**UND Strategic Planning**

**Meritorious Staff Focus Group Questions**

**May 24**

**5 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?** 
   * It covers all aspects; it is inclusive of the community not just student at UND but also talks about students learning to be leaders in the future.
   * The term “tomorrow’s leaders” with our leaders in action tag line there is no expectation that they are leaders while they are here. That would be my only critique.
   * Part of the challenge is that many people do not know UND’s mission. This is a weakness of the statement- that it is not well known.
   * When I see this, I am not sure if I like it. For some reason it does not resonate with me.
2. **Who does UND serve, and do you believe we are currently meeting these needs**? Who do you believe it should be serving and what do you think needs to change for this to happen?
   * Students are #1, but this expands to many different areas. As an institution, we are serving out state, our faculty and the community. As staff, we are primarily here for our students. The staff play a role in supporting the students.
   * We also serve the people of North Dakota in terms of research and workforce development. In some of our programs (aerospace) we serve the country as well. In the areas we are serving we are doing a pretty good job.
   * The academic leaders talk about the service to the state of North Dakota. We want the legislature and the state to know who we serve. It really depends on who you ask. As staff, we are here to support students and our colleagues. As an institution the research we are doing and the economic benefits we provide to the state are huge.
   * We strive for student retention and student wellness. Two important goals that can often be at odds. Usually when students leave it is academic or financial issues. We need to look for options in the areas of money (in terms of short-term loans) that we can offer students and some kind of academic forgiveness so if they get into trouble, they can drop out of class without costing them extra money (just one time). They need the option to continue with their academically competitive disciplines.
   * Positive aspects of technology in terms of bringing us together, but also the need for human contact- both are important.
   * Sometimes I’ve heard “some students don’t belong here.” We have admitted them, and we cannot write them off. We need to be supportive of every student we admit.
3. **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?**

* We are making gains on all these values. We strive for community in some of our events. We try to work with Grand Forks community and the GFAF Base. With the older students being able to take classes this is an important component of lifelong learning. We have grown in diversity and made strides to make people feel welcome (Feast of Nations and First Generation recognition).
* I think DEI challenge in terms of how to market things to everyone. Making a lot of progress in some diverse communities but lacking in others.
* We need to bring students together and allow them to get to know and appreciate one another. This will allow them to collaborate and work together in meaningful ways.
* Liberal Arts stands out to me. Having my own foundation in Liberal Arts and I am supportive of this type of education, however I wonder if we will continue to struggle in these areas as the cost of an education climbs. Will people look at Liberal Arts the same way that we used to? Looking at it from a financial standpoint, it may not make as much sense.
* Job market supports Liberal Arts but understand what you are saying.
* I think Lifelong Learning UND is supporting in a lot of ways.
* Discovery is so broad, seems like it speaks to mostly research.
* We are a Liberal Arts University, but this sticks out odd. If you call this out, why are you including this but not other areas? Is it covered under discovery or another area?
* **Do you see any weaknesses in these values?**
  + Discovery: we need more research opportunities for students.
  + Economically students are guided into what they feel will be ‘lucrative’ careers and these are more marketable. I do not think that we promote the liberal arts in the same way as these other fields.
* **To what degree do you feel these Values are part of UND’s culture?** 
  + Diversity and Inclusivity: we are trying, but we can improve here
  + So many things trying to tie DEI, but so much of this is outside of our control. We are a small institution in northern ND- this is a hold back for some people. It all comes back to money. We must budget your money to certain things, and how much will you spend for a small percentage of success? Getting people here permanently and keeping them here is a challenge.
  + DEI is more then just race, lots of ways to look at diversity (LGBTQ, etc.). We are making an concerted effort to address these areas. We still have work to do, work should never end, but when I think back to a few years ago we are in a much better place now. We are better at educating the community.
* Idea of being inclusive: I think that we miss the mark in some of our programs and things happening for staff. Many cannot get away from their work to participate in things that happen on campus. Night shifts cannot participate in many things happening on campus. We miss the mark here in terms of being inclusive.

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?**
   * Med and Law school. Aerospace…
   * What are we comparing it to? To other schools in North Dakota or to universities across the nation? In North Dakota it is just us and NDSU that does research.
   * I think they mean the institutions we are competing against for the students.
   * Our campus is beautiful- so much has been done in the last few years. We are working to make our space more attractive. I think UND for the cost is outstanding.
   * Online instruction is an area of growth and brings in a lot of tuition to the university from many outside places.
   * Our size is a positive. We are big enough, but not overwhelming. WE are the ‘right size’
   * Great strides in the facilities themselves. We have updated a lot of our spaces and made tremendous progress on this. This makes a difference to students.
   * The size- we are big enough, but we are small enough as well. I can connect with students, parents, and give the personal attention. The students want to come here because of the services that we can offer them. We offer great programs, but we can also cater to our students more.
   * **What should we focus on for the next decade?**
     1. There needs to be a real evaluation of our academic programming. Are we offering the right programs and are there programs that we can eliminate and new programs that we can develop? I feel like we cannot continue in the way we are going. We cannot make changes that need to be made in order to grow.
     2. We can hang on to certain disciplines by combining them with others, and we have done this with some success. The interdisciplinary work is critical.
     3. Sometimes programs are not money makers, but still have other benefit to our students and they should not be discounted.
     4. We cannot cut across the board. We must do what makes sense for UND
     5. What kind of classes do students want to take? What modality do they want to take it in. Being able to evolve and teach our classes in a way they want.
     6. Over the next 10 years there needs to be an emphasis on the on-campus experience. The online learning is important, but so much to be gained by that on-campus experience. Coming to campus and growing into an adult. The first-year experience is so important. Hope the university pushes this more.
     7. Curriculum and the decisions that need to be made around this. So many programs and a finite number of students. Too many programs and tough decisions need to be made.
     8. Programs vs. courses. Can we cut out some of the programs/degrees and keep some of the classes.
     9. This needs to come from executive level. This might be the financial model. For example: all the UND courses in ethics. It seems that every college developed their own ethics course and there is no university collaboration on this. There needs to be complete review of those kinds of things and this needs to come from the Provost. Better collaboration is in the best interest of students.
     10. So much of this is data and MIRA driven. Some departments don’t even know this is happening until it is approved at the SBHE. Needs higher level to step in
2. **What does it mean to feel valued and supported as an employee at UND?**
   * If you are being treated with honesty and integrity. Being included in discussions. Being told if you are not meeting expectations. Ongoing level of honesty. We all love to be supported financially, but other things we can do to feel valued and part of the team
   * I don’t feel valued and supported right now. I think back to value of inclusivity and valuing the people that work with us and giving people the autonomy to do their work is so important. That open feedback is so important, and that goes both ways. There needs to be trust. I need meaningful help or mentorship. Meaningful opportunities to engage. These reminders about why we do what we do- why we are all here. How does it connect back to our mission as an institution? Need to be a part of something greater.
   * Sometimes it does not have to be big things, but just an acknowledgement of why we do what we do. Hearing this from people that matter that we are valued is important
   * Also being valued as a person- it makes us enjoy coming to work more
   * I work with great people, and this starts with our supervisors and colleagues. We all have different talents, and we can collaborate, and we learn from one another. Beyond your department I think the university tires to make us feel valued with the recognition events. For me, UND is so much more than a job, it is an important part of my life. Whatever we can do in our own area is so important. We need to have room to be creative and bring our own skills- how do we help make that happen across the board?
   * You need to know as a team WHY you are here and how what you are doing adds to that value. So important to be reminded of our objectives and outcomes. We need to support faculty and students. These are the things we need to remind ourselves. If you can see how your support goes into the overall mission it makes you feel valued.
   * I think we have a lot of staff that don’t care as much about feeling valued. Needs to be a balance for those as well as those that have a real passion to be here.

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

* I’d like to see the resources to have the faculty we need so they can feel they have ore time to be student focused and focus on their research. Within the next 10 years I’d like to see/keep students on campus. Would like campus to be more alive. I know we need to make financial decisions, but we also need to look at our other goals as an institution
* Provide an incredible first experience for our students. Get students involved the community and engaged with one another.
* Strategic changes vs. financial changes. Strategic changes are not always based on financial support of initiatives from the legislature. So much pressure to draw students into their own programs vs. being collaborative across campus. We need to be more strategic and collaborative at UND.
* The smallest things can make a student’s decision. The whole student experience is important. Much of this does not cost money.
* I think it is wonderful that we are throwing out ideas like this- thanks for engaging us! This strategic planning process seems interested in hearing from everyone.