**UND Community: Climate and Culture**

**Final Report**

**August 31, 2022**

**Section 1 –** **Executive Summary**

The members of the UND Community: Climate and Culture Working Group utilized a multiprong approach in developing and articulating the following six priority themes that emerged throughout the process. Our engaged 22 member working group consisted of individuals from across the university as well as alumni and Grand Forks community members. We brought in subject matter experts to our meetings to learn about the UND master plan, MIRA, parking and community service initiatives. As a group we utilized the focus group notes collected by the Strategic Planning Committee and other Workgroups to start theming our priorities, we held additional focus groups in areas that we felt were missing (youth programing on campus, accessibility challenges and lifelong learners). It has been a busy and productive summer, and we are proud to share our six key themes that emerged.

The term ‘UND Community’, as used in this report, is seen as a greater than the physical campus located in Grand Forks, but expands out into the Greater Grand Forks community, across the state of North Dakota, the nation and truly across the globe through the use of online learning platforms.

We acknowledge there are costs associated with some of the items listed in our report. However, we view these costs as investments for enhancing the excitement for learning and engagement. If through these investments we can generate a sense of learning and belonging, it may in the long term save money (e.g. less turn-over, more engagement).

**Section 2** – **Key Themes**

**Theme 1: Create a welcoming, inclusive and accessible campus for all**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

The campus ecosystem influences behavior, impacts success and shapes the positive opinion of the university. UND will be a leader in creating an accessible and welcoming learning and working environment for our students, employees and community members. We are committed to making education accessible to all and removing barriers that may hinder the creation of a climate in which everyone is empowered to learn and engage in a campus environment that meets their changing needs and fosters a meaningful sense of belonging.

Action Steps

* Review and revise UND Master Plan to ensure the campus environment is accessible, welcoming and inclusive for students, employees and community members.
  + As we move forward with new and renovated spaces we must keep accessibility in mind. Many of our old buildings are not accessible, and accessibility should be prioritized as much as deferred maintenance issues. This can begin with having a representative from Disability Support Services sit on planning committees. This extends to outdoor spaces as well.
  + We need to ensure that we are investing to go beyond the minimum ADA requirements. Options Resource Center is located right in our community and their experts can help UND become a leader in the area of designing spaces to include everyone’s needs.
* Assist students, faculty and staff with self-advocacy who need accommodation, in terms of physical, mental or learning differences and disability.
  + A learning access program could be designed so students don’t have to advocate for their own accommodations but so others can advocate on behalf of them or support them. Need to be able to receive help to advocate for these things.
  + Continued outreach and education to faculty and staff so they understand and can support the accommodation process.
* Create an open and welcoming environment for our community members. Design facilities and programming that intentionally invite community members in for engagement.
  + Encourage increased programing, as well as better marketing of events happening on campus that are open to the general public. This includes the numerous musical concerts, lecture series and events held on campus. Create a community liaison who is dedicated to making sure the community is aware of these events.
  + Reframe how the university views parking. We must prioritize customer service over revenue generation. More details on this very prevalent issue can be found in section 3 of this report.
* Highlight and embrace all of the unique cultures that are brought together at the university
  + Continue to support and host events such as Feast of Nations, Time Out Wacipi and various cultural nights. Encourage students, faculty and staff to engage in these events to broaden their respect and understanding of various cultures.
  + Provide education and training on cultural awareness so that our international and diverse students, faculty and staff feel more welcomed on campus.
* Strengthen mechanisms to deal with bias and discrimination.
  + Increase opportunities to share information about bias-incident reporting on campus with students, employees, and community partners. Everyone should feel welcome and safe accessing campus.
  + Create or strengthen student support services for the specific needs of non-traditional students. This includes, but not limited to student parents, New Americans, students from other cultures, and others that do not fit the model of a recent high school graduate.

Metrics to Measure Success

We will measure our success in this area through the following metrics:

* Continued focus groups with marginalized groups on campus to track changes in experience.
* Parking customer service survey.
* Better use of a campus climate style survey.
* Review of campus buildings and master plans for construction by accessible space design experts.

**Theme 2: Provide life-long learning opportunities for all generations**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

UND is committed to cultivating engaged community members and promoting the intellectual curiosity to be lifelong learners. We recognize patterns for lifelong learning start young but develop and are important at all stages of life. The university, with its broad educational and extracurricular programming, has a unique responsibility to serve these populations. As such, we are committed to selective skill building in areas of interest to our community. We will be developing areas of interest where we can explore and discover and find a sense of belonging.

Action Steps

* Inventory of youth programming (academic and activity based) that takes place on campus throughout the year.
  + Explore models of centralized administrative support and marketing.
  + Keep engaged with these students and families.
* Partner with local organizations to increase support for existing lifelong learning opportunities that appeal to community members and alumni that capitalize on the expertise of UND faculty and staff.
  + This could include offering educational/cultural programming in local senior living facilities and/or presenting at civic organizations.
  + UND has a lot of expertise to share (i.e. sustainability, music, arts, literature, economics, history, research).
* Increase continuing education opportunities that meet changing workforce needs
  + These programs could be targeted to alumni to satisfy continuing education/recertification needs to stay current in profession.
  + Short courses targeted to external partners that need additional education and training.
* Expand the pre-school/day-care program to serve our students and more of the local population.
  + There is a definite shortage of child care in the region, and the current model at UCLC is impressive.
  + Look for additional funding to subsidize the cost to both employees and students (added benefit) and those in the area that cannot afford child care.

Metrics to Measure Success

Possible ways to measure success:

* Increased participation in both youth and adult programing.
* Yield of individuals attending non-academic programming to those that enroll for a degree bound program at UND
* Recruitment and retention rates of students who are parents

**Theme 3: Enhance and foster UND’s relationships in the local community and beyond**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

UND is committed to continued engagement and relationship building with local businesses and organizations both within the greater Grand Forks community and beyond. We recognize the importance of having a campus that welcomes all and encourages and values outreach to the community, the state and beyond.

Action Steps

* Create an inventory of what UND is already doing within the community (e.g., events, service, organizations, partnerships, etc.) and communicate (e.g., articles, social media, emails) to highlight those opportunities to broader campus/community.
  + Partner with existing community empowerment efforts in the local community (farmers markets, Downtown Development Association, University Park Neighborhoods Association, Historic Riverside Association, and Near North Neighborhood Association, etc.) in their ongoing efforts
* Determine resources and points of contact between UND and various community partners for increased collaboration, communication and develop processes to help implement, improve and maintain the connections long-term.
  + Identify/hire a campus/community liaison
  + Encourage students to participate in local, regional and state communities, including student participation in elections and public service.
  + Formalize opportunities to develop a business/networking/mentoring relationship between local community and students (e.g., expand Pancratz Model).
* Work with the business community to share employment opportunities with recent graduates to keep them in the local community.
* Work with local business community to post relevant messages (e.g., Welcome Back or Good Luck Team) on their digital signage to help spread UND spirit and sense of pride throughout the community (UND lacks in this area compared to other college towns).

Metrics to Measure Success

* Surveys of students, faculty, staff, community to assess awareness, inclusion, current culture, improvements in campus/community relations, etc.
* Increased/improved opportunities for businesses across the state to partner with UND departments and colleges not just UND as a whole.

**Theme 4: Transparent and effective communication to internal and external stakeholders**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

A key element in improving an organizations culture and climate is effective communication. Providing proactive communication, through various means, is crucial in keeping our campus community informed and builds a sense of trust and belonging. This communication must go beyond just the decision that was made, but takes time to explain how it fits into the universities overarching goals, and how the decision was made.

Action Steps

* Survey campus (faculty, staff, students, alumni) every other year to determine what is working and what is not working with internal campus communications.
  + Identify more communication strategies to improve opportunities for input from campus community – how can it be more of a two-way conversation?
  + Through new employee orientation, provide information and descriptions of the different campus communication options, purposes, etc.
  + Look into a social media ambassador/training program. Consider how employees can be engaged on social media to help answer questions, dispel myths, etc.
* Continue providing Town Hall sessions and President’s bi-weekly videos.
  + Have focused town hall topics for portion of the time (e.g., master planning, parking, budget and spending), along with Q&A for the second half of the town hall.
  + Make sure town halls and other events are offered in hybrid format for maximum participation.
  + Include showcasing people from across campus as part of the President's bi-weekly videos.
* Continue fostering relationships with local and state media, by communicating all the exciting things going on at UND.

Metrics to Measure Success

* Improved satisfaction with campus communication survey results.
  + Increased participation/engagement across various communication tactics (e.g., numbers at town halls, readership of UND Today, social media posts, etc.)

**Theme 5: Value and Encourage Community Service of all members of the UND Community**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

Community service is an opportunity for engagement and outreach and to share the expertise and resources we have as individuals and a University. It is a time to give back to our community and create a positive impact.

Action Steps

* Inventory and identify the various community service related activity already occurring on campus both in-side and out-side of the classroom.
  + Develop means to track participation of students, faculty and staff
  + Highlight the work that is being done through various means as a way to encourage others to get involved
* Create a center for community outreach, local partnerships, volunteer opportunities, public engagement, etc. to work as a clearinghouse for the individual efforts of different schools and divisions and to connect them with local organizations looking for our support or involvement.
  + Increase service opportunities that encourage collaboration in public-facing service activities across student/faculty/staff lines (like the Big Event).
  + Implement a community service project for new incoming students early in the year (e.g. welcome weekend) to help demonstrate value of community service early in the student experience as well as introducing them to the Grand Forks community.
* Value student/faculty/staff giving back to the community.
  + Provide time/incentives to help establish a campus culture of service and community participation.
  + Positively highlight the great work being done by UND students, faculty and staff that is bettering the community.
* Value Community Service done by our faculty, staff and students.
  + Develop a consolidated portal to identify/track service/volunteer opportunities and hours given so they can be reflected in contracts, review files, evaluations and budgets). Offer grants for community service projects to faculty, staff, students, and community organizations.

Metrics to Measure Success

* Catalog existing and then increase the number of volunteer/service-learning opportunities/courses
* Incorporate service activities into the MIRA budget model similar to how teaching and research is incentivized

**Theme 6:**  **Enhance and generate a strong sense of belonging**

Key Theme/Priority Brief Description

Belonging is a basic human need that if not met can negatively impact one's health and happiness. This theme focuses on both the overall sense of belonging that comes with being a member of the university community as a whole, as well as emphasizing the importance of belonging in smaller subsets. As we explore this theme it is important to respect and honor existing traditions, while also finding ways to embrace new ideas and change.

Action Steps

* Building sense of belonging among entire university family (students, faculty and staff) starts right away.
  + Create an engaging onboarding process for staff and faculty that builds a sense of community on campus and enhances communication transparency.
  + Continue to enhance and improve the student orientation experience specifically for our non-traditional, transfer and online student population.
  + Consider establishing common gathering areas for faculty, staff and students to engage with each other.
* Establish means for increased engagement in university level organizations, similar to what is offered for students through the involvement office.
  + Establish affinity/service groups for employees to join such as what is seen in corporate entities.
  + Establish a university club/faculty club on campus for individuals to come together.
* Support more teambuilding activities and events for employees building on the work already being done by the UND Wellness team.
  + These activities can be campus wide, or held in specific colleges or departments.
  + There needs to be resources dedicated to supporting these initiatives.
* Celebrate successes and cultures (individuals and teams) across all of campus more.
  + This can include current students, alumni, faculty and staff, and can be done at the individual department, college or university level.
  + Share best practices already being done in units with others across campus.

Metrics to Measure Success

We will measure our success in this area through the following metrics:

* Employee/Student retention/ satisfaction data gathered before and after new programs are in place.
* Increased forms of recognition of success for students, alumni, faculty and staff.

**Section 3** – **Other Areas of Importance**

UND Parking

Parking at UND is an area that came up over and over again in both the focus groups discussions with internal and external stakeholders, as well as within the work of our working group. If there is one important area for this strategic planning process to tackle it would be to rethink how we view parking services on campus. Community members told us outright that they do not come to campus in fear of getting ticketed, groups do not hold events on campus to avoid paying unnecessary parking fees and students, faculty and staff view parking as a negative aspect of their campus experience.

Our working group heard directly from UND parking services as well as from the financial unit to better understand MIRA. It was stated that the university is in the process of forming a parking advisory committee on campus, but we feel that this will be a slow process to find positive solutions that can be implemented quickly on our campus to eliminate the negative impression of our campus. Below are a few short-term changes that can be made to improve the campus climate:

1. Only enforce zoned parking during the 16-week semesters (Fall and Spring) during the business day (8:00-4:30pm). Allow easy access for visitors, including alumni passing through with families, in the summer months when campus is beautiful and has ample parking for all.
2. Reconsider the combined A/S lots. This will come to a head as soon as classes resume on campus especially as A-permits cost more than S-permits for the same lots now. Also, if staff leave for lunch or meetings across campus there will not be parking upon their return.
3. View parking as a service unit, not a primary revenue generator. This is an imperative philosophical shift.
4. Adjust vehicle permit renewal times to align better with semester dates. For example, the current dates run from Aug. 1 to July 31, yet summer commencement is usually that first Friday in August. If you’re a summer student graduating, your annual permit would expire one week before graduation.
5. Complete an audit of UND Parking Services communications to improve clarity and messaging.

Leaders in Sustainability Initiatives

UND needs to be a leader in regards to embracing sustainable solutions not only on our campus, but across the state and region. We have a few buildings and initiatives on campus that are positive examples on how we lead in this area. These programs and initiatives can be shared with others as leading examples of best practices. Just as leaders in industry are vowing to be carbon neutral in the near future, UND should consider making a bold commitment to our environment.