**Former University Faculty Senate President Focus Group**

**June 9, 2022**

**9 People**

**What is your vision for UND’s future? What your ‘big dreams’ be:**

* I am tired of hearing us called the ‘flagship’ when we are not the flagship. We have the medical and law school, but not the Carnegie R1 designation. If we are serious about this, we need to ‘go big or go home.’
* Over the next year or two I would like everybody to feel like part of UND again. We continue to repair the damage that has been done in the past, and I am encouraged by the current administration’s work on this.
* I’d like to see something that is more collegial and stronger campus culture that harkens back to earlier days of campus. Less of ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’, because Paul has more grants. We need to help up the game and lift the spirits of those that just have been tenured and might be stuck with smaller funding requests that would make a big difference to them. Something like small pools of money so that the historian can travel, etc. More seed money spread around to help people do these kinds of things.
* There is not great cooperation among the colleges in terms of curriculum. We have multiple colleges teaching similar courses. If we had better cooperation, we could free up resources to do other things. This should involve Deans and curriculum directors to see how we can communication and cooperate better.
	+ Pointed out that this is happening in some areas, buy this was more by accident then by intention.
* From a humanities perspective: in the grand vision general education is high on my list. Regarding being the flagship institution, at UND we have a liberal arts core that is very strong. We offer many programs that NDSU doesn’t. But, we don’t back that up in our actions to reflect the importance of the liberal arts. Demonstrating that our students know what this means, that is it not political and there is a concrete value and what it demonstrates is so important. Internally we have a long way to go here. One example is in study abroad- we have less students that go abroad then at NDSU. Intercultural knowledge: examine how that looks in our curriculum and how it reflects our values. Finally, how we can explain the importance of this to our students?
* What does it mean to get behind general education and unite people behind this? What are we not saying in classes that show we have this rich campus community? How are we are not tapping into this in some way? We need to have general education that other institutions in the state all look up to. We can incorporate this to undergrads and have people realize the value of this knowledge when they graduate and enter the workforce.
* I’d like to see more emphasis on the value of teaching. For past several years we have been very research focused, which is important, but we need to highlight the importance of teaching as well. Not everybody came out of a research institution. Some people came to UND because we are not an R1 and they wanted to focus more on teaching.
* My vision for UND would be to put our money and resources into things that are reflective of our mission and core values. If we can do this, we can build a better sense of connectedness.
* My vision would be a place where faculty feel valued and supported for all the work they do- not just research but also the teaching. We need to value all the work that is happening across our community- with students, faculty, staff. I don’t know if we always reward this in the same way. I want people to want to stay and work here because they feel acknowledged and valued for what they do.
* For a while, I have felt like there has been a great lack of trust in our decision making. We need to value the broad range of what we are all doing. Things at UND have felt less collegial and less like ‘we are all in this together.’ Covid may have contributed to this, but this is not really at the heart of it. My vision would be to have a more friendly, collegial environment, with greater trust in each other and in those that are doing the work of the institution and what they are bringing to their jobs and also to the university.
* Message we have been getting in the past is that the administration does not care what you have to say and they don’t recognize that we are all professionals. The recommendations we make come for our collective experience.
* I agree, this circles back to the value and respect comment.
* Also speaks to a process of shared governance. The MIRA process – the tool itself is functioning, but campus wide some of the checks and balances of this process no longer exist. I’m encouraged when I hear the current administration talk about more shared governance checks and balances.
* Sometimes people think about shared governance at the institutional level, but it is also at the college level. At this level they may have more information and better understanding, but this needs to be shared with the faculty. Making sure this communication is working in all ways.

**Curious about the issue of the ‘flagship’ and the ‘liberal arts flagship’- we (the SPC) are struggling knowing that there can be problematic uses with the words ‘liberal arts’ and that we have not always communicated these words in the best way. What would your advice be to ensure that we retain ‘liberal arts and critical thinking’ and all that goes into this, for the new plan?**

* I think this goes back to ‘what is the meaning of higher education’ and its goals. One of the things we are supported to do is help turn out an educated citizenry who can think critically. The second goal is to develop skills to be career ready. This second part has been more heavily emphasized in the last few years- which is not a bad thing and makes sense, but we also want to create citizens who are critical thinkers. I wonder if the emphasis in liberal arts can be better highlighted in terms of being a broad thinking citizen.
* How do we get people to realize and understand the importance of liberal arts? We need to understand as faculty and also as advisors, all that we all offer on campus. I think this is lacking. We as a campus need to be more aware of what we are all doing and present these courses to the students as they are coming in. This could be a start.
* Perhaps a department ‘show and tell’ to show what you offer and what you are doing. Part of that would help break down some of those barriers between college. Do our funding models help create these protective barriers? If so, we will need to look at this as well. I think this would be great to see what we are all offering and how we can support one another.
* Thinking about ‘What does what we are teaching matter? How does it factor into the broader scope of things?’ We need to have enough people in our society who can think critically. We need to understand why our field is important.
* I am happy that campus advisors help with the more administrative pieces, but not be the same without faculty being able to help show what else they can see in their degree. I think faculty are better at showing multidisciplinary degrees which can be so interesting. How do we help make all this happen when we don’t make room or time for these conversations? How do we encapsulate ‘liberal arts’ so that it makes sense to people that are not in our ‘bubble’?
* If resources were not a limitation, to do this would require smaller classes. I feel like I have just seen class sizes grow and the number of faculty shrink. I have taught these large classes and I cannot make connections with students in the same way. If we want to do this work and help student be intellectually curious, we need to have smaller classes and more faculty. This must happen in smaller settings where we can talk about some of the hard things. If we can provide the type of experience, they can give in a smaller liberal arts school that would be good. There was a push to show how important HIPS are, but when we try to implement them in big classes it is hard to do.
* This is another aspect of valuing teaching. I felt that in some graduate courses. I had 30 docs in one session, which would have been 2 sessions in the past. If you teach 3 classes you have 90 docs. This makes it a treadmill and you don’t get to form those relationships and get to know these students. This goes to the 10% load. How do we scale things on these page 2s the 10% when you have so many docs. You have a lot more questions, responses, grading and mentoring and this needs to be recognized. These students deserve this time and that mentoring. If we can find a way to get this recognized more or look at some kind of a process or system where if there are over 15 or so we can get more than 10%. This would be a big morale boost.
	+ I think this is related to that ‘trust’ piece again. You are trusting that person making that decision that they know how their time needs to be spent.
	+ Also speaks to the advising piece- if faculty are not trusted to make sure that the advising is robust then I might assume that we need a professional advisor. This goes back to the trust theme that runs though several issues. This eats at morale and makes people care less then we want them to.
* Getting to know the students. There was a time when we did signups, and we didn’t have professional advisors. These were the times when I had personal conversations with students. I could talk to them about what they wanted to do and let them know about other opportunities. I think there needs to be an appropriate mixture of professional advisors with what faculty advisers can help provide where we talk about life goals and what they want to do. We need to bring back the more personal contact. This goes back to the 10% for service which may need to be revised.
* Institution needs to put more money or effort into the teaching evaluations. What we are doing is lip service. It is more of a customer satisfaction survey. There is a whole literature out there of how to do a better job at this. There was just something in the Chronicle about this.
* I would even like to rename it as a ‘student course experience’ vs. calling it an evaluation. We are looking for students experiences and how prepared they feel and if we met the learning experiences.
* As we ease out of the pandemic and what we have learned by online and hybrid - how do we balance our on campus experience and online experiences? How are our online experiences equal to those experiences and classes we offer in person? What does it mean when we are offering bigger programs online and how can we serve those students the same way? How can they have that sense of belonging?

**I was intrigued by the comment/desire to be able to provide a small college liberal arts experience. One of the things that we (the SPC) has heard many times is how ‘right sized’ UND is. That it is not overwhelming, but it is big enough that it offers things. Also, the R1 goal of the current plan and the idea of providing the liberal arts small college feel at a place that is a research institution. People still appreciate the focus we have on teaching. This is interesting, and perhaps even a type of branding. We offer a liberal arts education in a research environment. Smaller courses focused on critical thinking but can also do hands on research work that would not be available at another place.**

* Look at our student: teaching ratio. We can have that smaller liberal arts feel but still some classes that are taught in large sessions.
* Regarding the R1 status, it would not bother me in the least if we failed at the R1 status, as long as we achieved the classical, but more digital orientated, liberal arts education. What really concerns me is that we speak with a forked tongue at times. We are not a flagship if we are not promoting the liberal arts. We must go back to our roots and value teaching at or above the research and increase the respect to service because this is not sustainable. Let us hope this plan helps consider what we are going. We need to have these conversations on a more regular basis, and we need a place where we can get together and talk about this.
* We are really going to be looking for ways to continue these conversations. We have heard so often as we conduct these focus groups that this is important that we have been reaching out and talking to as many people as possible. We need to keep channels of communication open. This needs to be done on a regular basis.
* One thing I would like to see if better outreach to the tribal communities and the tribal colleges. In the future this is an addition thing that I would like to see.