Strategic Planning Focus Group

Student Aerospace Advisory Council- SSAC

6 students

Monday, May 2, 2022

1. **Why did you choose to attend UND?** 
   1. Aviation; well-known school for aviation. One of the best for its price (Value). I had an aviation 45 minutes away from home, but came to UND (out-of-state), because this was a better price.
   2. I chose to go here because it was the only school in the nation that had offered both of my degrees. Such a high-level aviation program with option of Chinese language (unique pairing of programs)
   3. When I toured here I dropped all other options. I was sold on this university because of the smaller, more personable class sizes and the sense of community.
   4. There is a wide variety of majors here. For a school of 15,000 the amount of degree programs is nice. I also have a degree in communications, totally unrelated to aviation so having a variety of programs to complement our aviation degree is important.
   5. Competitor aviation schools feel more like an industrial complex, not like a college at all. This feels like an actual university, and I can get the college experience here. We have a lot of other degrees here which I like, so we can add to our aviation degrees. Able to make lots of friends who are not in aviation or aerospace sciences. So, I appreciate the college environment that exists here.
   6. As an international student I wanted the best aviation school in the world and UND came up at the top of my search list- so this is why I applied. UND’s aviation program reputation was my selling point.
2. **How do you describe UND to your family, friends, and neighbors?**
   1. I like UND because it feels small; it is a tight knit community. I can pick out people that I know as I walk around.
   2. UND is a leader in education. Aerospace is my pride and joy at UND. We get so many resources here that are unique to UND. Offer a hands-on experience here.
   3. Work in housing, and I feel ‘home’ at UND. I live here full time and I don’t go home often (distance). All my friends are here, and we stay over the summers. It has become a ‘substitute family’ while I cannot be with my family.
   4. Being an international student, I cannot always go back home. UND feels like home because of the people. I describe UND as the Harvard of Aerospace (many agreed).
   5. Being from ND, always a divide between NDSU and UND- I chose to come here because of all of the things about the program that makes it feel like home. The programs are top notch and UND hockey.
   6. I always talk about three things: how cold it is, aviation and hockey.
3. **Who does UND serve, and do you believe we are currently meeting these needs?** 
   1. **Who do you believe it should be serving and what do you think needs to change for this to happen?**
      1. UND serves the majority of incoming students- but there is so much demand that we have to set higher standards and place more limits on incoming classes. To grow as a university, we will need to take more of the resources from other programs so we can grow; we need more resources to meet that demand.
      2. Airport Shuttle. UND does not help financially support this- but we pay for it as part of aviation fees. UND is paying for the campus shuttles to get around campus, but UND is not paying for our shuttle to get to airport (part of academic course work). Could really help if UND could try to help reduce our fees for this. This would make us (aerospace students) feel more part of UND and that our university wants us to succeed- aviation is already really expensive before all these fees.
      3. Looking at it from a main campus lens, aerospace students are provided a lot of resources. Our classrooms are new, etc. Seems like a big separation between main campus and aerospace (physically and socially). Would be nice to make everyone feel like a part all together. It would be good to fix this.
      4. It is a mile walk from Robbin Hall to here (MU) and I never want to make this walk- so I don’t go to the Union. The campus shuttle does not go to Robbin- only to JDO and I wish it was better connected.
      5. Services and facilities offered are different depending on what school you are in. I see stark differences in what Communications has and what we have in Robbin Hall and Aerospace. Uneven quality to the facilities depending on the department/college resources.
      6. Agree, that others do not have as nice of facilities that we have in aerospace. I think that we can recognize that we get a lot in our college.
      7. Everything that we get (like the shuttles) we are paying for. We have to be self-sufficient. We pay higher fees and much higher rates for tuition.
      8. Think that our on-campus facilities are nice, but the airport facilities are not as nice. Every time that it rains there are buckets to collect the rain.
4. **What has the university done to benefit you or your student organization most?** 
   1. **What might the university do better to help you, or your student organization succeed?**
      1. Our organization (Student Aerospace Advisory Council SAAC) was founded by the Aerospace Foundation, so our support comes from there. UND does not support much. We did get student government money to help with a trip. Our advisor and Dean are very involved, and they have helped quite a bit.
      2. University, and especially Aerospace, has been welcoming to students in the college that are not aerospace degrees. Different dynamic post-covid; seems more inclusive now. Grateful that I can be a part of SAAC now so we can help improve the whole college. The University has helped with Student Government money. Our national conference was supported by them. We don’t get a lot of hands-on career things in Grand Forks so being able to go to conferences that offer leadership opportunities is so important.
      3. We need more college career support for non-aviation students so expanding the amount or types of careers they are looking for at these career fairs.
      4. We need more help with work visas for international students. International students cannot find suitable jobs in the US because not a lot of jobs without work visas.
      5. Even if domestic industry can’t sponsor us perhaps UND can partner with international companies. UND is well renowned for aerospace so working with these other companies should be easier. This would make more international students want to come here because it would show that there is a plan/pathway for a job.
      6. We have a lot more diverse organizations popping up and we think our college could do more work on inclusivity. Main campus is a bit better than us on this, so this could be something to work on.
5. **What have been your best experiences at UND?** 
   1. **Would you recommend UND to your family and friends, why or why not?**
   2. **Can you see yourself returning to UND as an alumnus?** 
      1. Since I have gone through the program, I cannot imagine myself anywhere else. I would highly recommend it in terms of aviation, but for other degrees not as much. They do not have as many good scholarships for international students. This would be helpful to international students; without financial support I think they could get better value somewhere else.
      2. One of my best experiences is the hockey games.
      3. UND has the holistic college experience so I feel like I am supported as a whole (academically and in terms of extracurricular activities which you don’t get from other top aviation schools). The ‘whole package’ college experience.
      4. I would recommend UND to others. UND and the community is great because of the small size. Free food, events and the clubs – you can get involved in so many things. It is a fun college experience. I would also love to come back.
      5. This is such an important part of being a college student. I will remember these extracurricular experiences. You get to hang out with your friends and forget about homework. But I love the professional/academic side of things as well. The relationships that we build with our classmates and others (faculty and staff) is supportive and I am excited to maintain these relationships. This is why I am recommending UND to others and will be returning to UND as an alumnus. I feel very connected to people and the school.
      6. I am hesitant to recommend this school. Not being from ND, or the Midwest, coming to Grand Forks is not always easy. Not as welcoming for everyone (as an outsider). Not as diverse. If you are coming for aerospace I would recommend it but for other degrees then I would not recommend it as much.
      7. I agree, I have been to many places, but it is not very diverse here. Even if people don’t mean it in a bad way, I get stares sometimes. I don’t want to be in a place that I stand out all the time.
      8. I try to usually stay on campus because there are people in the community (off campus) that have made rude comments to me because of the color of my skin or sexual orientation. This is uncomfortable. The community is not always the most welcoming.
      9. The transgender bill is an example. I personally do not think that the city entity or a non-government entity should have interfered with what we were doing.
      10. Culture of ND is different from other places. It is important for international people that come here to know this. It is not NYC, and I don’t want it to be NYC, so it important to increasing transparency of what culture is here.
6. **As a student, what concerns you most about UND?** 
   1. **What do you think needs improvement?**
      1. See above.
      2. UND does a good job of Student Diversity and Inclusion, but I feel like faculty and staff have more interest in this then the students. Primarily white people go to this school. I can’t speak to how others feel, but know what it is like for people to hate on me because of where I am from.
      3. Everyone has different opinions, but you can still be respectful. None of us like everyone, but we need to be respectful and nice. Be slow to speak.
      4. Support for international and overseas (domestic) students. There needs to be more support not only in terms of financial support but also for housing. We can’t go home as easily, so having that ability to have guaranteed housing is very important.
      5. When I look at other universities a lot of the buildings have a similar style. I feel like schools sometimes over modernize and they don’t connect back to the ‘original feel’ of campus. Alumni have connection to buildings. We need to build and renovate buildings that look like they belong here.
      6. Concern is that UND is seemly focused on external things (facilities) less on some academic programs. Keep academics at the forefront and prioritize resources better.
7. **What would be your vision for UND’s future?**
   1. **Do you have any ‘big dreams’ for the institution?** 
      1. More inclusive campus. The buildings are important, but the community needs to be more inclusive.
      2. Getting more students involved in things- want people to get everything that they can from their education at UND. If more people joined student organizations, they would get a lot more out of their time at UND and feel involved and connected. If we can motivate students to do things like this that would be my vision. Make the most out of these opportunities.
      3. Your everyday ND or other domestic students would like more financial help for them as well (scholarships for those that excel in leadership or in other ways).
      4. Hope that UND becomes one of the top 10 in the Midwest. We are for top ranked in aerospace, but I think that this institution can be a leader in a lot of different fields and the state offers a lot of employment opportunities for them.
      5. UND has the potential to be very big, so 20 years from now I think that it could be. They are trying to make things better for the school and the students.
      6. I would like UND to continue to be a public good for, and serve, North Dakotans.
      7. I think that there are more alcohol-related incidences in places on dry campuses. Look at the effect of being a wet campus. As an aviation student if you have an alcohol offense it will almost ruin your career, so this is something to keep in mind.