**UND Strategic Planning**

**Staff Focus Group Responses**

**May 26, 2022**

**9 participants**

1. **UND’s Mission is “*to provide transformative learning, discovery and community engagement opportunities for developing tomorrow’s leaders*.” What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of this statement?**

* I think the community engagement statement is weak. What does community mean? How is it being engaged?
* I would agree. I found all of it a bit weak. I did a google search of ‘transformative learning’ and ‘community engagement’ and it is so broad. We put a lot of emphasis on this, but do people really remember this? I am not sure the mission statement is as important as what we do.
* I also had to look up transformative learning. When I saw what it means it really resonated with me- broadening horizons that leads to introspection. Encouragement to be lifelong learners.
* Embodies what we are, but the verbiage is not great.
* Depends on who we want to talk to. If this is for a prospective student, this is too high level. If we are not a leader and just want to get a great education this may feel like we are not part of this statement. This could be too high level or intimidating to some people, especially the younger students
* This was developed at the end of Kennedy’s tenure.
  + There was a period that we had a mission statement that we had to memorize but it was not this one.

1. **Who does UND serve, and do you believe we are currently meeting these needs? Who do you believe UND should be serving and what do you think needs to change for this to happen?** 
   * The students we serve are not degree seeking, but are looking for continuing education units, or knowledge attainment. I don’t feel UND is overly strong in reaching out to these students. We do that in our office, but we can do more of this as a university. These students feel they are UND students, but since non-credit they are not treated in the same way.
   * We serve the students and we need to be laser focused on doing the best for our students. Dismayed to hear that some of our students are not getting the support they need. I see that across campus. Our students deserve our 100% and they are not always getting that.
   * Some of our students would say we are only serving the administration, the SBHE, or the government and their needs are not being met. I would say we need to be more focused on the students and what they need.
   * I work in a different area where I don’t see much of that. I work with employees of UND, so what I see from day to day is different. I am serving employees so that is what I see. As a whole I think we should be serving students.
   * We serve students first, but we also need to serve our Alumni population. They help get our name out there nationally/globally and bring finances back. We serve the students, but we are a big community and need to serve all of us (faculty and staff as well).
   * Primarily the students, and in descending order the community and beyond. What sometimes is missing is a balance between all of that. This relates to the desire to be “the premiere flagship university of the northern plains” Sometimes students feel put out when they can’t meet with faculty. When they can’t access faculty, if they are too busy with research and publishing, I would like to see those that are good at teaching to be able to teach. Those that are carrying on research that can be their focus.
   * We need to be more futuristic. I have seen a great change in this in the last few years, especially with online education and website. Needs more open mindedness and more diversity awareness. Difficult for them to convey to students what that looks like when they don’t always know. We need more career advisors and more hands-on learning within the community. Less telling students what to think and allowing our students to form their own opinions. Need to look at these things to have improvement.
2. **The Core Values of UND are Community, Discovery, Diversity, Inclusivity, Liberal Arts and Lifelong Learning. What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of these Values? To what degree do you feel these Values are part of UND’s culture?**

* I have felt that the Liberal Arts is such a huge component of the university education that it fosters an educational foundation that it supports what you become in life. To have those experiences outside of your major. If Essential Studies was not required, how many student would dive into these subjects? This is what makes us different from tech or community college schools.
* Agree, Liberal Arts is so important it connects us to live experiences. Students are not getting career training in their curriculum- we need to prepare them for a wide range of life experiences where they can be successful
* I question the verbiage of Liberal Arts. UND is so much more than Liberal Arts. I know of science faculty that see this and questions this asking if other areas are not valued. I would think “Educational Foundation” would be a better verbiage then Liberal Arts.
* Terms can mean different things then the definition of what we mean by it.
* Agree, educational foundation is what stands out. We learn so much more than what comes to us out of classes. We must learn how to engage other people. This aspect the Liberal Arts can give to all the majors. It provides another dimension to our students educationally and career wise.
* I like the comment that each word has multiple meanings. These words mean different things to each of us. I also think that there are too many core values. We have a little bit of everything but if we had less we could do better at each one.
* We do well at a little bit of all of them, but this is the buffet of Core Values (to make us look good), but this is watered down.
* My undergrad degree is from a truly Liberal Arts college and working here I had not really heard Liberal Arts emphasized this for UND. I would not consider this true Liberal Arts college- it does not resonate to me.
* I am a proponent of Lifelong Learning. I think this is essential to continuing to live a full life. I feel that not all our students feel a sense of belonging here- this speaks to the Inclusive value. We can do better at helping them engage.
* I would pair these down to discovery, diversity, and inclusivity.

1. **What do you see as key differentiators of UND as compared to other institutions? What are our strengths, potential areas of growth, or areas which UND should focus for the next decade?**

* We are the only Law and Med school in the State of ND. Our Aerospace is globally known- these help differentiate us. We need to help prepare our students for careers, so they have that holistic experience at UND.
* The health insurance helps us stand out to employees.
* Getting people involved in cutting edge research and involving our Alumni.
* We do well in on-campus and online programs, but we need to focus on growth in both areas.
* We need to keep up with technology, in the classrooms and for support systems.
* Also need more collaboration with the city, state, internships, and with each other. We need to get UND out there in the workforce and in different areas.
* Collaboration amongst colleges as well. We can do so much with this with experiences for students and degrees. We don’t always know what other places on campus will do.
* Asked my son for his feedback since recent graduate: Projectors that work. Archival experience in the history department. Student organizations- the funding department was not always as responsive to our students when they are forming student organizations. His professors in history did not encourage him to go on for his masters or PhD and seems like there is some faculty who are disgruntled or feeling underappreciated. Also lack of internships.
* Online and classroom experience- both are valuable. Students utilize the online to their advantage. I want everybody to have those options. We notice when working with our students that they experience some issues that keeps them from being successful academically- wish they had more flexibility/options for class schedules. More flexibility with online/in-person/part term- meet the students needs better.
* Providing more mental health services. The counseling center cannot keep up with the current demand of our students.
* Sometimes I see a lot of waste (from the finance side). Can we fix some of this waste and spend it on students in a more meaningful way.

1. **What does it mean to feel valued and supported as an employee at UND?**
   * When you have an idea or a direction or initiative it is listened to and taken seriously. It should not just be all these ideas and plans, but they go nowhere. Also, being rewarded for your work, financially.
   * I like the various offices on campus who help me learn new systems that we have here at UND. A lot of things people used to do for us we now do for ourselves. I feel supported when people understand that I may be trying something new. When we ask for something, I appreciate when people know that we are trying to understand new processes.
   * I want to offer kudos to Dean Tande. He does such a good job at a heartfelt thank you. When he comes to our office and thanks us that is nice. Acknowledgement of our work is so important.
   * Agree, Dean Tande is so approachable, down to earth- he treats staff members as valuable. He actively seeks out our knowledge and thoughts.
   * Working from home vs. working from campus. We try here to accommodate people’s needs and have good work/life balance. Have staff members that needs more flexible schedules. Part of that is that we don’t have the same student foot traffic as other offices. Want to know the plan long term for our employees. We have proven that we can be productive from home, but now more urgency to come back to campus. We need more direction in what the expectation is.
   * We have added three new staff members, but we do not have the office space for everyone. We had to create a rotating schedule to work from home. We need the structure and organization to be able to work with each other. Don’t have space now.
   * **Is there anything that makes you feel devalued?** 
     1. We were housed in a space where we all fit, but we were moved. The new space is nice, but we have been sitting in a construction zone. We have staff show up and construction starts, and we have to go home because we don’t have water or electricity or it is too loud.
     2. I have health issues and I do not have a parking permit where I can park in the ramp. The constriction people have taken the Carnegie parking lot and we need to walk around all the construction zone. However, I cannot park close to my building- so this makes me not feel valued. I must work on campus three days a week and I have to walk with all this construction to get to work, but it is not easy with my mobility issues. This does not make me feel valued.
     3. We have all experienced a lot of construction around our areas, and access can really be an issue. I am rather Pollyanna but look at how many years we had deferred maintenance. It is all happening at once. When it is done it will be beautiful and when done, accessible.
     4. Frustrating to see some of the waste that happens on campus sometimes.
     5. Disparity between faculty and staff makes me not feel valued.
     6. Some people that have been here for several years and the new people coming in are making the same wages that we are making that have been here for a while. Should be more incentives for people that have been here for a while.
2. **What would be your vision for UND’s future? Do you have any ‘big dreams’ for the institution?** 
   * I would like to see us reach R1 status, not for the R1 name but for what it means for our students and all the benefits that they get from that. It is amazing what reaching this status would open for our students.
   * We deal with the nontraditional students; I would like to see them be able to use their prior experience for their degree. I would like more flexibility in this area. Perhaps this is through badging or micro credentials. Military or those looking for career change- this would be so important to these students.
   * Cost of room and board has shot up and I think that we are asking a lot for some of our students to be able to afford. I wish there was more institutional funding for those that have a need. I am not sure what will happen this next academic year, the last year our students received emergency grant aid if they were Pell eligible. I don’t know what will fill this need for next year, since this is gone with the CARES program.
   * If we want to be the flagship of ND, we need to collaborate more with other institutions in the state. We need to get out there and collaborate with other institutions in the state- so even if they don’t attend here, they may connect with us in another way.
   * We also need to work with Alumni better, we need to encourage them to come back and continue to take degrees or stay with us in the future.
   * Educate our students on work study options available. Great way to make money to pay for their education and learn.
   * It is hard to pay students the same here on campus, but they can get more money often off campus jobs.
   * Thank you for letting us share our opinions on this- it is great to have our voices heard.