)
* Coordinate the development of internship and community-based learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the identified workforce and community needs
* Establish relationships and experiential opportunities for P-12 students to engage, enhance, and sustain interest in STEAM. Consider developing a series of “summer camps” for the elementary, middle, and high school students in a coordinated, sequential approach, that sustains interest in and develops skills and abilities necessary for success in STEAM fields. Coordinate and identify the current summer campus. Partnership with industry, government and nonprofit sector entities will be key to enhancing these experiential opportunities. Communications with students and parents regarding the employment outcomes potential. Without the establishment of these pipelines, our efforts at the higher levels will be too little, too late.
* Expand dual degree offerings and liberal arts education degree offerings with pathways to specialization (e.g., interdisciplinary pre-law or pre-medicine pathways)

**Metrics**

* Develop a comprehensive list of state training mandates and assess each mandate relative to UND degree programs or other credentials. Measure the alignment of UND educational pathways with identified training mandates
* Identify existing, or develop new, funding streams (fundraising, grant development, etc.) to provide financial assistance to students pursuing P-12 teaching credentials and other identified workforce needs and/or create financial incentives for individuals who, upon degree completion, live and work in a rural or otherwise underserved community
* Each college develops a methodology for tracking their graduates into the workforce or into graduate-level education. Tracking should include information about how graduates move into areas of the workforce that reflect the broad-based, liberal arts education received at UND
* Increased partnerships with local schools to enhance STEAM initiatives

***2.3 Enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion for the workforce development needs of North Dakota and the region***

**Action Items**

* Through explicit outreach and relationship-building, ensure equitable attention is paid to rural and tribal community workforce and/or community engagement needs
* Through trainings, workshops, or formal credentials (such as certificates), broaden the access of those living in rural communities to workforce opportunities

**Metrics**

* Ensure assistance efforts are equitably balanced between rural/urban and tribal/non-tribal
* Results of a ‘needs assessment’ are used to identify or develop training, workshops, etc., that broaden access to individuals in rural communities. Educational offerings are marketed, offered, and assessed.
* Acceptance of transfer credits from tribal colleges
* Number programmatic offerings like INMED, RAIN, InPSYCH
* Number of students enrolled in these programmatic offerings

***2.4 Ongoing development of existing, and cultivation of new relationships with industry, government agency, and nonprofit sector partners (utilizing UND initiatives: Accelerate to Industry program, Career Services, Pancratz Center, Riipen, etc., and developing others)***

**Action Items**

* Consistent, sustained coordination between and among these initiatives and units not only to coordinate efforts but also to avoid duplication of effort and confusion of outside entities in terms of who to work with when looking for, for example, interns.
* This coordination should include education of potential employers/partners as to skillsets and abilities of student talent pools at UND to ensure quality of experience with outside entities.
* Outside entities with pre-existing relationships with UND units who have built internship and employment pipelines should not be disrupted, but development of new partnerships and collaborations for internship and other experiential opportunities, whether paid or unpaid, would benefit from establishment of a single point of contact, whether office or individual, at UND
* These efforts should include sustained attention to growing experiential opportunities with outside entities through sustained, consistent education of potential employers in any sector that broaden their awareness of the different talent pools at UND--undergraduate, graduate, and international—as well as what to expect from each talent pool and what is involved in working with/hiring from each pool.
* Some of the most in-demand degrees and skillsets at the graduate level in, for example, Data Science, Computer Science, Engineering and STEM fields more broadly, are made up of primarily international students, many of whom want to stay in the United States. Educating UND programs, international students themselves, and outside entities on what is involved with CPT, OPT, and Visa sponsorship will be key to keeping the international talent developed at UND in the local, regional, and state economies.
* *\*Additional point of discussion\** insufficient domestic student pools available, especially in STEM fields important to diversification of local, regional, and state economies is a problem that is already and will continue to impact UND’s ability to supply the talent needed by local, regional, state, and national industry, government, and nonprofit partners.

 **Metrics**

* Increased experiential learning opportunities for students
* Increased number of experiential learning opportunities that lead to job creation

# Strategic Priority 3: Engaging Alumni - Harnessing their time and talents

* 1. ***Create a robust, collaborative model between UND Admissions and UND Alumni Association and Foundation***

Expand the relationship between UND and our alumni. The importance of not waiting until graduation to connect with students as alumni are critical.

* We must cultivate a relationship that spans across the student lifecycle and beyond graduation.
* A technological framework is needed to deliver a personalized, engaging experience for UND students starting from the point of recruitment that carries through to their transition into alumni. A shared, customized portfolio that will improve both student and alumni outcomes.

* 1. ***Build meaningful student-alumni relationships for the advancement of UND***
* Utilize the unique international network of our alumni so our students can benefit from their mentorship and networking opportunities.
* Ensure alumni are aware of what is happening at their Alma Mater and create intentional interactions with UND and alumni both on campus, virtually, and by meeting our alumni where they are at.
* Engage student-athletes with alumni by hosting events.

* 1. ***Examine workforce trends and identify educational opportunities for students and alumni***
* Offer certifications or advanced degrees that would enhance alumni marketability and career progression. Provide learning pathways that reinforce the value of their UND degree.
* Create more robust Alumni/UND partnerships to help ensure educational pathways for students are meeting changing industry needs.

**Metrics:**

* Number of UND alumni that stay engaged with UND post-graduation
* Alumni donations
* Readership of alumni materials and social media engagement
* Number of student internships/applied learning experiences
* Number of alumni that return to UND for post-baccalaureate educational opportunities

Strategic Issues:

It is of utmost importance to the co-chairs to include the voices of the nearly 150 opinion leaders who participated in this work, so their contributions are not lost in the summary data. Their comments underscore alignment with themes in the report. Many stakeholders encouraged us to be aspirational in our efforts forward.

Opportunities and concerns were expressed and noted (in the C&E Attachments online). Worth attention, at least from a public perspective, is the importance of the need for more aggressive efforts to address the teacher shortage. There were also concerns about the health care workforce shortage and the separation between nursing and SMHS. Concerns were expressed about transitioning Indigenous students with a strong suggestion that we reinvigorate the American Indian Center (AIC) for a visible presence on-campus so students have a place to go when they feel lonely and isolated. Many positive comments were provided about our work in energy, aerospace, medicine, and health sciences, including Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy.

*Note: of the identified themes, we suggest the communications plan below, be a Communications and Marketing division-specific priority. The prior three identified priorities are institution inclusive.*

Ensure strong communication to nurture partnerships and address needs

***Develop and nurture partnerships that help address North Dakota and regional workforce demands.***

**Action Items:**

* UND increases personal visits throughout the state to listen to and identify the needs of communities.
* UND partners with companies and government entities to create opportunities – identify needs, develop partnerships, and financial partnerships. Host Zoom listening sessions with alumni, industry, government, and K-12 partners.
* UND facilitates a meeting of alumni and local community leaders to host focus groups in each of the four western cities. Bring individuals together for a listening session to gather businesses, government, and P-12 input. Hosted by Provost Deans, and Dept. Chairs of various colleges. Also, consider having UND athletes host events across ND including possible pre-season or non-conference games in Western ND.
* Expand degree-seeking options with flexibility. For example, the Accelerated programs are an excellent value for motivated, high-achieving students and allow the completion of the Master's in 12 months from undergrad graduation by double counting up to 12 credits between the Bachelor’s and Master's degrees ie 2+2+1 programs.

**Metrics:**

* On-going sessions are minimally held every year, and notes are distributed with action items to Provost, Deans, and Department Chairs.
* Expand 2+2 partnerships with NDUS system schools to develop 2+2 undergraduate degree partnership programs and 2+2+1 accelerated Bachelor’s to Master’s degree partnership programs.

***Collaborate with other institutions of higher education in ways that provide access to educational opportunities that meet the needs of our region.***

**Action Items:**

* Expand partnership programs with NDUS schools across the state to keep students within their home communities by offering online or location-based programs
* Support provosts, deans, and department chairs to expand partnership programs with NDUS schools across the state to for example develop 2+ 2 undergraduate degrees partnership programs and 2 + 2 Accelerated Bachelor’s degree to Master’s degree partnership programs.
* Time to degree completion needs to be competitive
* Market “start your degree XXX and finish at UND (online)” together upfront
* Publicize partnerships more so communities are aware of the partnerships

**Metrics:**

* Increase the number of partnerships of degree programs and students served.
* Help people to find the “front door” so they can easily find where and how to connect.
* UND administration to have discussions with Deans and Department Chairs and encourage them to reach out to alumni or industry trade associations etc. for collaborative projects and engagement.
* Create special interest groups within UND to increase communication across internal stakeholders and encourage collaboration.

***Enhance our campus environment in ways that make it easier for outside stakeholders to find ways to partner, engage and collaborate.***

**Action Items:**

* Help people to find the “front door” so they can easily find where and how to connect
* UND administration to have discussions with Deans and Department Chairs and encourage them to reach out to alumni or industry trade associations etc. for collaborative projects and engagement
* Create special interest groups within UND to increase communication across internal stakeholders and encourage collaboration.
* Offer listening sessions to identify how people define what the front door is by stakeholders
* Based on feedback, create a web page under about us with contact information and a commitment to follow through on requests within 48 hours in working days.
* Deans and Department Chairs work together to create special interest groups and identify ways to share information and engagement opportunities with outside stakeholders.
* Bring out hockey and other sports teams to our regional communities for a pre-season game in the western part of the state to help people to feel connected to UND.
* Hold Community Expos to enhance UND presences.

**Metrics:**

* Establishment of a front door and measure traffic.
* Establish feedback mechanisms with outside stakeholders.
* Measure collaborations within UND and outside stakeholders.