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A campus-wide initiative entitled “Healthy UND 2020” was conceptualized on the University of North Dakota (UND) campus in Grand Forks, North Dakota in the latter half of the fall semester, 2008. The inception of the initiative was February, 2009, with planning meetings involving the UND Wellness Center, the UND Student Health Promotion offices, and the Center of Excellence in Women’s Health through the Department of Family & Community Medicine in the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences (UNDSMHS). This collaborative venture was designed to explore the links between health and wellness and academic success and retention.

The initiative officially began with the campus visit of Jim Grizzell, MBA, MA, CHES, on April 7-9, 2009. Mr. Grizzell’s visit included three presentations at different locations on the UND campus, a day of social marketing training, and discussions with UND administration, faculty, and staff through informal social gatherings. (Attachment A) Mr. Grizzell’s visit introduced Healthy UND 2020 through a series of campus discussions on how UND can work collaboratively to foster a campus community that supports student success. His presentations explored strategies to reduce impediments to academic performance; promote health and wellness through an integrated, systems-wide approach; and employ evidence-based and best practices in disease prevention and health promotion programs. (Attachment B)

Mr. Grizzell’s visit was followed by initiative planning members’ dialogue with UND students in seven focus groups campus-wide to determine the needs of the students for their personal health and wellness, the students’ perceptions of current UND strengths and weaknesses, and student recommendations for improvement. The information gleaned from these groups has been amalgamated, analyzed, and synthesized to help inform the Healthy UND 2020 steering committee. The steering committee will begin meeting in September, 2009, to act on topics of the committee’s discretion based on provided data. Committee actions will be illuminated by the information contained in this report via two primary sources: opinion survey results completed by UND administrators, faculty, staff, students, and one community member; and the focus group research and analysis. An intermingling of issues showed that most topics were interdependent. Findings showed an overlap of themes, perceptions, and recommendations. Verbatim student comments from seven transcriptions are included in this report. Those comments are in quotation marks and have been italicized for additional emphasis.
INTRODUCTION

The campus visit by Mr. Jim Grizzell was viewed and explained as a continuation of the extensive work already accomplished on the University of North Dakota campus. A partial list of achievements was distributed at all Grizzell presentations. (Attachment C)

FINDINGS

Stress
Opinion survey data in conjunction with campus health and wellness training within the academic success frame indicated stress is the second leading issue impacting student academic performance. Students, however, seemed to rank stress highest through a myriad of connections with academic attainment. Opinion survey respondents noted sleep as a separate issue while students subsumed lack of sleep as a major component contributing to stress. For the purposes of this report, sleep will be addressed separately. Students also included financial stress under the larger topic umbrella while respondents delineated finances as a separate issue. Students tended to attribute some aspects of stress to factors with classes that they felt were beyond their control.

Diversity
The University of North Dakota’s website on Diversity and Pluralism states: “The University of North Dakota takes pride in its mission to meet the individual and group needs of a diverse and pluralistic society through education, research, and service. The peoples served by and associated with the University vary widely; all must be valued for the richness their different cultures, heritages, perspectives, and ideas bring to the community.” Creating a climate of acceptance, as mandated in UND’s Diversity Mission Statement, remains an ongoing university community focus. A few students addressed the diversity issue as a concern and as a continuing obstacle on the campus.

Substance Abuse
The headline of a front page article in the June 4, 2009 Grand Forks Herald newspaper stated, “N.D. leads nation in drinking.” The secondary headline continued, “Survey shows high rate of binge, underage alcohol use.” This article confirms alcohol consumption and substance abuse as the opinion survey item deemed the most significant deterrent to academic performance. Conversely, three times as many people noted that busy lifestyles were more of a barrier to wellness than substance abuse. Students uniformly across all focus groups recognized the problems alcohol use creates and the impact on class attendance and participation which in turn influence academic performance.

Time Management/Life Balance
Busy schedules were noted by survey respondents as the primary obstacle to health and wellness. By a large margin, participants noted time was the single factor that hindered students from addressing health and wellness issues.
Education
The importance of attending classes consistently and of recognizing the investment in education was intertwined with other themes. Education in the special needs of diverse groups through discussion of issues ("teaching teachers") was recommended. When instances or episodes of discrimination or violence occurred on the campus, students stated that they hear the problem initially but feel they are not informed of the ultimate resolution. Students want to know the aftermath of campus situations.

Food/Diet
All student groups initiated and addressed the issue of food as an overarching component to health and wellness. The opinion survey linked poor diet and lack of exercise as the third highest indicator of potential difficulty in student performance. These combined factors were listed as the second most prevalent barrier perceived by survey participants.

Sleep
Students considered sleep to be a contributing factor to stress while the opinion survey noted sleep as a separate issue. Students verbalized that lack of regular sleep is a factor that could occasionally be avoided through time management and organization. With simultaneous demands from multiple classes, however, the impact on students’ sleep seemed unavoidable to them.

Depression and Anxiety
The opinion survey respondents listed mental health as a separate entity and one of the top five contributors influencing students’ health and wellness. On the opinion survey, three people stated the stigma of mental illness remains an obstacle. Students remarked that they saw depression stemming predominantly from a feeling of isolation. This view was more pronounced in cultures which strongly value community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Motivate students through healthy modeling.
2. The Wellness Wing in Brannon Hall was suggested as a viable option to promote for students interested in a more guaranteed healthy undergraduate experience. The stipulation was made that students need to be aware of this option, need to be invested in the selection of this alternative as a housing choice, and that the decision to live in the Wellness Wing must be the student’s and not the decision of her or his parent(s).
3. A comprehensive, user-friendly, easily accessible calendar with all UND and all Greater Grand Forks community events delineated would be helpful in encouraging student participation.
4. Social programming should be promoted through marketing and advertising. Student motivation is a key with incentives to participate and varied organizations available to the student body. Timing is important. Too much information too early will be ignored.
5. All students need to find a connection on the campus. Connections promote retention.
6. “Continue doing focus groups.”
7. Continue campus-wide efforts toward acceptance – race, age, ethnicity, orientation, culture. Classes focused on education about specific minority groups were recommended.
8. Find ways to make fitness fun.
9. Require students to attend one or two cultural events per year.
10. Recruit students to become involved and organize events to promote a vested interest in an activity. Ask participating students to recruit others to join.
11. Talk to students as adults, particularly when educating about substance abuse.
12. Tailor an introductory session to a wellness activity on a gender specific night to encourage participation.
13. Promote a theme day once per month for awareness on basic issues – nutrition, exercise, health screenings, Earth Day, for example.
14. Try to combat the “Thirsty Thursday” mentality.
15. Consider making the “University Life” class mandatory.
16. Ask clubs to have specifics on their mission, activities, meeting dates/times, and membership expectations available online and on posters. Ask clubs to provide a thorough portrait of their group to incoming freshmen.
17. Emphasize and support the RA’s for the tremendous influence they have on students in the residence halls.

METHODOLOGY

Opinion Survey
Invitations were sent to key individuals across the campus – administration, faculty, staff, and students – who were targeted to be instrumental in this health and wellness initiative. People who were encouraged to have a vested interest in the initiative were personally invited through a letter from UND President Robert O. Kelley to attend one of the Grizzell presentations. A “Healthy UND 2020 Opinion Survey” was distributed to all Grizzell presentation attendees. (Attachment D) The survey response rate was minimal, thus a follow-up letter was sent to invited individuals along with the administrators and staff who may have been unable to attend. (Attachment E) Salient points from the survey are included with this report. The full results of the survey were summarized. (Attachment F)

Focus Group Questions
The number of questions for the focus groups was deliberately limited to encourage response from all participants and to allow sufficient time to discuss each topic. (Attachment G) Questions were based on the opinion survey questions distributed to Grizzell presentation participants and invitees to provide the opportunity for the correlation of responses. The questions were developed by the three people tasked to initiate the Healthy UND 2020 project.
Focus Group Sites
Seven focus groups were held in the spring of 2009. It was determined that students would be more comfortable and relaxed in settings familiar to the group with which they were participating. The focus group facilitator and the focus group advisor, therefore, held discussions in various buildings around the University of North Dakota campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Representative Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04.22.09</td>
<td>Memorial Union</td>
<td>Student Wellness Advisory Council</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.23.09</td>
<td>American Indian Student Services</td>
<td>American Indian students</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.27.09</td>
<td>Christus Rex Campus Center</td>
<td>Ten Percent Society</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.28.09</td>
<td>Wellness Center</td>
<td>Wellness Center Representatives</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.30.09</td>
<td>Wilkerson Complex</td>
<td>Food &amp; Facilities Representatives</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.06.09</td>
<td>College of Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.07.09</td>
<td>College of Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A focus group was scheduled with Tyrone Grandstrand for UND Student Senators through the UND Student Government for 05.03.09. Food was purchased and the conference room was reserved and arranged, gift cards were purchased, and facilitators were on-site and prepared for the group. No students showed up for the discussion.

Participant Recruitment
A notice was emailed to the “Healthy UND Coalition” listserv on April 15, 2009:

The Healthy UND 2020 initiative will be conducting student focus groups this spring and summer to obtain input from students on health and wellness issues/needs. The results will be used as part of the Healthy UND 2020 action planning process.

We need your help in identifying existing groups of students who may be interested in participating. We are looking for opportunities to conduct focus groups as part of a classroom activity, extra credit project or group meeting.

We would like to recruit small groups of students (6-10 participants) to visit with for about one hour. We will provide refreshments and a $5 gift card to each participant. We have a student friendly invitation and poster which can be forwarded to you upon request.

Susan Splichal will be serving as focus group facilitator and Jane Croeker will serve as focus group observer/recorder.

We are also looking for Healthy UND 2020 steering committee member nominations to forward to President Kelley for his consideration.
Please contact janecroeker@mail.und.edu or 701.777.4817 if you have student groups willing to participate, you are interested in being considered for the steering committee or you have questions about the project.

The student groups were recruited through the outreach and connections of the focus group advisor working with the advisors for the individual groups. (Attachment H)

The initial email, as noted, was sent April 15. Within three weeks, all seven focus groups had been completed. Students were asked by a designate affiliated with their group to participate but attendance at the focus group was entirely voluntary.

- Danielle Refsland organized a group of students who were members of the Student Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC). 4 SWAC members and 1 non-SWAC member participated in the discussion.
- Jenna Parisien organized the American Indian student group of traditional and non-traditionally aged students.
- Kim Jorgensen, TPS Social Hour Coordinator, encouraged people to participate in a focus group in lieu of their usual gathering.
- Carrie Herrig, Assistant Director of Marketing & Membership with the University of North Dakota Student Wellness Center, organized the group of Wellness Center Representatives.
- Dustin Frize, Dining Services Dietician, chose student representatives from the residence halls’ Food/Facilities group to participate after one of their weekly meetings.
- Lois Ustanko, adjunct instructor with the College of Nursing, recruited students from her classes to participate in groups.

$5.00 Marketplace gift cards were given to students as a thank you for their time. Food and beverages were provided for each of the groups. Healthy food options were furnished for the students.

**Focus Group Agenda**

Dates of the meetings are listed on page 4. Each focus group was scheduled for one hour. Food, beverages, self-stick easel pads, easel stand, seating, and tape recorders were arranged prior to the arrival of the students. Students were encouraged to sit together in a group to facilitate recording, although this was not always possible. Some students arrived after their group discussion had begun. The facilitators included latecomers to the dialogue although some then sat on the periphery of the group. If a single table was unavailable, tables were arranged in a manner conducive to a round table discussion. Students were greeted as they entered the room or, if already present, the facilitators introduced themselves to the individual students prior to commencing the discussion.

The agenda for each of the focus group followed a comparable pattern:

- Introduce group facilitators
- Review confidentiality incumbent with qualitative research focus groups:
- First names
- Tape recording
- Pseudonyms only on transcriptions
- Explanation of data use in aggregate form
- Post-meeting personal networking off recording, if desired
- Access to taped dialogue
- Access to transcription

Explain Healthy UND 2020 initiative:
- World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
- Wellness is an on-going process to reach our full potential as human beings, personally and in relation to families, community, and the world around us.
- Seven dimensions of wellness:
  - physical
  - emotional
  - social
  - spiritual
  - intellectual
  - occupational
  - environmental

Explain focus group purpose:
You have been invited to share your perceptions and suggestions for the direction of health and wellness on the UND campus. Your ideas will be instrumental as an action plan is crafted for the next decade.

List of names to be used solely for Dining Services accountability
Demographics sheet (Attachment I)

As you know, focus groups are designed to inform a particular program. Two of the hallmarks of focus groups are confidentiality and anonymity. We tape record our discussion with pseudonyms so we’ll ask you to identify yourself by your first name only. A pseudonym will be provided for each of you and that will be your anonymous identifier on the tape. We use the compiled ideas (data) to inform our practice and to give us direction as to how we should proceed. With our group today, we are most anxious to hear your ideas, your opinions, and your suggestions about how we might best serve your needs. We are interested in health and wellness for all our students on the UND campus and your recommendations will be added to the opinions of other groups so that we might focus our wellness efforts in the manner most helpful to you, our students. Any names you mention on the tape will be changed and all your comments will be coalesced into codes and bullet points that will center our efforts in the best manner to benefit the campus community.
Once the transcription has been completed, you are welcome to review the transcript at any time to check accuracy. You are also welcome to discuss any follow-up questions or comments off-tape, if you’d like. It is your choice to either include or to not include any information off the tape recording in our information summary. We’ll ask your preference.

Anything else we should discuss about our upcoming conversation before we turn on the tape?

At this point the tape recorders were turned on and the discussion began. More than one tape recorder was used to ensure complete capture of the dialogue for future transcription. After the recordings concluded, the facilitators thanked students as a group and then individually as people exited the room. Facilitators remained well after the recording to complete conversations with students from the groups.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

A “Healthy UND 2020 Student Focus Group Demographic Summary” is included with this report. ([Attachment J](#))

**Race and Ethnicity**
The Mission Statement of the University of North Dakota begins with the title “Diversity and Pluralism” and continues with the opening statement:

“The University of North Dakota takes pride in its mission to meet the individual and group needs of a diverse and pluralistic society through education, research, and service.” [www.und.edu/dept/diversity/mission.html](http://www.und.edu/dept/diversity/mission.html)

It is the continuing mission of the university to support and encourage the education and employment of all people as stated:

“Diversity in the University is constituted by the full participation of persons of different racial and ethnic heritage, age, gender, socio-economic background, religion, and sexual orientation; of persons with disabilities; and of people from other countries. Of special and particular importance is the University's longstanding commitment to the education of American Indian students and the cultures and traditions of the American Indian people.” [www.und.edu/dept/diversity/mission.html](http://www.und.edu/dept/diversity/mission.html)

Although the university’s advocacy of multiculturalism is a distinct effort, the campus remains predominately white. In spite of diversity outreach, 85.35% of the 2007-2008 class of undergraduates declared their race as white. [www.und.edu/dept/datacol/annualreports/200809/b3reg431f.pdf](http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/annualreports/200809/b3reg431f.pdf)
It was particularly gratifying, therefore, that our focus groups included people who declared themselves as American Indian/Alaskan Native; African American; Asian/Pacific Islander; Hispanic; and Caucasian.

**Class Status**
Participation of undergraduate students, freshmen through seniors, was quite evenly distributed. Additionally, four graduate students participated in groups. One person abstained from specifying class status.

**Housing**
54% of all focus group participants lived in the residences halls on the University of North Dakota campus. 33% lived in off-campus housing with the remainder living on-campus. None of the participants lived in Greek housing.

**Residency**
The largest demographic sector of students claimed North Dakota as their state of residency. Of all participants, 65% were from North Dakota and 28% declared Minnesota as their home state. The remaining participants (3) noted Wisconsin and South Dakota as their state of residence. There were no international students in any of the groups.

**Addressed Services**
Of all services available on the University of North Dakota campus, students noted only three areas when asked what services they used:
- Wellness Center – (55% of total responses)
- Student Health Services – (38% of total responses)
- University Counseling Center – (7% of total responses)

**Health Insurance**
In the group discussions, health insurance seemed the more dire issue for the older students, logically. Numbers indicate that 78% of all students in the focus groups did have health insurance while 22% stated that they are uninsured.

**Gender and Age**
The male/female distribution was relatively even:
- Male 46%
- Female 54%
Participant ages ranged from 18 years to 43 years with the largest percentage (26%) age 19 years. There were 46 total participants.

**DISCUSSION RESULTS**

Interconnectivity and overlapping themes emerged from the discussions. Aspects students mentioned relating to one theme blended into other themes. General categories
are delineated below. Many of the comments which support one of the themes associate with additional themes. Explicit attention to peer pressure ("group think," some students stated) was recommended as a means to mitigate many types of unhealthy conduct.

Healthy debate with the occasional divergent opinion was a part of the dialogue. All perspectives were encouraged. Some people had concrete suggestions for improvement. Many of the feasible recommendations have been included. Students mentioned person-to-person connection in varying guises throughout each of the themes. Loneliness was acknowledged as particularly deleterious for freshmen.

Timing was a factor intrinsic to many of the themes. Students felt so overwhelmed with information when they were incoming freshmen that many people recommended postponing distribution of information until later in the fall semester.

**Stress**

Stress seemed to be omnipresent for all students yet the guises are so diverse that this umbrella term applies to students in many and varied forms. The universal explanation students gave for their academic stress was the perceived increasing demand of credit requirements which impacts the ability to graduate in four years. Large class sizes are a deterrent to success for many students as it is difficult to concentrate and perform well with distracting technology which is pervasive in many lecture bowl classes. Growing and learning about oneself should be intrinsic to college life, students shared, yet the means to grow may take a toll. "Some of those ways can be relationships, friendships, and if you have even something a little stressful, it can really affect the amount of stress in your academics and just what you’re doing."

Students generally agreed that they performed better in their classes when they felt well physically, were well rested, and had time to prepare adequately for the requirements of their classes. Students also emphasized self-esteem issues within physical wellness. They discussed feeling more confident, comfortable, and energized when they felt physically fit. Many students viewed exercise as a good stress reliever. "...you can’t just dedicate yourself to books and studying all of the time. You have to get out there and take time for yourself, and by going to the Wellness Center or going out for a run or whatever is a good way to take time for yourself.” Another student in another group concurred. “There’s also reducing stress. Like basically when somebody has all the pressures and stuff, sometimes they just need to go exert their energy, better to do it through physical activity like running or any type of exercise.”

Procrastination in preparing for tests and completing projects and papers produces avoidable stress, students acknowledged. The perceived need to “party” after a test or paper contributes to substance abuse and perpetuates the stress cycle. “Yeah, because to me, time is, like, everybody knows procrastinating and...studying for the day before the test. And it puts a lot of stress and then you want to party afterwards or something like that to relieve your stress. It’s just like a negative, you know...habits that you are developing.” Students stated that a reasonable credit load should help with class preparation. Environment and peers also contribute to and make a difference in
developing study habits. The time to begin appropriate study habits and techniques is freshman year, students agreed. It was suggested that the freshman “University Life” course could be required and augmented.

Tour guides promote what they deem as “stress relieving areas” such as the Counseling Center and the Wellness Center. The Getting Started Program was recommended as a helpful adjunct for beginning freshmen. “I think also with that is getting involved with other things, not just schoolwork, because like for me I am involved in a bunch of other things.” Participation in extra-curricular activities was touted as a means to encourage community, friendship, and interests beyond a program of study.

One student quite poignantly recounted issues intermingling stress with financial responsibilities and obligations. When asked how it was possible to maintain a life balance and to manage school and jobs, the response might resonate with many students for whom the demands on time may seem daunting.

Student: “You choose the worst food options because you need something quick so you can run to the job or so you can get back to your studying to make up everything that you’ve missed. Having to work takes you away from studying.”

Facilitator: “How do you manage all of that then?”

Student: “I don’t. It consumes me every semester. It really does. I don’t have balance in my life and I haven’t had balance in my life since probably my freshman year, and that definitely shows in why I’ve been here for 5 years, 6 years, or whatever it is, but that’s probably one of the biggest things that I have troubles with is that I work two jobs and I have to work those two jobs to make ends meet because it’s just unfortunate that I always have something that comes up with medical, and so.”

Finances were a serious area of concern for many students on several levels. Students worry about the debt they are incurring. They worry about paying their own bills in a timely manner based on receiving their loan dollars promptly. There are also real concerns about dealing with the Financial Aid Office where their finance aid has been outsourced to a company outside the university. UND acquisition of a third party company in dealing with financial aid is strongly disliked. The perception of financial aid has become more difficult to access, delays have increased, and the company charges additional fees. There is a waiting fee with some transactions which subsequently delays payments. Students feel the university should control its own student finances.

“College is a pressure cooker. I mean everything has to be done at a certain time, by certain dates. My roommate had 5 tests in one week, so I mean like that.” This view took precedence. Three students took the opposite view that stress is a motivator in completing class requirements. “Sometimes it helps get things done.” The majority, however, felt that the detrimental stress far outweighed any advantages.

Diversity
Five active committees on the University of North Dakota campus are charged with supporting diversity. The Diversity Advisory Subcommittee, Council on Campus Climate, American Indians Program Council (AIPC), Multicultural Awareness
Committee (MAC), and the President’s Advisory Council on Women’s Issues (PAC-W) support the continuing efforts to encourage acceptance and to celebrate heterogeneity. For some groups, acceptance felt like an issue. Other groups did not mention the multicultural focus of the campus.

Language contributed to a dialogue of understanding varying perspectives and struggles. Discussion of stress interrelated with expressed thoughts about how a language barrier would exacerbate the challenges of studying and preparing for exams. “I guess this is international students but I know a lot of them. It will take them extra time because of the language like because they have to look, besides just reading their assignment, they have to look up all the words they don’t know. That would be hard for me.”

An emphasis on opportunity for learning would be a helpful adjunct to learning about diversity. “I think definitely college is a time that you’re learning a lot about yourself and kind of stretching yourself in new ways.” Sensitivity for classmates should be intrinsic to the college experience. It does not always follow, however, that people show consideration for those seated around them in classes.

“I’d like to add something . . . about, you know, having to hear what everybody is talking about, hear other students, you know . . . there needs to be something done about the cultural sensitivity on this campus. Especially when you’re a minority because I remember one circumstance in particular where I was sitting in a room of 300 people getting ready to take an exam, and I happened to overhear somebody behind me bad mouth the Native Americans, and oh my God I couldn’t, I just could just barely restrain myself. I wanted to turn around and choke the guy but I couldn’t get kicked out of the class before the exam, well, on top of you just can’t choke a guy. [laughing] But even to turn around and confront him, though, I would have risked, you know just verbally, say hey, that’s, I heard what you said and that’s not appropriate. You know, I could’ve risked getting kicked out of my exam, so I have to sit there and just try and gather myself back and I lost probably 15 minutes at the beginning of that exam because I couldn’t think, I was so upset, and I know that happens everywhere and, well, being Native American happens here, you know it’s kind of the elephant in the room, but I’m sure it happens with other cultures as well and it’s stressful.”

Another person added a more general explanation following the specific example above.

“I think it’s something that we probably, I kind of thought of that a while ago, you know we haven’t talked about cultural sensitivity or people feeling out of place purely because they’re not of the majority of the population and, you know, UND does a big job of talking the talking but walking the walking is completely different, you know, and when you see the same person on all their diversity publications . . . you know there’s something wrong, you know. It’s not as diverse as they’d like to be, even the professors, even the people that, that administrators, don’t know as much as they think they do. They can be just as ignorant as some of these freshman that walk on campus who have never laid eyes on a black person or who have never talked to or known American Indians that live in North Dakota . . . you know.”
When the facilitator asked about acceptance for diversity throughout the campus, one person responded:

“I have dealt with some of these issues personally and I think that that’s an issue that is kind of very, very difficult to deal with. Even back at my first year, I was part of a group there and we’d always do stuff with the group there. We would put on events for the community to kind of educate about our group, but it seems like the only people who would attend are the people within our group . . . but it just doesn’t spark that interest. Whenever we try to set up events on campus, a lot of times it will be people within the group or close friends that come to our events, where we want to try to kind of reach everybody else, and I don’t know if there’s an undercurrent that people, they want to accept it but I think it goes back to the group thing. I really don’t know how else you really can get to the root of that just because the demographics is so outweighed, the majority vs the few . . .”

The students for whom diversity was an issue and who experienced bias seemed to share a more loquacious explanation. Once the window for comment opened, it seemed as if the hurt or the anger could not be contained in succinct response. Some people expressed what seemed to be almost a sense of bewilderment at the inability of classmates to accept people with differing skin color, culture, or religion.

Education for the receptivity of new experiences within college life may be aggrandized to the population of people with whom the students share their learning experiences.

Substance Abuse
The June 4, 2009 issue of the Grand Forks Herald newspaper featured a front page article entitled, “N.D. leads nation in drinking.” The secondary headline stated, “Survey shows high rate of binge, underage alcohol use.” Researchers from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health cited in the article released the statistic that the national average for binge drinking is 23% compared with the North Dakota average of 32%. “More than 58 percent of North Dakota for age 18 to 25—the highest rate in the U.S.—reported binge drinking. Nearly 29 percent in the 26-and-older category said they had five or more drinks in one sitting, also leading the nation, the report said.” The article quotes the North Dakota attorney general as stating alcohol abuse is a serious social problem. The article concluded with the statement, “The study also found North Dakota was one of five states that showed increases in marijuana use among people ages 12 and older. But the state was among the lowest in the rate of illicit drug use other than marijuana.”

Released through the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, these dire statistics clearly focus on the depth of the problem faced by the UND administration, faculty, and staff. Students acknowledge alcohol and drug issues. Resident Hall staff (RA’s) find it challenging to be able to enforce the laws they are asked to uphold. “Maybe the first penalty needs to be more than just a one hour education course and their second time their parents should be notified so maybe their parents should be notified on the first offense. I think that is a huge factor, if their parents find out what’s going on...parents have a huge influence on what actions they have on campus so if they know that on their first offense their parents will be notified, their
actions could be changed severely by it.” The majority of all people in the focus groups agreed that the repercussions for alcohol abuse are far too lenient. A few students thought the drinking problem affected all ages. Some mentioned an unjust double standard with specific student populations, for example aviation students: “...they tell aviation students they are not supposed to get caught but that’s with minors or whatnot but if you’re caught in residence halls it’s not that big of a deal.”

Many focus group participants assumed and accepted the fact that students on the campus are going to drink alcohol. Their focus was how to encourage people to drink responsibly. “Thirsty Thursday” is a commonly accepted component of university life for many. Participation in this feature of campus life may lead to skipping classes on Fridays or attending classes with a hangover. Drinking regularly or cyclically may lead to serious problems academically, socially, and physically and ultimately may lead to addiction, students noted. Greek fraternities and sororities were mentioned as an easy source to obtain alcohol and locations where alcohol consumption is not only accepted but expected. Some students stated that house parties were worse for alcohol abuse than the Greek organizations, however.

Drinking garnered quite differing opinions even within the same group. “I just know that like for me I look at it as a social activity.” and “It’s so stupid, it’s such a waste of time.” along with “I guess my problem I have like with going out and getting drunk is that some people don’t remember what they did that weekend and that would scare me.”

The RA’s, in particular, stated they have been asked to make alcohol infractions “an educational process” yet they have no sense that their educational efforts produced a behavior change. RA’s said they talk to students who violate the campus, state, and legal stipulations yet they stated conversations do not alter behavior or produce outcome modification. Even students who acknowledge that their behavior is inappropriate and who appreciate the RA’s concern do not adjust their actions. When students find the ramifications for their abuse of the campus alcohol rules are not substantive, subsequent transgressions become exponentially easier. The RA sponsored programs in Walsh Hall were recommended as exemplary. There was a high level of participation. Students suggested comparable programs in other residence halls to combat excessive drinking due to boredom.

A student expressed strong feelings, backed by others, about the disparity between support of Greek activities and the lack of support for ecumenical adjuncts to college life.

“A student expressed strong feelings, backed by others, about the disparity between support of Greek activities and the lack of support for ecumenical adjuncts to college life. “I think it’s real interesting that UND as a college and I know this gets all into politics and everything like that, but they support fraternities and sororities that are known for drinking and partying, yet other alternatives such as like Campus Crusade or Jacobs Well or intervarsity don’t get a lot of play time, they don’t get a lot of promotion from the University. We have a very strong Greek life and that’s what gets promoted and that’s what gets the freshman in there, and then they get to partying and just letting them know like, hey, there are these other things too and I know that they’re church based and their Christian based and so that will probably meet resistance, but I definitely think like if you’re putting up
Some group participants stated that drinking was a waste of time, an escape, a means to alter who they are, yet a societal expectation. Those who did not drink and who chose not to drink suggested finding friends with whom to socialize who shared similar views. Students stressed that a continual effort to find a viable solution to the problem of binge drinking should be of high importance to the campus community. Surprisingly, however, drinking in general was explicitly recognized by students as being more worrisome than binge drinking. The RA’s in the focus groups along with the majority of other students felt a need for stronger penalties for substance abuse, alcohol in particular. No students stated that the UND penalties were too stringent.

“Thirsty Thursday” is an issue. Some students who regularly participate in drinking until drunk are unable to attend classes on Fridays. Focus group participants mentioned people they knew who deliberately would not schedule any classes on Fridays with the presupposition that they would be unable to attend. This fact elicited varied responses: “that is really pathetic if you’re like adjusting your schedule on Friday because every Thursday you need to go out and get wasted” and “You can see it that way but also if you think about it in another way, it can be a smart decision. Like that means that they’re taking charge and they know themselves.”

The adoption of a policy creating a tobacco-free campus was largely due to the efforts of the Healthy UND Coalition. The difficulty, students remarked, is enforcement. This is especially challenging for the RA’s. “Nobody is scared to because they know that nothing’s going to happen so therefore by putting a sign saying ‘we’re tobacco-free but if you smoke it’s OK we’re not going to do anything about it’ it’s not going to help.” Students agreed that there is no place to put used cigarettes which creates an aesthetic problem on the campus. They stated that the university does not support clear ramifications for smoking violations. RA’s feel they have little or no recourse to enforce the tobacco mandates. There was no consensus on the best method to require student compliance. “But there’s nothing that as an RA we can do. We’re supposed to let it happen. They are smoking too close to buildings, we say “please more away from the building, 50 feet” but that’s about it. And there is no, there’s nothing, so it’s, this is going to continue to happen…until something else changes.”

Students felt that appropriate punishments should be meted out for alcohol infractions. Currently, most students (including RA’s) agree that violations generally are dismissed with a “slap on the wrist.” Most agreed that the university repercussions for drinking violations are far too lenient and often not enforced. Of those who verbalized comments about drinking, students unanimously stated the consequences for violations are not enforced uniformly. The limited authority RA’s have in dealing with alcohol issues is frustrating and counterproductive to university regulations.

Some students expressed the belief that their faith in God impacted their decision to abstain from drinking alcohol. These students wondered aloud if UND had a connection
with churches. Instances of people who used to drink and had subsequent difficulties because of their drinking were improved through faith, some students stated. “This is bringing God into it again but, um, I really, like I’ve seen people’s lives change because of them having God in their life. Like they used to drink and stuff and now they don’t.”

Students expressed the consensus that a full schedule of classes, but not an overload, is the best solution to keeping active and engaged without being overwhelmed. Students stated that being occupied and having class responsibilities that are manageable yet required time and attention are a means to mitigate some of the temptations of drinking. One person offered a concrete solution for drinking issues. “And a solution to help with the drinking is everybody should have at least one or two good buddies that know their limits, that can help them out, and if anything goes wrong, then they can be there for them . . . they just have to be there to help them.” This person models community on several levels: “personally I am the friend factor, like I don’t drink.”

**Time Management and Balance**

“Time is my biggest issue.” The existing Healthy UND Coalition was instrumental in the promotion of and support for the Wellness Center which is now an integral part of the UND campus. While this is a viable option for many students, some people stated that they are non-athletes and feel somewhat uncomfortable with people who seem to already be quite fit. Options for those who are not yet ready for the Wellness Center include intramural activities, clubs, and events on the campus. Finding the time to participate is a challenge, students noted.

“Cramming for tests” may make students physically ill by reducing the immune system through lack of sleep and improper food intake. Some degree requirements for their majors and minors seem to require an inordinately high number of participation hours for the number of credits. Music and physical education were mentioned specifically as requiring a large amount of time for the number of course credits. In addition to time studying, students stated that blending their attendance expectations for scheduled classes with time to study often leaves limited free time or ambition for exercise.

Students recommended making lists and prioritizing to help with time management issues. Making lists helps to focus attention on the most pertinent daily and weekly requirements. “I know that I can control it . . . you know, just take it easy and write down everything that I have to do and start dividing my time.” Some students viewed their education as their full-time job and have the preferred option to concentrate fully on their studies. When this is not a choice for some students, those who need to work or those who have the onus of responsibility with spouses, partners, or families, for instance, time management becomes increasingly demanding yet exponentially necessary because time is not an autonomous option. Much of a person’s schedule is impacted by the needs of others.

Ineffective time management was noted as a significant deterrent to health and wellness. Lack of sufficient time for meals, study, and exercise are enmeshed with stress. Some focus group members mentioned that it took students at least their full freshman year to
become accustomed enough to university life to establish a healthy lifestyle through organization of their time. Others said that if people cannot constructively shape their study and lifestyle habits by the end of their first year, this probably would not happen throughout their university life. Sleep was mentioned as a component to time management.

Goal-setting was a student recommendation to aid time organization. “You know . . . but I think goals are a big thing. I just have big goals and then break them down into smaller goals. It just makes you feel a lot better once you can accomplish that one thing, you just feel better about yourself.”

Unrealistic workload expectations were noted as a source of stress. Students felt that the amount of work per class should be reasonable although no guidelines were given to define “reasonable.” There was explicit irritation at classes that had a significant, excessive number of requisite, ancillary hours in addition to classroom hours and expected homework hours. An opposing view was also offered. “A heavier workload doesn’t leave you time for destructive behavior.” Staying healthy and fit was an end result to staying physically active.

Even students who manage time well feel the crunch of too many demands packed into their days. Students cited insufficient time to eat regular meals when days are so full. In those instances, students grab the most quickly available food which is generally far less healthy (see Food and Diet). Some people astutely noted that students’ perception of how busy they are is not always an accurate reflection of their daily/weekly routine. Small daily adjustments can accumulate to make a difference in lifestyle, however “we can see more that shows you just the little things you can do” such as parking farther away from your classrooms and using the stairs in buildings.

Two students expressed a remarkable synthesis in their response to an inquiry about how to deal with the time crunch in their busy lives:

“Caffeine.”
“Triage.”

**Education**

Diversity was recognized by students in the focus groups as an important part of the university campus which is best encouraged through education. Diversity is promoted by the university administration and therefore needs to be an accepted adjunct to higher education. “I mean for any cultural group you should recognize differences and honor those differences but also that those differences are okay.”

Classes that illuminate specific groups were suggested as a means to increase understanding of race, culture, orientation, ethnicity, and age. “So I think more classes that are in that kind of area would be better off, because then people are also learning a lot more and that’s the biggest key for acceptance. The more you know, the more accepting you’re going to be of this group or that group or the other group.”
A reasonable amount of work per class or per credit hour was a point of discussion in a few of the groups. Students noted that most people are unable to complete college in the expected four years regardless of carefully laid plans. “So it’s just like schoolwork always comes first.” Many of the focus group students were dedicated students without the negative goal issues they shared that some of their classmates seem to experience.

Education may help to instill healthy behaviors in people. One comment “Not being healthy can seem more fun” was astute recognition that steering students toward a healthy lifestyle may be a challenge. Freshmen in particular, focus group students noted, can benefit from intervention to encourage adoption of wise choices early in their college career. They will profit from being shown the need to be healthy. Education was suggested as the best way to combat drinking, for instance. A caveat was given for educators not to preach and not to illogically assume students will not drink at all.

The Safe Zone Program is an example of education that might be helpful in all areas, racial, gender-related issues, religion, and ethnicity. Differences need to be acknowledged within the sphere of student services. A suggestion was made to require training for all administration, faculty, staff, and students in multiculturalism. “I think that really kind of when we focus on health and wellness, if we can get to a place where we’re nurturing people and their personal identities and appreciating diverse identities and supporting that . . . will help with the sort of wellness part about becoming the best that you can be.”

Food and Diet
Discussions of self-awareness and self-confidence in physical wellness commingled with the kind and amount of food a person eats. Students mentioned portion control as an issue in the dining centers as well as a universal issue in restaurants. It is helpful to have healthy choices on campus, particularly at the dining centers, but with a meal plan it is still too easy to overeat. This problem is exacerbated by the sedentary hours required for study and inactive hours spent at the computer.

Students cited time constraints as a factor contributing to unhealthy food choices. When time is limited, students noted that they gravitate toward the most quickly available food which is generally not as healthy “most of the options in the Union are loaded with grease.” Students mentioned substituting snacks rather than eating a meal when their days are heavily scheduled. Addictive behaviors with video games, texting, Facebook, Twitter, and so on, were cited as contributing factors to unhealthy eating as well. When students become entangled in these or comparable activities, they often do not access the dining centers when meals are available. Additionally, people subconsciously eat snacks while playing games, exacerbating unhealthy eating issues.

Some students mentioned their childhood and upbringing as contributing to a proclivity toward physical activity. “When we grew up, we did real things.” A few students shared stories of an active life as a child growing up on a farm or with physically active parents and siblings. Some students spoke of their Christian belief in God as a motivation factor
to proper diet and exercise. Others thought that a proper diet contributed to stress relief. Still others expressed that having friends can be a helpful barrier to undue stress.

Students in the focus groups felt strongly that the need to use all food dollars on their U Cards encourages overeating. “But the only problem is...I just feel like there is a flaw in the meal plan options and they are at a cascading level so that as the more meals you get the more extra dollars you get to spend around campus and instead of those going up and up and up together they should have more variation so that if you have unlimited meals for the semester that you don’t have a lot of money to spend elsewhere on campus otherwise you feel like a need to use all of that money and all those meals and you’re just eating way more than you need to.” Students stated that easily accessible pop and candy machines make it a challenge to make healthy choices. One student recommended, “Actually get rid of those pop machines. Put in juice machines, water machines, something else.”

**Activity**
Several students commented on the role environment has on health and wellness and its applicability to the student’s shift to college life. Students stated that an active lifestyle as a child may accompany the person to college. Family upbringing and family activity level throughout childhood years developed behavioral patterns. A danger, students noted, is when activity levels dramatically decrease while people eat the same amount. There were a number of comments relating motivation, accessibility, and climate to exercise. Students encouraged use of the Wellness Center and of other activity centers. Use of the Walsh Hall volleyball court was highlighted and encouraged. Currently, the Walsh Hall volleyball court experiences frequent activity. Students in the focus groups noted that they were sometimes the role models for others by exercising and verbally sharing their benefits of exercise – energy, increased concentration, efficacy of study time – and of staying in shape. Activity is a stress reliever, building self-assurance and creating a networking of friends and a sense of community.

Exercise and activity may be more feasible for students when they accompany a friend or a group. Comments were made that exercising can be intimidating at first if a person is around people who are already in shape. Student involvement is encouraged in all areas of the campus as a means to stay physically active and to aid fitness. Students with limited time were encouraged to take small steps toward fitness, for example using the stairs in lieu of the elevators and walking to class rather than waiting for shuttles.

The cleanliness and attractiveness of a facility was noted by some students as an encouragement or a deterrent. A comparison was made of the Wellness Center and Bek Hall, the former as an example of a facility with current equipment that is well maintained and the latter where some of the equipment is in disrepair.

Students also suggested becoming more active in the greater Grand Forks community through participation with community events along with UND events. Suggestions to provide resources for activities were tempered with the recommendation to dispense information judiciously. “They’re given the resources and they know where to go and
who to contact from the beginning, the rest of their college career is going to be that much easier, their attention rate on campus is going to be better and everything else…” Although students need information early in their academic career, when they are overwhelmed before classes even begin, they tend to ignore opportunities. Students agreed that many people would be willing to experience new things if they are “risk free” – if they have someone with whom they can attend events. Most people are unwilling to attend events alone.

Students stated that it’s more fun to have friends with whom to exercise. The collegiality makes exercise more enjoyable and fortifies friendship. One student stated moods seem to improve after exercising. Additionally, exercise can be short and not “like a hard core workout, like an hour long type of thing” but some activity most, if not all, days was recommended.

Advertising and posters are a helpful means to encourage student participation in activities and events on the UND campus and in the city. The use of table tents, particularly in the dining centers, was suggested as tents are noticed. Notation of admission or attendance fees on advertised events is much appreciated. Students said they tend to gravitate more readily to events that are free of charge.

The pervasive intrusion of Facebook, Twitter, video games, internet, CD’s, DVD’s, television, and cell phones, all contributed to the substitution of passive recreation for active, physical participation in events. “As much as it is a good thing, it also is a huge hindrance to an active lifestyle and immediately gratifying [to] you.”

Distractions were a factor in classes as well. Students find that it is difficult to concentrate when others around them are talking on phones, playing games on their computers, and texting during class. There was a general consensus that students should be allowed to have their cell phones, laptops, etc., in the classroom but they felt professors could – and should – set boundaries and then enforce those boundaries for the benefit of the entire class. “I mean, like, set some standards. That usually works.” Students also commented they felt that when technology intrusions were prevalent in the classroom, they were disrespectful to the teachers. Student suggested solutions to this dilemma varied. General consensus was that this issue should be addressed and enforced from the day the class begins and should be handled on an individual basis by faculty.

Procrastination was mentioned as a primary component to a lack of activity as well as a contributing factor to classroom stress (see ¶ 3 “Stress”). People enrolled in established sports, college teams, intramurals, or recreation teams, will most likely maintain an established exercise regimen. It is more difficult for people not associated with organized sports to find the motivation to exercise regularly. Companionship during exercising is important for many students. Many saw the camaraderie of working out with others as social networking in addition to fitness.

A student recommendation was to have a focused day for exercising, perhaps even once per month, where the entire campus population would be encouraged to do some physical
activity. This could be promoted campus-wide, again emphasizing the perceived need for additional advertising. Valid comments were made by the non-traditional students regarding families. “. . . it would be nice . . . if there were options for students who have families. If there were more family based exercises or if there were more options where students that wanted to work out could also take their children along . . . so maybe if there was something offered for students that have families.” There was recognition of several activities sponsored through the apartment community center. These are only for residents, however, which prompted discussion of activities for on-campus versus off-campus. The off-campus residents felt their options were limited compared with those people living in on-campus facilities.

**Health Access**

Non-traditional students, in particular, expressed concern about health care costs. Without a full-time job that provides adequate health care insurance, clinical visits and hospital stays are a serious issue. Attention was brought to the options available for students at the UND Family Residency Clinic and Student Health Services. The caveat was added by students that it would be helpful to further advertise those services. Bulletin board notices are advantageous when the bulletin boards are not too cluttered.

Students encouraged others to take advantage of free fitness assessments and orientation. A fitness goal would be an adjunct to the recommendation for academic goal-setting. Many of the students comfortably accustomed to the Wellness Center were nonetheless unfamiliar with fitness assessments. Promotion of this student benefit would be useful.

Services that encourage and support mental health were touted as those that would be best to keep free-of-charge, if possible. Stigma issues around mental health still remain. Discussion was inconclusive regarding anonymity of individual help for overwhelming stress which might require counseling. Student Health Services specifically was recognized as doing particularly well at advertising health-related issues (vaccines were highlighted). Students felt these services were advantageous to the general campus population and should be utilized.

**Sleep**

Once a cycle of unhealthy sleep has begun, students feel it is difficult to break this pattern. Students verbalized that they need to make time to sleep. This is aided through organization and time management. Focus group members felt it was important to attend classes. When lack of sleep is too prevalent, students noted that they, or friends, acquaintances, or classmates, often skip their classes. One student recommended looking at finances as a stimulus to attend classes. “Especially when you figure out how much you’re paying per hour...I think that’s what every student should do is figure out how much you’re paying per hour to go to school. Or even per, like, month or per, I mean it’s just like ‘oh, maybe I should go to class and study because this is really expensive’.”

Although students may acknowledge that procrastination is a personal issue, “I mean, obviously that’s probably my own fault” the fact remains that may students jeopardize their health and their academic career through ill-advised sleep patterns.
Student: *There were 2 nights in the last week that I didn’t sleep.*
Facilitator: *At all?*
Student: *No.*
Facilitator: *Oh my goodness.*
Student: *Because I had to get projects done.*

Astute student comments correlated lack of sleep with poor eating habits, anxiety, and the cycle of an unhealthy lifestyle. Methods to encourage healthy sleep habits in students early in their college career would be instrumental to success. The following comment was made by a UND senior: “And I think if students actually realized if I slept for 8 hours, if I had a normal schedule, if I did this stuff, I would actually feel more energized, I’d do better in school, and I would feel a lot healthier.”

**Depression and Anxiety**
A feeling of isolation was noted as a precursor to loneliness which can lead to depression and can be debilitating and dangerous for the individual. Students noted that lack of sleep may accompany or contribute to despondency and time management issues may lead to anxiety. Students recommended using the Counseling Center when situations or issues become overwhelming. Depression should be addressed as soon as possible. Anxiety and depression are major contributors to retention difficulties and lack of academic success.

Maintaining mental health is as important an adjunct to retention as good grades, students stated. “I see new faces every year that will disappear after a certain amount of time because the loneliness gets to them.” It is important not to feel isolated, to find a circle of friends, “to create home here” one student wisely stated. Connection will help to keep a person balanced and will aid in keeping students focused on their goals. Connection was described as a two-way street, however. Students need to reach out when they need help; knowing where help may be found is the next crucial step. “I think if we could get our RA’s and our HD’s to kind of take more of a personal in touch feel with their residents, they would kind of feel like more people are there to support them and they’d be less likely to try something or more likely to come and try and get help.”

Excessive stress tends to cause students to shut down, to divert effort from their studies. Students recommended prioritizing as a means to mitigate some stress which in turn may lead to more severe anxiety. “Sometimes you just need to talk to somebody.” Another person added, “Sometimes it’s not just basically having someone to talk to, it’s somebody you know you can trust and won’t really judge you.”

**STUDENT ADVICE**

Students were asked to give their advice to incoming freshmen based on their own college experiences. Some of their verbatim recommendations follow:
Try to balance schoolwork with friendships and activities, and make sure you get a good meal.

Make sure you don’t overload yourself with classes.

Make sure you make time to eat . . . lunch.

I would say that first semester just be full time.

I would say, especially, in particular for American Indian students, coming on campus can be extremely isolating especially if you come from a very small community, so get involved.

That at the time when you’re stressed the most is probably the best time to go work out.

We should make good habits right away from the beginning . . . even like as far as like study skills . . .

I still think your biggest asset in capturing freshman is to get the RA’s involved.

I find that just participating in everything your hall has to offer.

Make some friends and just getting involved.

I think a constant reminder that we aren’t alone on campus . . . I think if we could get our RA’s and our HD’s to kind of take more of a personal in touch feel with their residents, they would kind of feel like more people are there to support them and they’d be less likely to try something or more likely to come and try and get help.

University Life is well worth the time to take.

Find some good friends.

I’d say, chin up, you’re going to learn a lot about yourself this year and you’re going to grow and hopefully you’ll come out, you know, a better person.

You should take some responsibility, really.

You need to learn how to study but also have fun at the same time.

All-nighters are not worth it.

CONCLUSIONS

The steering committee for the Healthy UND 2020 initiative at the University of North Dakota was gleaned from multiple areas of the campus. Recommendations for members of the committee were invited from all departments, schools, and programs at UND. The chairs, department heads, and supervisors of those selected people were then contacted for their approval. When that approval was granted, the potential members were contacted for their willingness to serve. The list of proposed committee members was forwarded to the President of the University of North Dakota, President Robert Kelley, for his approval. Letters of invitation were then sent to the committee designates for final acceptance and specified charges for the committee. (Attachment J) Charges include the prioritization and development of an action plan to address the leading health and wellness issues that affect academic success and retention. The campus discussions led by Mr. Jim Grizzell had focused on the use of the ecological model of Healthy People 2020, the nation’s health agenda, to frame the Healthy UND 2020 agenda. The ecological framework will assist the steering committee in drafting goals, objectives,
action steps, evaluation and assessment components that will be submitted to the 
President’s office for further consideration.

Within a one- to two-year commitment, steering committee members will be asked to 
share their ideas and expertise in a campus-wide collaboration, lending their individual 
perspectives and expertise to the group. Each committee member will also be asked to 
act as a liaison to their departments, organizations, and schools to share information and 
to gather recommendations. There are a number of issues for steering committee 
consideration.

Student concern about finances is pervasive. This apprehension is often exacerbated 
when students are also parents with additional financial responsibilities. Maximizing 
available health and wellness dollars for free and/or affordable events which will 
encourage the largest number of participants was a recommendation from the groups.

The Healthy UND Coalition began in 2000 as an adjunct to the national Healthy People 
2000. The coalition has been remarkably adept at affecting change in a number of areas 
which impact health and wellness (Appendix E). The work of the coalition is a critical 
component to the Healthy UND 2020 initiative. The initiative’s work is predicated on 
the successes that have preceded it.

It was surprising that so few students noted the extreme danger of binge drinking. 
Students verbally recognized alcohol issues but comments were directed primarily at 
those people who drink to excess regularly. Regular alcohol use was not 
identified as alcoholism by any student in any group.

Focus groups were an effective method to provide the opportunity for students to directly 
share their opinions, perceptions, experiences, and suggestions for an initiative expressly 
designed to assist their academic success. Students who participated in the groups 
seemed well pleased that the university was listening to their input. A recommendation 
expressed by one student, supported by others in the group, was to continue focus groups. 
Many verbally expressed their thanks to the focus group organizers and facilitators.

The findings of this effort indicate that students are recognizing the correlation between 
academic success and health and wellness but not always acting on this knowledge. 
Although the steering committee’s tasks are formidable, students have demonstrated a 
williness to engage in dialogue about the health and wellness issues they face. 
Students are creative, realistic, and receptive to programs that are designed for their 
benefit and in which they have a vested interest. The students who comprised the focus 
groups were representative of the exceptional student body on the University of North 
Dakota campus. Working side by side with students, providing opportunities for their 
academic achievements, and celebrating their accomplishments, will make the efforts of 
the people promoting and working with Healthy UND 2020 a powerful, productive 
component for the UND student body.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Health promotion was a leading opinion survey suggestion for assisting administrators, faculty, and staff in addressing health and wellness issues for students. The survey delineated specifics which included marketing and advertising of events and activities, additional, structured programs focusing on health and wellness, and faculty and staff involvement in healthy practices. Students concurred that advertising is particularly helpful to promote healthy choices and wellness participation. Events, programs, or evenings designed specifically for subsets of students (freshman night, ladies’ night, one free session with a personal trainer, for example) are recommended to encourage first-time users of on-campus facilities. Connecting people with similar interests should be a goal. Students should be encouraged to use existing available health services.

2. University life can be overwhelming at the beginning of freshman year. It was suggested to wait until mid-semester or second semester to send information and invitations to students regarding health options and wellness opportunities. Encouraging student participation in programs and events may be more effective if inducements arrive later in the semester rather than with the deluge of information as students begin their university life. The ubiquitous intrusion of technology is unavoidable but should be acknowledged by teachers. A “no cell phone day” was suggested.

3. Collaboration in scheduling between departments and faculty was suggested as a means to reduce stress, free some time each day for exercise and recreation, and promote collegiality among students. Success is enhanced when administrators and faculty model cooperation with test schedules, homework projects and major assignments. If teachers would embrace some flexibility in scheduling their primary tests and projects for their classes with intra- or extra-departmental input, students feel this accommodation would allow them time to perform more successfully and to participate more regularly in events and activities. Students asked numbers of expected hours of work and class attendance to be evaluated.

4. “Identity wellness” was an interesting term proposed by focus group members. The impetus behind this term is to nurture all students, to promote acceptance, and to encourage the best in each individual. Mandatory diversity training was recommended to implement this outcome. Administrators were pinpointed as the de facto leaders for diversity acceptance.

5. Campus events that promote activity and camaraderie within a safe and sober environment are recommended as enthusiastically by students as by the opinion survey respondents. Several specific suggestions were made such as additional events through Night Life, regeneration of the Green Bike Project, events for the non-traditional students that would include family members, the Student Involvement Expo, U Life courses, the Involvement Expo (more than once/year),
Study-a-thon at the Chester Fritz Library with free coffee, Springfest, and Comedy Fest. It was suggested that active breaks during longer classes would be helpful. Students might be encouraged to walk the stairs or walk around the building, for example. Mobile interests are encouraged to divert student attention from video games, texting, Facebook, and other solely sedentary activities. Accessibility, convenience, and cost were mentioned by students as factors in their participation in campus events.

6. Modeling positive behavior was strongly supported by the students. The RA’s are role models and students suggested that the RA’s actively promote programs, assist in planning events, and manage some events. Focus group participants also look to the RA’s to make students aware of on-campus activities, clubs, and organizations. When RA’s have a personal connection with their undergraduates, students are more likely to participate readily and to seek help when needed.

7. Education through advertising was strongly encouraged by all groups. Students noted that posters portraying the antithesis of healthy behavior may be effective motivation. They support incentives for attending classes on nutrition and well-being. Marketing was repeatedly stressed as the means to let students know of activities and events, particularly in the residence halls, to encourage positive lifestyle choices that might then might be established early. Marketing should also stress the reasons why an event is important for students. Marketing will help people see the compounding benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

8. A comprehensive calendar was suggested as a means to keep track of all events that would be available to students on campus and in the city.

9. Students encourage UND to enforce rules already in existence and augment penalties for infractions; smoking and drinking alcohol were specifically named.

10. A “dead week” prior to each semester’s final exams was suggested. During this week, no additional papers, projects, or tests would be required in any class to allow students to fully focus on final exams.

11. It was recommended to include more variety with meal plans and to downsize portions. It was also suggested to continue an effort to minimize or eliminate foods with high fat content and to offer healthy food options to control or to potentially eliminate the “freshman 15” or the “freshman 40” weight gain.

12. Effective suggestions for dealing with sleep difficulties are to make lists, use a planner, organize required work, do homework before leisure activities, and make time for some recreation and physical activity. If possible, exercise or attend events with friends. Find activities on the campus that are alcohol and tobacco free and attend some events every semester. Exercising does not have to be structured to be effective. These recommendations could be encouraged by faculty.