Military and Veterans Focus Group

Thursday, June 30 at 11:00 am

Zoom

10 Participants

1. **What do you see as ways for UND to enhance and collaborate with our military and veteran community?**
   1. Reaching out and trying to make sure that GFAFB and National Guard service members and their families can get plugged into the university and Grand Forks community.
   2. Greater access to higher educational opportunities with. DoD and Airforce are assessing communities based on how they serve the service members and their families. This is part of the BRAC considerations – so continuing to provide higher education services to the base is key (look at undergraduate, post-grad and the transferability of credits).
   3. Don’t know where UND is with spousal employment and reciprocity but that is a big one. Airforce really investigates this and how the surrounding community does with this. Mental Health will be a big priority as well. Areas that UND can help in these spaces will be big.
   4. Accreditation of military specific training would be huge.
   5. The TAG office has been working with the legislature on getting education accreditation for prior learning. A lot of that must come through the legislative process. They have been working on this for last 3 sessions. An important piece for the military and North Dakota.
   6. We primarily look at military and veteran employment opportunities and have had a good relationship with UND. I have not looked at the numbers recently, but we have close to 60 veterans in the aviation program alone. Prior to Covid we worked to link the veterans in the program to employment opportunities. If we can build a more collaborative effort between our program and UND and how you are recruiting veterans to your programs, and what their job placement post-graduation that would be helpful.
   7. We are always looking at new changes to current legislation with Century Code, or enhancements or clarifications so if there is anything that UND wants to propose we can investigate this. This is how we have come with things such as the waiver program and enhancements to this program. Any stakeholder can present an idea when it comes to enhancing veteran benefits.
   8. One thing that would be interesting for UND to consider is looking at the veteran employees. I don’t have on-the-job training approvals from any of the colleges currently. Think this an oversight. Can use their GI bill to use this to upskill. Something to think about.
   9. University of Iowa or Iowa State has an interesting program where they require all VA beneficiaries (those using VA benefits) to take a veteran benefits class that they get credit for. This helps explain to them VA education benefits, disability compensation, retirement- it really dives into VA and DoD things. This helps answer a lot of questions on the front end.
2. **What types of activities and events would you like to see more of on or off campus for the military and veteran community?**
   1. One thing that has benefited me was being offered icebreakers about once a month. I would recommend this about once a quarter. Always better to find people that are like you because it helps you feel connected. One of problems we have is assimilating into the population of UND. Need functions to bring us all together to help build relationships.
   2. Making sure the community knows about it as well.
   3. What about offering co-ed sports with the students and the airman at GFAFB? For a lot of airmen at GFAFB this is the first base they work at. They are young and looking to get plugged into the community and get to know other people their age.
   4. UND Day out at the base or on campus for airman and families. Letting them know about the degrees, services and events that are offered. Make them feel more welcome in your community out at UND if you come to them first.
   5. UND does a military appreciation day every year (hockey or football game tickets) The airman and their families really like this, so encourage you to do this more than once a year.
   6. For that it will be the last football game of the season, so will work to get tickets out to the airbase- we can look at national guard headquarters. Love going to university events. Discussions about how the university and base can partner better to get more cross-collaboration between the groups
   7. Look into the in-processing day they have at the base. We are going to this now with the American Legion, they have a day where they talk about what Grand Forks offers. I would call them and see about injecting UND into that process.
   8. Part of the welcome packet of information; add a ‘come to the university and downtown GF so they can see what the community is about.
   9. Do we still provide downtown walking tours for military and families? I have not heard of that post covid, but perhaps we can bring this back
3. **How do we enhance our campus environment in a way that makes it an inviting place for all members of military and veteran community to access the resources, arts, events, and cultural activities that it provides?** 
   1. One of the things I hear about a lot, is we expect them to come to us. We want them to come to the university or downtown. If we can also attend their events that is more welcoming. Then we invite them to our events- it is less threatening.
   2. Does UND track the Veteran graduates? Sometimes the Alumni Center reaches out to alumni, but what we have seen at Job Service is people leave North Dakota. Right now, we are trying to entice those folks to come back and work here and understand what is happening in the state. This connection gets lost sometimes so it would be nice if we could have a newsletter that could go to Veteran members and alumni. It is hard to know what is happening. Keep connection to UND and bring people back to events and see how UND is treating their veterans. How many have gone through new Vet Services office? The space now is much more welcoming, better place to hang out.
   3. Watched last commencement The pre-commencement ceremony did amazing job at telling story on national guard solider joining UND and teachers supporting him. Awesome story, if we can capture these stories and share them more widely that would be powerful. We have so many stories like this and sharing them in more places will go a long way.
   4. Opportunity to get them together will go a long way. Not just the sporting events. When I went though college there were a lot of clubs- opportunities to get together.
   5. Perhaps offering to co-use the physical fitness facilities at UND. We have quite a few that do not live on base, and this would help integrate them with the students
4. **How should we continue our efforts toward being a premier military-friendly institution and help grow opportunities for service members on the campus, online, and in the community?**
   1. You are competing with online universities that specialize in this. There is a big piece of the market that UND wants to tap into. Grantham University is giving service members and Veterans one free class (can pick out of 3 entry level classes). The one class is free but this gets the service member to enroll in the college to attend the free course. Now that they are enrolled, they can use GI bill or tuition assistance, so it gets them in the door.
   2. A lot of our population – especially active duty- are in the UND engineering program, so want to touch on the online piece so they know they can continue with the degree when they leave Grand Forks. You have strong online engineering program so this is a strength.
   3. Back to the ease of transferring of credits. If you have a 19-year-old airman at UND, I love the idea of free credits and then in 3-6 years if they are transferring you want to keep them and graduate them from UND so have enough classes online to help with this.
   4. You want to make sure the credits they currently have transfer in to UND. You want to recognize credits they are coming in with.
   5. One of the things that drew a lot of students from our military organizations are the government defense programs at University of Alabama Huntsville. With UAS it would behoove UND to reach out and start providing federal employees program training in this area. We could go to these locations from 30-60 days and walk out with credits. Lots of opportunities for UND in the DoD arena.
   6. <https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/executive-development/government-and-defense-programs/>
   7. <https://www.uah.edu/cps/professional-development/short-courses> UAH has some UAS programs already.
5. **Are there other areas we should explore as we look towards the future of UND and meeting the needs of the military and veteran population?**
   1. When service members use tuition assistance of GI bill, they have no control over when that payment goes to the university. Need to make sure we are not giving late fees or holding diplomas if it is past a university deadline. (note: UND does not do this)
   2. Get better for giving credit for prior training. Minnesota is looking into this. How can this training be credited though an institution? Need to understand classes they took in military and how it is transferrable into college credit
   3. The Joint Service Transcript is available for all branches. Service members can print this off and it is a list of all schools they attended in the military and what the equivalent college credits are. UND is on par with rest of ND state schools for this, but if you want to go above and beyond a few military specialties (such as on the medical side) that would go a long way. Digging into the Joint Services Transcript would be good.
   4. We help connect Veterans to top employment opportunities in the country, so helping us make more people awards or these benefits would be good. Anything we can do in terms of outreach to get more service-connected individuals to use our benefits.
   5. Don’t forget about the trailing spouse, especially with workforce shortage. UND HR could help fill holes for UND with some of these people.