Collaboration & Engagement Focus Group

UND Strategic Planning - Community Leaders & Economic Developers Focus Group

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12 Participants

1. **What do you feel makes UND unique from other universities across the state? In other words: ‘Why UND’?**
   1. We have not had a lot of partnership opportunities with UND yet, but we like to use the Alumni Center for meetings and events. We enjoy when we can be on campus. It is a nice way to connect, and we have appreciated being among the UND community.
   2. Interesting to see that there are only a few places in North Dakota to pursue certain programs. When we look at UND we want to know if it has the program that our students want to take and what UND offers in terms of partnerships for our communities. What is it that we can take advantage of out here in Minot? For us it is mainly through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). We would like to do more collaboration and feel like UND could do more in terms of collaboration in these parts of the state. Don’t know what that could look like, just want more of these partnership opportunities.
   3. For the rural communities, sometimes it is hard to find ways that UND is involved in significant ways. To our clients they don’t often see a UND presence out here. We do work with their pilot program through our weather ops, so UND does have a presence at our local airport.
   4. There are a few unique partnerships that help with economic development in this part of the state. We continue to want to find these areas and work on them more. The process to follow to have these collaborations is not always clear. There are places that we have seen UND on the west side of the state, but if we can find more ways to spread their presence and assist us with economic development that will help us.
   5. I work in disability advocacy, and we help with programs and initiatives for individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities. We have heard some push back that being at UND, as a student or person with a disability, is very hard. We utilize the social work programs at UND, but that is about it.
   6. When I think of UND, I think of the great Medical School, the Law School, the outstanding hockey team and the culture that this provides, such as what you have at the Ralph. The environment around sports and community building is valuable. Hockey is the sport that Grand Forks is known for.
   7. We don’t see as much in partnerships in the western part of the state. I am a UND grad, and I am proud of UND, but we need more partnerships in terms of helping economic development in these areas. I would like more outreach and partnerships. The relationships we have are good with SBDC, but we could use more. It seems like once you get past Jamestown we are forgotten.
   8. Our medical programs would not exist without UND, and what you can offer in terms of rural health care- we need these partnerships in place. UND is working to make sure we get physicians down here and that is vital to these areas.
   9. I would echo that our most common contact is SBDC. We have had opportunities to work with the Center for Innovation and this helps with some of our economic development work. When I think of UND the top things that come to mind are the School of Medicine, Law and hockey.
2. **What would be your vision for UND’s future? Do you have any big dreams that you would like to see UND take on in the future?** 
   1. In the western half of the state, we fight this all the time- sending our kids to the east and never getting them back. Engineering, law, med school- our students have to go east to get this education. This really feeds in the west vs. east tension. If you could put a law school over here so that we can have our kids stay in the west and get their education here, then the chances are increased that they will stay here. Teach people in the west that it is okay to stay in the west and that we have jobs here to support them when they return to the workforce after college.
      1. What if we could connect students back to their hometown or communities in the west via experiential opportunities so they can still maintain their connection to that part of the state and see how their degree can lead into a career in these communities?
      2. Yes, that could help. In terms of engineering, we are seeing them start to recruit kids in high school and we hire them during the summer in these areas while they are still in college, so we can keep some of those kids. That model could work. Don’t know how you would do that from a med or law school perspective- but that would be great. A way to tie it back to our communities would be great.
   2. With rural health, med school- if there are more ways that we can help older people age in place and get care they need to live independently as long as possible that would be very important to our state. We are aging in the state especially in our rural communities
   3. Even for individuals for disabilities and getting specialists from UND that can help in the rural areas. We need more specialists that can come to our rural communities. Some people must drive over 6 hours to have medical procedures done.

**If UND were a partner of yours, what would that partnership/endeavor look like and how would it be helpful to you and your community?**

* 1. There are a few different things that partnership would help with. Internally, at UND, I would like to see a clearer focus on true shared governance. This would help provide stability for UND’s workforce. This what a partnership would look like with us at the university. From a statewide focus, it would be partnering on ways that we line up in legislative asks. Things such as the defense of intellectual freedom and defending pensions. We can see clear alignments in areas that we can partner on together.
  2. We have an incredible partnership with UND but dreaming big I would say a focus on retention of our workforce though partnering on creative pursuits in the downtown area. A vibrant downtown is something that our community needs to attract and retain talent. We need UND branded across the community of Grand Forks. This is powerful to creating a community people want to be a part of. We need to welcome everybody and offer something to everyone. We have so much more potential in this area. When people are looking for jobs and where to move, it is less about the job and more about the community that people are moving to. We need to make our community more welcoming and inviting. It should be a place people want to live in. They are looking for activities, entertainment, a spirit and vibe and we are missing the mark on this a bit in North Dakota.
  3. Partnership opportunities for us goes back to experiential learning and utilizing UND for helping us, especially in the areas of marketing and social media. Helping us find interns that can help us with this work. This is more than a few months process- to learn what an organization does is a longer-term project. It does not have to be onsite.
  4. We have Operation Intern, but we can’t use these funds to help nonprofits. This makes no sense. Interns should be exposed to other places to work and this includes nonprofits where you can make a difference and also make a living. We can partner by working with the school of business and opening these channels where we can have that on-the-job experience, meaningful work. I want to have somebody come in here and do real work with our company in terms of experiential learning.
  5. Would be great if UND could serve in areas of placemaking, economic development, small nonprofits. In terms of downtown placemaking they can help look at the data to see if we are successful in creating this ‘sense of place’. We don’t have a lot of services that can help with this. Don’t concede eastern North Dakota and this part of the state as NDSU territory. Be a truly statewide leader, all the way to the Minnesota boarder.
  6. Knowing who is open to these collaborations. Innovation can happen in all parts of the state and other people can be a part of this.
  7. Finding unique collaborations and stories that exist and telling them better so we are aware of what is happening and ways that we can get involved.

1. **In terms of communication, how does UND grow these relationships and foster them with business, industry, and community partners for a long-term benefit to the state? How do we start these initiatives with you and then how do we make these partnerships bigger?**
   1. For me, it is personal relationships, so whatever can be done to have someone with UND come out here and talk to us, our boards, our communities, and see what matters to us. A personal touch goes a long way. It takes a long time to build these relationships, but these are so much more meaningful than an email or press release. You need that personal connection to people.
   2. Know what you want to do and be specific in the ask. We are all busy, we want to partner but the more we have to do in the front end makes it harder. If we need 5 meetings to define what the help will be we will probably not get far. We need to have a ‘win’ to start with. See what we can do in easy ways which does not involve a lot of work on the front end.
   3. I am a one-woman shop- so I don’t want to jump through a lot of hoops. Let us know what is going on, know what you are asking and what we need to do. I don’t have time – we are short staffed and a nonprofit. Time is money (or the lack of money in some cases) so partnerships are important, and we need to make it easier to do this.
   4. Meet us where we are at.
   5. I agree- meet us where we are at. This includes UND reps going to statewide conferences where "we" are … or having UND reps in our communities being involved on our boards/organizations.
   6. On the communication side: it has both an internal and external piece. We have active members on campus that are deeply involved in parts of UND administration, but perception has been that changes at the university or intentions are not always communicated to employees. On external side we don’t always know who to talk to at UND. We don’t know who at UND wants to partner with when it comes to legislative priorities and outreach.
      1. Who do you normally communicate with for ND United?
      2. From the state level we don’t have a point person. For internal issues we work with HR and have members who are involved in other parts of strategic planning and they speak for the membership of the university but they don’ have a specific contact person. They touch a lot of things, and it may not need one person, but it would be nice in things involving the state legislature to see where we align and how we can help each other.
      3. With other companies that do this well, who do you partner with - what position does that person hold?
      4. The best model I can think of is school districts- and that person would be a school board member. There is not a perfect model for this in Higher Ed, so that may be an opportunity that we have not focused much.
   7. I have a different philosophy. We appreciate anytime UND reaches out and asks us to partner. My question is how we make sure that our name is part of your conversation and how do we make sure that we are at the table?
2. **How do we enhance our campus environment in ways that makes it easier for outside stakeholders to partner, engage and collaborate? What are barriers?**
   1. Parking. It is a thing.
   2. The biggest barrier for us is travel time. I can drive 3 minutes and I am at Bismarck State. You get a lot more done face-to-face. Travel is big.
   3. Time, travel, and money. In Bismarck, so for us it is the travel piece.
   4. Do you have UND champions in each community across the state? In the top 20-30 communities can you identify somebody that you can tap into so nobody has to travel? If we have advocates for the school in our communities, you can build an infrastructure of the people that know UND.
   5. There was a time when the colleges around the state allowed older people to audit classes. If this is still available, we advertise this again. We need ways to connect the older generations and offer more continued learning
   6. Do not assume people know campus. Buildings are not always well marked. So, if you can attach a map or give good directions on meeting or event invites. Don’t assume people know the campus when you are inviting them to things.
   7. One area where we have a strong relationship with UND is with accreditation of professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers. That works really well, and we want to expand our offerings with UND in terms of this collaboration.