**Student Success Beyond the Classroom**

Tri-chairs: Sara Kaiser, Anna Kinney, and Andrew Williams

Our workgroup includes staff members from both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, faculty, students, community members, and alumni. We were intentional in inviting workgroup members who spend a lot of time “on the ground” working directly with students from a wide swatch of campus experiences. Together, we discussed the recommendations from the Taskforce on the Future of Higher Education (2021) and UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion (2020) final reports, and institutional data from enrollment and engagement surveys. We also incorporated community input and feedback through the broader strategic planning process, focus group data, expertise from our workgroup members and their professional networks, and conversations with campus units and organizations that serve students outside of the classroom.

Parameters

There is no one definition of success for all students at UND. Our recommendations, therefore, are in line with UND being able to become the institute that enrolled students, across all means of delivery, demographic, or academic program can succeed. Our recommendations focus not only on the traditional aged, residential student, but also on-line and hybrid enrolled students, as well as graduate students and students seeking a non-traditional path to degree attainment. Utilizing a holistic approach to student programming and wellbeing requires the use of evidence-based practices including all stages of the relationship with the university, beginning by attracting and retaining talented students, faculty, and staff who will contribute to a thriving university community. It is necessary for UND to continually explore what success means for student engagement, learning, and the overall collegiate experience.

Meaningful and thoughtful student support occurs by both faculty and staff. It requires training, time commitments and institutional support. It is crucial that we provide staff and faculty with support and recognition for their work, especially in advising and mentoring students outside of the classroom. Taking care of our people is a core value and requires thoughtful integration into unique student support roles.

Our work here focuses on both co-curricular and extra-curricular out-of-the-classroom experiences for students. While honoring the traditional liberal arts focus of UND we also bring forth ideas and suggestions that will not be a “one-size fits all.” In our recommendations for “beyond the classroom” we are strategic to meet the various and complex needs of our students, while recognizing experiences can and should be different. These experiences outside of the classroom, while diverse and dynamic, should be of high quality, student-centered, and support the overall growth and development of our students.

It is especially important to the strategic planning process that all pillars, recommendations, and metrics of success include attention to our growing online and distance community and offerings. It is important to continually seek connections with and feedback from those members of our community and not assume that strategies that have worked for traditional, on-campus students are the only or best methods for all. In thinking beyond the classroom experience, we asked: how do we differentiate “out of the classroom” based on the mode of delivery for the academic curriculum? What are our standards for “out of the classroom” experiences for timing, especially for online students in different time zones or with various other commitments? How do we create, refine, and communicate policy standards and expectations for how students, faculty and staff interact with distance and non-traditional students?

Recommendations and potential action items

Supporting Transferrable Skills Beyond the Classroom: Deepen student engagement in activities that prepare them for lifelong learning and success and engaged citizenship by providing intentional opportunities to practice and refine skills associated with the academic mission of the institution, Essential Studies, specific programmatic outcomes, and classroom learning.

Action items:

* Co-curricular opportunities: Foster opportunities for students to document their learning, showcase their work, and disseminate their research/ideas (i.e., portfolios and cross-campus support of meta-cognitive reflection about learning)
  + Revitalize the Essential Studies showcase and continue to support research dissemination days
  + Increase visibility and access for community, regional employers, and parents/families
  + Clearly articulate and align the language of a liberal arts education and Essential Studies with what employers and students are looking for. If we can better frame and market the skills base of these programs, this will help our stakeholders see its value and elevate our liberal arts mission (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)
  + High Impact Practices: Facilitate opportunities for students to reflect on these experiences—their own, their connections and engagement with other researchers, as evaluators, etc. Connect these to critical skills like written and oral communication skills, ability to effectively speak to skills sets for interviews or self-assessments
* First Year Experiences: Colleges should identify faculty interested in greater mentoring roles, offer specific training, and assign cohorts of students interested in working with a mentor. This type of service work should be considered as a percentage of effort on the faculty contract and can potentially be quantified by retention rates. (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)
  + Create a holistic first-year enrollment experience from time of application to start of the second year of enrollment
  + Facilitate first-year experiences that promote academic engagement, intellectual exploration, and community building (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)
  + Offer students more individualized advising during their first-year experience that will help them find more personally meaningful course choices (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)
  + How do we create a “first time enrollment” experience for students who are not the traditional aged, residential student?
* Expanded, individualized advising and mentoring experiences: Meaningful mentoring of students (beyond advising) leads to a culture of trust, respect, and appreciation which research demonstrates to increase student success and retention. Meaningful mentoring involves faculty, staff, and other students taking time to talk with students, understand their questions and concerns, and involves a passion for helping students improve their futures (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)
  + Support lower advisor/advisee ratios, especially for first- and second-year students
  + Offer students more individualized advising during their first-year experience that will help them find more personally meaningful course choices
  + Create opportunities for students to have the same advisor for 2+ years
  + Provide greater employment stability and reward mechanisms for non-tenure-track staff and faculty to recognize their contributions to student learning and retention (added to job descriptions) (Task Force on the Future of Education at UND, 2021)

Cultivating Self-Advocacy and Student Accountability: Reinforce expectations and necessity for students to develop the core competencies of social and emotional learning. Support students as they learn to set and achieve positive goals, demonstrate the ability to work on a team and show empathy for others, and make responsible choices.

Action items:

* Help departments develop their own learning outcomes for student engagements and interactions intentionally focused on self-advocacy and accountability
* Move beyond “exposure” models of resource use
  + Connect resources to literacy development (information, financial, global, oral and written communication, critical thinking, teamwork, etc.)
  + [NACE Career Competencies](https://www.naceweb.org/uploadedfiles/files/2022/resources/2022-nace-career-readiness-development-and-validation.pdf) and AAC&U Employer Reports
  + See AACU employer reports for additional metrics ([AAC&U, 2022](https://dgmg81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/OntheSamePage_FINAL_2-15-22_pdftoprint.pdf); [AAC&U 2021](https://dgmg81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/AACUEmployerReport2021.pdf)).
  + [CAS standards](https://www.cas.edu/standards)

Commitment to Wellness and Wellbeing: Provide supportive programs and experiences that serve the whole student to provide foundational learning opportunities that enhance the student experience and support growth in all facets of student wellbeing.

Action Items:

* As a campus, select a multi-dimensional wellness model and embed into all our extra-curricular and co-curricular programs and experiences. Creating a healthy and well student body requires initiatives to be pro-active rather than re-active. Develop competencies for wellness-based outcomes based in preventative skills to help students with mental, physical, financial, and emotional wellbeing
* Take care of those who take care of students
  + Create debriefing sessions/ peer led community programs for faculty and staff who respond to a student in crisis (For example, see Altru’s Code Lavender)
  + Create a physical environment that promotes wellness including bike lanes, accessible entrances, food options, recycling, sustainable environments that are safe and healthy
  + All departments are responsible for contributing to the health and well-being of our students and the overall campus community
* Integrate wellness, health, & counseling including a reorganized Division of Student Affairs to include Health and Well-being to transcend operational silos and provide overall campus leadership to wellness
  + Hire a Chief Wellness Officer (At President's Cabinet to ensure credibility)
    - Lines dotted to HR, Facilities
    - Funding and clear initiatives
    - (For example, see: The Ohio State, [Bernadette Melyn](https://wellness.osu.edu/people/bernadette-melnyk)k)
* Invest in and Integrate programs and services that are easily accessible and responsive to students’ holistic health and wellbeing needs
  + Achieve high standards of practice, student access, and operations in health, counseling, and wellness services
    - Develop a common mission
    - Implement policy changes in student health regarding health insurance
    - Consolidate all health education and promotional activities
    - Redefine a multi-dimensional model to be core and embedded in all health and well-being activities
* Increase sense of belonging through community (beyond traditional paths, such as recognized, official student clubs and organizations) through mentorship, employment opportunities, leadership experiences
* Assess programs using a continuous quality improvement/evidence-based model to reduce mental health stigma and improve overall well-being using a multi-dimensional model

Fostering Community and Belonging: Create, enhance, promote, and support opportunities for students to engage and network with students, staff, faculty, and community both socially and academically.

Action items:

* Invest in and maintain accessible physical spaces, virtual environments, and other gathering spaces for students, faculty, staff, and guests. Accessibility is paramount to everything we do and should be the minimum standard, not as an added request.
* Enhance student support services to better promote a sense of belonging to our community and academic success (UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020)
  + Create or strengthen student support services for the specific needs of non-traditional students, student parents, New Americans, and others that do not fit the model of a recent high school graduate (UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020)
  + Provide adequate staffing and resources for population specific support services (e.g., American Indian Services, Black Cultural Centers, Multicultural Centers, LGBTQ Centers, Women & Gender Centers, etc.) on campus (UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020)
* Create community gathering spaces where connections can be forged and strengthened and where wide-ranging informal and social interests and needs can be met
  + Create more informal social space on campus, in collaboration/consultation with student groups and potential donors (UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020)
  + Foster collaboration between student organizations
* Review procedures that may impede support of opportunities for students
  + Robust mechanisms to deal with bias and discrimination (UND Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020)
* Foster a global perspective to prepare students for global engagement and leadership. Promote meaningful and connected global experiences that are integrated into the curriculum and connect to essential skill building. Globalize our campus community by increasing resources and support for international students and domestic students who participate in study and experiential learning abroad

Developing Leadership and Career Goals: Promote experiential learning for programs across campus. This can be defined at the program level to best meet the needs of students. Foster partnerships offering collaborative and mutually beneficial opportunities. Care should be taken to ensure that opportunities are not exploitative—pay should be equitable and provide living wages for students; internships should provide meaningful leadership and experiential learning opportunities.

Action items:

* Support students’ understanding and communication of their core values—connect to learning in curriculum and in co-curriculars
  + We see successful examples of this in a variety of areas (athletics leadership program, Career Services and the Pancratz Center, capstone programs, etc.), and these examples/approaches can be extended to support students much earlier in their college career and more often (before, during and after learning occurs)
* Expand and promote opportunities for engagement in professional development, including on-campus work opportunities and internships
* Increase opportunities for alumni, community members, and other partners to create enduring connections that promote knowledge and resource sharing
  + Facilitate new partnerships with individuals, businesses, governmental entities, and organizations
  + Pair students early with alumni, businesses, organizations, and other leaders to foster learning and networking opportunities
  + Institutional opportunities for experiential learning should also be further explored and expanded (e.g., computer science majors working with UIT; editing/publishing students working with marketing or writing program).
* Conduct a needs assessment with large regional employers, government, non-profits, and other agencies to identify needed curricular and programmatic offerings or training that UND does not currently offer
* Support efforts to assess student career outcomes and placement in graduate and professional school (and throughout the college career)

Measuring success: To measure this, there need to be inclusive conversations around how UND defines success. We also need to decide what fits outside the classroom. Where does this fit? And whose responsibility is it to collaborate and build on implementing these action items and measuring students’ success. We recommend continuing to use existing university-wide metrics and benchmarks, such as the NSSE, FSSE, retention rates, graduation rates, job attainment, etc. We also advocate for opportunities to support students’ self-assessment and reflection of their own learning and development, to build ownership and responsibility for their own experience and gather feedback. As a campus, we also need to decide what experiences we value for students learning in different capacities and with different educational goals.