**Local Community Leader Focus Group**

July 14, 2022, 11:00 am

12 Participants

Zoom

*UND’s Mission is “to provide transformative learning, discovery and community engagement opportunities for developing tomorrow’s leaders.” It is the “community engagement opportunities” that we are particularly interested in today. That’s connected to UND’s long-time mission to Serve North Dakota, and that includes Grand Forks.*

**What do you think UND does well in terms of providing service (to collaborate and engage) with Grand Forks in terms of the governmental and quasi-governmental entities? What are some examples of UND’s engagement and/or willingness to collaborate?**

* UND always has somebody at every event. Doesn’t matter who the event is for, it seems like they always make the effort to have a representative there. Very supportive of the community.
* More recently, it seems like UND has done a better job at aligning curriculum with the workforce development needs. From a regional and local impact this is good to see.
* Workforce. UND has strong job fairs, works to provide internships, helps create workforce centers. Also, creating research opportunities, in Engineering, School of Business and Public Administration. These are applied research opportunities that helps UND and creates real life solutions here in Grand Forks.
* At the Police Department we are working to expand our connections and collaborations with a more diverse, broader community. Those involved in the diversity, equity, and inclusion work at UND have been excellent to work with and have helped us connect with students from diverse backgrounds and follow-up on some of these initiatives.
* The Law School does a good job of keeping alumni connected. This is mutually beneficial to alumni and to UND students at the Law School who get to network with people in the field.
* Partnerships: we have a great partnership with the health programs that engage students in clinical opportunities and project work. But we have used the social science institute and engaged with the communications department for other projects – the willingness of UND faculty and staff to share their expertise has enhanced our work.
* Engaged with UND for our community health assessment. Had opportunity to work on the blue zones which improves health in the community.
* The collaboration that UND has going with Grand Sky and the GFAFB has been tremendous. The support that is here for the GFAFB and the community overall has been great to see.
* We have strong partnerships with UND and the Parks District, particularly when it comes to facilities (golf, tennis, etc.) These partnerships have strengthened in recent years. Working through the issues, good communication between entities.
* Work with the Math Department on efficiency study for the city. This has been a strong collaboration that we will want to build on moving forward.
* The UAS search and rescue team partnered with UND and the other departments and that has helped us out just recently. We would not have had those capabilities without UND, and our entire region is thankful that we have this capacity now.

**Where could UND be playing a role that it doesn’t seem to be playing now? Are there areas where UND can do a better job?**

* Develop a more standard way to engage. We have worked with them on several research studies, and it is almost as if we were working on a national study. A lot of paperwork and hoops that we must jump through. If we had an integrated agreement that the city and country could use for research that would be helpful. We need to change it to a way that removes the overhead and bureaucracy.
* Continue to be aligned in our legislative asks. We need greater alignment than in the past.
* UND has made a lot of great strides in experiential learning and internship opportunities. If this could be increased with an additional focus on local companies, this would be helpful to the workforce needs we have.
* Some of UND programs don’t always meet the industry needs of today. We need industry advisors that can help take some of the UND programming back to what Workforce is needing. UAS and Space is a great example of ways that UND is doing this well. We need to leverage UND’s expertise to help our local needs in Grand Forks, and make sure that we are educating students to meet the workforce needs of today and tomorrow.
* From a community perspective and quality-of-life in the area, how can we return to having joint facilities? UND used to be a leader in our athletic facilities (track, aquatics...) but these are not premier facilities anymore. How can we integrate and cooperate better so UND can be leveraged as a partner and have great facilities at UND that also meet our community needs?
* In terms of what UND is not doing, this is a difficult question. UND is always so open to meeting. If we thought of something important, I think that we could have a meeting in a week to talk about it. The strengths are the partnerships that others have discussed. This has been growing in past several administrations, especially in this one.

*Higher education institutions like UND can have an important impact on a state through Research. Take the ag research done by our friends at NDSU, which has benefited North Dakota and its economy in multi-multi fold ways over the years. Or the energy research done through UND’s Energy & Environmental Research Center, which has played a role in energy boom North Dakota continues to experience. UND’s work in unmanned systems which has led to a statewide UAS ecosystem is another example. Health and wellness is another sector where UND researchers are having an impact.*

**As you look at Grand Forks, and even beyond Grand Forks, are there other sectors where UND could and should consider creating a research focus?**

* The partnership that we have had with the graduate students in the Math Department has been positive. We are now looking at partnerships with other departments across UND. The Math students had a lot of expertise in the data analysis. We saw a gap on policy side of things to help us inform the data, so for that specific project we see added value in exploring those projects.
* Exploring how similar research opportunities might be available in private sector opportunities. If they can partner with private companies as well this would be beneficial.
* Student groups can get involved as a class project, or a faculty member as a project. We need to find a way to refine those opportunities.
* Dissemination of research findings. Make sure that the community hears about the impactful research happening at UND. Not always aware of the amazing research that happens at UND.
* Communication is a strength of the university (news releases, social media). I have looked to UND as a good model for internal communication in a way that connects people.
* One of the struggles is identifying where there are opportunities at UND to engage and partner. Is there a way for community entities to share their projects with UND that can be sent to faculty to see if they can help with it? They can pick and choose and see what is out there. From external perspective it is often hard to know what UND can do to help.

**We have heard UAS and Space, but what do you see on the horizon that UND needs to get more involved in or behind?**

* This is broad, but if we can get more involved in Tech that would do amazing things for this community. Just thinking about all the technology that goes along with UAS and Space. We are really underrepresented in this industry [Tech] in this region. Ryan Adams is doing a good job, but I would love to see more of a focus in building this sector up in the region.
* We need UND to continue to ‘predict the future’. Without UAS we would not have Grand Sky and all the amazing things that have come along with it. None of these things would not have been here without UND building out the ecosystem. So, in some ways, we need you to help us think about what the next thing out there is, and we want to partner with you to make these things happen in our community. To help you build that ecosystem so we can all grow together.

**What would be your vision for UND’s future? Do you have any ‘big dreams’ for the institution?**

* Football winning a national championship and bringing back the rivalry with NDSU. We used to have the longest football rivalry in the US. We need to get back to that.
* UND is a top-notch research school, and I want to see you continue with this, but also be the place where the everyday student can come and find their place. We need to be open, but also remain high end. We are the premiere institution in the state, and we need to pump out the best product. At the same time, we need to grow enrollment and be a place that allows every student a place to thrive.
* Seek more opportunities to engage non-traditional students. Move beyond catering to just your 4-year students. How can we engage with the 2-year colleges and start thinking about stackable credentials? Need to be accessible to today’s students and workforce.
* If you bring in more students, how can you bring in more experiential learning opportunities to keep those students in the area after they graduate? We need to connect students to these opportunities, because they are more likely to stay in the region if they had these experiences.
* My vision would be to have UND be the recognized leader in terms of research, education, training, talent development and engagement around the things that are going well and are strengths. UAS, Space, Energy are all examples of this. We need to leverage that type of recognized strength for UND. When people think of UAS they think of UND and Grand Forks. We need more of that to continue to drive recognition to the area.
* I think we have huge opportunities for adult learning. From community engagement prospective it makes UND much more accessible. You can connect this to workforce. Opportunities for adult learner classes to upskill. The A2i helps with this, but we need to look much more broadly from community engagement lens and building workforce talent
* Taking classes while working a full-time job during the day does not work for me. What can we do more to look at those adult learners? UND is missing out on this. I don’t go to UND because they are not as flexible as they need to be to meet my busy lifestyle (adult learner with a family). I don’t think that UND is going after that population as strongly as they could.
* Adult leaner certificates are an area that we need to continue to build on. Also, non-degree seeking may be another path that could have additional focus and add value to the community.
* Good example of that with Ryan Adams and Electrical Engineering. Three individual models on what people can do in their job. It is self-paced and then you have a master’s degree. Some good examples of this happening at UND that can be expanded.

**Is there anything you want to make sure we consider as we are crafting this strategic plan for UND?**

* Make sure that it your new plan is aspirational and elevated enough. A mistake that UND made in terms of football is that NDSU thought that it could something bigger/better and UND didn’t. UND needs to aspire at a higher level. Needs to compare itself to bigger/better schools and push itself more. We need to be more aspirational. If we don’t look to raise our game, we will continue to be left behind. Football example is a metaphor across the board. Be aspirational.
* Swimming program. How many national titles would we have had? Now Hislop is getting ready to be demolished. Common use facilities used to be more of a focus. Now we are moving away from facilities that drive community members to the campus and focusing on buildings that only UND people can use. This is not welcoming to the community, and I would argue that we need to get back to that.
* I support distance education, but I hope that we have a continued focus on getting students to the physical campus. This adds vibrancy to the community. We have fewer students on campus and that is being felt around the community.
* Focus on quality programing and athletics. The campus is beautiful. All of this adds something to make students want to come to Grand Forks and UND.
* The Strategic Planning Committee seems very focused on trying to support the community and get our input. We also want the County and City to be more involved. How can these lines of communication be open and find out how we can support you in additional to you supporting us? We want to make sure to integrate into the plans so we can have a healthy, vibrant ecosystem that helps everyone.