**Current and Past Student Body Leader Focus Group**

**June 8**

**12-1 pm via Zoom**

**7 people**

* **What was the top issue or priority that you dealt with as a student body leader?**
	+ Budgeting and budget concerns were top of list. An overhaul of how we viewed student fees and how they were allocated. The Memorial Union cost for students and determining if this something that is acceptable; the vote and start the design process.
	+ Funding- particularly at the state level. Looking to match the student fee dollars to the state match. Making sure funding remained constant at state level.
	+ Came in after Covid pandemic, so big priority was to get student body back into the swing of things. Mental health and experiential learning opportunities.
	+ Mental Health, Challenge Fund grands, OERs, political process, and now looking at an alumni- how are we connecting recent graduates to the alumni base to help them as they are entering into the workforce. Helping with that transition. Thinking about employment first and foremost, internships, experiential learning. How do we support entrepreneurship and innovation? How can we be supported by our alumni in more meaningful and lasting ways?
* **What do you feel makes UND unique from other universities in the region?**
	+ UND stands out in terms of access to administration. Our VP of Student Affairs will sit down and have lunch with us, the President will set meetings and respond to email. Being able to network so well with upper administration who is so receptive to student concerns is unique. I feel like student voices are heard at UND and we are fortunate.
	+ The research and scientific pursuits that are happening at UND are incredible. In the energy and UAS sectors it makes us stand out nationally. This opens up exceptional opportunities for UND students.
	+ Our students have solid access to community resources in Grand Forks. Good ability to partner with the issues happening downtown and this continues to improve.
	+ We are more flexible with our programs at UND. Being able to serve nontraditional students with our online programs is a big plus, and for those living on campus there is a lot of opportunity to get involved. At UND you can build relationships and have lifelong connections. Easy to connect with people on campus.
* **Do you feel these experiences you are describing apply to the ‘average’ UND student?**
	+ You bring up a good point- this group had some of the best access to the resources described. The average student maybe does not have as big of an opportunity. One thing that does put UND ahead for the general student is some of the programs- data programs, UAS and space, medical school, our investment back into UND (i.e. the new business school, library, MU), so much has changed since I have been a student and it is great to see the progress that has been made and what students can enjoy now.
	+ I have been able to connect with alumni outside of UND while I am away. Doing smaller events will help connect students and alumni- create that sense of community. Internships, panels, things that connect us and create roots in the community- engage people that are various levels. This creates connections to people and cycle of UND alumni helping UND students and helps the community grow. They have synergy with one another.
	+ UND is very affordable in terms of scholarships and financial aid that is a huge competitive advantage.
	+ What is the average student going through and what connection do they have to resources? They have quite a bit but choosing to use them is a different story. Only 5-10% are participant in an internship opportunity. We need to connect people to these opportunities better. This experience is so important- how do we get the ‘average student’ into internships and HIPS so that when they graduate from UND they are truly ready for the workforce. This is something that we need to focus on.
* **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?**
	+ Weaknesses: a lot of younger ‘traditional’ students may not see themselves as a leaders. They may see this and think UND is not a good fit. This is one thing that can be improved - to seem more inclusive of every student that wants to be here.
	+ I was on the team that had to help make this mission statement. We were given instructions to: highlight leadership, academia, and discovery. This was what we were asked to do, so that was the framework in which this was written. I agree with the leadership commit, but it seems like what we want UND to be known for. There is a need for a mission statement to be concise, but agree there is room for improvement
	+ I like that it talks about discovery. Community engagement is also great. One of the best parts of my education was the community engagement (UND, Grand Forks and the state). We look at discovery in terms of research, but it is also about discovering yourself.
	+ Missing: we don’t have anything about what students do after they have their degree. Something like: ‘changing the world’ or about how our graduates go and do amazing things and represent UND. Our alumni have heled changed the world and we don’t talk about our goal being to graduate students that will help transform the world, or make the world a better place.
	+ Nothing in here about how we are a state institution and how we add a benefit to the state. I think it would be stronger id we had something about how we benefit ND and the community that we live in is important. We need to show how we add value and give back to the state because so much of what we do benefits this region.
	+ One version of the original did say something along the lines of ‘changing the world, state, community’ – but it was taken out.
	+ I would like it to remain concise, so I get that. I do like the strong community focus- this makes us unique. Opportunities to add or modify: UND has taken a strong focus towards DEI if we add words “all students” this would help. Also the word education can be added. ‘Emerging leaders’ comes to mind as we think about the evolving student experience.
* **The Core Values of UND are Community, Discovery, Diversity, Inclusivity, Liberal Arts and Lifelong Learning (see below). What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of these Values?**
	+ We include diversity and inclusivity as two values, but what is the justification to keeping them separate?
	+ If we say these things we have to be committed to these things. I would ask, what level of dedication do we have to each of these? Going off the previous conversation, I think we do have a passion for learning and civic engagement. When I look at these I think: “What are actionable items that will have tangible results based off these?”
	+ We need to articulate core values that play to our strengths vs. more aspirational and lean into them. Otherwise, we need to look at a set of values that we embrace as a way to help us get to where we want to go as a university. I see some of these and think they are here because it is where we want to go. For example, is diversity a strength at UND or is this something that we aspire to (diversify more)?
	+ Under lifelong learning I see “civic engagement’ and ‘community engagement’ I don’t think this is what we mean by lifelong learning, but I do think they are incredibly important. This could be clarified more in future iteration of this.
	+ What is the objective? What are we looking for and what are the core values we want our students have? We want them to be educated, but beyond that? Having well-rounded, inquisitive students- people that are passionate about learning and gain an understanding of the world and ultimately make it a better place. People that have leadership qualities- inspirational goal, people that are enlightened and good community members.
	+ Missing: beyond Liberal Arts and a broader understanding of our rapidly changing world is providing students actual experience in the workplace while they are still a student at UND- experiential learning. As a future employee you want to have a great education, but also understand what you are doing and can easily step into the workplace. Employers wants to know these are well trained students and we need to express our desire to have practical experience. This goes to our ND roots of ‘getting the job done’
	+ Add an area of empowerment- we want students to leave UND feeling empowered. What does it look like for a student to step out of college and into the workforce and feel confident in themselves ( with a job search, their communication and knowledge base, being able to handle mental health, etc.). This sense of empowerment should be something they gain during their education and experiences they had had at UND.
* **How do you think we can enhance our campus environment in ways that make it easier to partner, engage and collaborate with outside stakeholders?**
	+ Internships, experiential learning, opportunities to connect with the community. This is such an important part of our education, and it creates a pipeline. This will help increase retention and creates a flow of people that will help mentor the next generation of students. All sorts of benefits come from having these leaders in the UND alumni base.
	+ Networks and experiential learning. LinkedIn type things with UND graduates. Being able to look through UND registry of Alumni pre and post-graduation to see where they are located and what areas they are working in. This would be huge from an alumni standpoint. Panels and guest lectures and having people come into classrooms and talk to our students about real life experiences. It helps create a pipeline for jobs- constantly getting access to these types of people.
	+ Co-op spaces downtown and getting young professionals and students collaborating and interacting. Get them at events together as well- connect people to each other.
	+ Engaging alumni as much as possible is extremely important. The university does work on this and any more that can be done would be a benefit to our students. I encountered a few roadblocks in trying to integrate with downtown. University people prefer to stay on campus, but we need to connect downtown as well. We have efforts, but it could be so much more.
	+ I think of all the startups that would be wonderful for students to connect with. A good portion of our employees used to be interns from UND. How do we get a business develop person to get connected to these students? This could be one of the best uses of our time.
	+ The Pancratz center has an internship coordinator.
	+ Our partnership with alumni- how do we find mentors within the community. Especially outside of the business realm- how do we give other students these opportunities? Transparency – allowing students to be involved and engaged about what is going on and make them aware of these opportunities that are available.
	+ How do we get more internships and matching or other dollars and find resources to start up internships? How do we incentive this- any way we can find would be a tremendous asset to UND students and also the community.
	+ Collaboration across the UND community for more interdisciplinary opportunities that can bring in community and engage faculty and students. Need to look across teams and give this experience to students. At state level we look at Challenge Grants and how to incentive this. Can we do this on a smaller level and set aside funding to incentive students to help solve targeted problems on campus in an interdisciplinary way?
* **How do we deepen alumni collaborations, especially with our newest alumni, that helps grow a sense of belonging to the UND community?**
	+ Best way is intentional asks- taking the time to reach out to these alumni and understand what you want to bring them to the table. Newsletters are fine, but I also like phone calls or in person meetings.
	+ We are the youngest people at the alumni events. This is okay, but if you are another young alumnus and more introverted, this is a difficult experience. Perhaps a young alumni event? What about the non-Grand Forks folks? Are there digital opportunities?
	+ I only get two kinds of correspondence- inviting me to Homecoming or a Twins game, or the financial support emails. There is not a lot of activities that I can participate in being so far away. I think that we are underutilizing the UND network. If we are only asking them for the financial resources, we are missing out on all this other value that our network can bring to the table. Their knowledge base, work connections and bringing the ability to network and be mentored- we can do so much more then events or fundraising. I would be happier to engage with UND in these other aspects: time vs. treasure.
	+ Really like the idea of a young alumni network
	+ Athletics is a huge one- one of the biggest pieces that keeps your interest in the university and feeling a liability to the university. Beyond that, one of the things that brings people back is their Greek or other student connections. Finding ways to promote a student organization infrastructure that create a sense of belonging will help bring people back. They are more willing to continue engagement if they have smaller affiliations that bring them back to campus.
	+ Helping people connect in different cities so alumni can connect with each other outside of Grand Forks or ND would be a huge thing. Also creating reasons to come back and connect to universities is important. Also have more visibility to UND- things for our desks, or in the airports, help us connect to each other with ‘UND recognizable’ things that help visibly show I am a part of the UND community.
	+ If we don’ have ways for students to connect while they are at UND, it makes it harder to connect them as alumni. Event attendance has taken a heavy hit in the last years- not a lot of UND pride. I hope that is something that has an intentional focus throughout the next few years.
* **What would be your vision for UND’s future? Do you have any ‘big dreams’ for the institution?**
	+ #1 esports institution in the Midwest.
	+ Leaning into UND’s strengths- from UAS and drones, the EERC with energy and carbon capture, space suits that are propelling us into the future. Lean into these strengths, expand them, utilize them. How do we bring in applied groups that offer jobs right when the students while students are in school so that when they graduate they have a reason to stay in Grand Forks (and with that company). Build that research block right here in Grand Forks. Such as a Policy Institute for drone. If we focus on strengths and lean into these things it will help UND be a leader. Having that nationally recognizable name is important for alumni. Being flexible for the future- and invest academia so we have top professors and researchers that are propelling us forward.
	+ Like each student to leave UND with an appreciation for what they have gained while they were here and find somewhere they belong. I would also like to see continuity in our leadership and a continuity in our vision and strategy moving forward.
	+ Students that are more intentionally engaged in experiential learning and engaged in building their futures. Students must seek these opportunities out right now, but how do we provide that infrastructure for the students that may not have that drive to go out and look for these opportunities? We need to incorporate these offerings so students can access them in an easier way.