**Strategic Planning: Focus Group**

**Student Veteran Organization**

**6 people**

**May 4, 2022**

1. **Why did you choose to attend UND?** 
   * I attended because one of my friends did before me and recommended it. UND is military friendly, so I came back to get my second degree here.
   * Aviation- I chose UND because of its reputation in aviation and it is military friendly – much more than other aviation schools
   * Choose UND because I am in aviation and didn’t want to go to the other main aviation school that has a different atmosphere. I wanted to go to one of the best aviation schools in a college atmosphere that is less like being in industry.
   * I googled top online engineering schools and UND was one of them. It was close to home (Twin Cities) but not too close. I could work on my degree while I was overseas and now I am close enough to visit family as I complete my degree. The fact that it was an ABET accredited online engineering program was a big plus.
   * Military friendly here, and costs- wanted to attend the aviation program and this was a good value. Have some family nearby.
2. **How do you describe UND to your family, friends, and neighbors?**
   * UND is a great school- especially for aviation. In the future if I have kids, I will tell them to come here for aviation.
   * This is my first semester. Impressed with the professionalism when it comes to my professors and how willing they are to help in various situations. I went to other colleges before, and it seemed lackluster- just collecting money from students- I don’t feel that here in the aerospace program. I like the newer buildings in aerospace and that it gives you a lot of amenities.
   * Agree, I tell my friends and family to come here. I’ve been impressed with my professors and the students’ organizations. I like how involved the students are, when they are involved, so I’ve been impressed with things like this (i.e getting students feedback here)
   * Yet to convince my siblings to come here but trying. One sister wanted small college feel, and I tell her that UND has a state school cost but not as big as other state schools where you might feel lost. We have the facilities ‘look’ that she likes, a good-sized school and has great amenities, including research money.
   * I am just here to do my education and move on- so do not always fit in with the typical student. Older, with a family, so at times harder to find your group.
   * Agree, I am also older and the integration for nontraditional students has been hard at times to get into that ‘groove’ so maybe a non-traditional student orientation might be nice. To see that you are not alone.
   * Agree, when I first got here it was hard to find people to connect with. So, the connection with the rest of the student body would be good. Our priorities are different then the younger students. I’m paid to go here, this is my ‘job’ so this is a different mindset.
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. Depends on what part of the university you are in. In aviation we feed the aerospace industry in terms of workforce. The business or engineering schools will have a slightly answer. The whole purpose of going to a university is to go to the next level and get a job. Feels like industry is a client of UND and UND is providing the human resource/talent pipeline.
      2. Interesting thing back to some of my interactions in CEM, you can see all the plaques with the donations to the building; you know how much you can earn for your degree when you get a job. But there is this research component in CEM where we are trying produce/generate grants and contracts- to a certain level it seems like they are producing us in the same way- for the workforce.
      3. I would agree with this in the aviation college as well. As I’ve been going through my classes I have a clear path to how I can fit in and serve this community and be a part of this industry. I don’t know about the other colleges because those may have a different agenda.
      4. You could look at what we are saying pessimistically, but this is why we are getting our degrees. We would need a cultural shift to have people do things outside of the colleges. If we are only focused on getting a job, then we are missing out on learning other perspectives. Going outside of your college such as to Liberal Arts would be good. Part of the university should be producing well-rounded people. We are not a tech school. We could learn to write better if we took communications classes- Engineers need these ‘soft skills’ that we don’t always get in our college.
      5. It doesn’t matter your degree; we all need to learn how to communicate well. This is not always what we hear from our professors, who often want us to say only within the college (pessimistically this could be to keep our fees in their college) but seems like we could be served better if we were encouraged to do this.
      6. UND is here to serve the students; to ensure their success. Things like getting midterm reports which show us how we are doing. When I was younger getting good grades was not always a priority, but now if I don’t get an A that bothers me. Holding students accountable is important. Sometimes they need the nudge in the right direction- if they are doing poorly in a certain area, they need to know that and be pushed. Success for that student needs to be top of mind because they are paying for this.
      7. Something that goes along with that is there is nothing to do in this town. They just go downtown to bars. We need to get them involved in other activities (scuba diving, open a woodshop, auto shop, learning other languages, taxes and finances, cooking- life skills). Get them out of the bars and doing other things that are not just based around drinking.
      8. Serving the industry and the students by preparing them for workforce is good, but UND can also serve students more holistically by giving them things to do outside of academics. This will give them a more complete life outside of just their studies. This would also teach them other skills outside of their degrees.
      9. Had lots of opportunities on post. The battle buddy system- this was a great accountability system. Instead of going to bars this gives you a person to hang out with. This would help create sense of community for incoming students.
      10. I speak 5 languages and would be happy to teach any of them for free to help give people something to go and expand their knowledge outside of class.
      11. Hidden barrier: once students get involved, they have community, but getting them involved is the trick. Universities are good at getting top 20% of students involved. The middle 50% and bottom 30% are stuck because they must work to get through school. Creates a system where it is very hard top move out of middle or bottom rung because they are having to work to get through school. Self-fulfilling prophecy.
      12. How do we let people know about these things that we can do- can things be posted in Banner? It would be great if we could suppliant knowledge this way- not a course but something that is cheaper but still helps us learn something.
      13. Would be great for faculty to push student involvement more
      14. Encourage wellness activities. If people can get involved in community atmosphere it would create a sense of belonging. I like the Blackboard idea where you can advertise things to do for students. This would create a community on campus- especially for nontraditional and online students.
      15. Totally agree- this would help distance and non-traditional students with getting involved. If you want student engagement you will get this on Blackboard.
      16. Interesting the engage modules are now owned by Blackboard, so this probably will be coming (integration)- they need to put these together. UND purchases these modules, so perhaps this is something that will be an option.
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. I needed help and UND stepped up. My family was in Afghanistan, and I needed help to relocate them here. Dr. Armacost put me in touch with Congressman and Senator and even found a donor to help with funds to evacuate my family and get them here.
      2. My interactions with my advisors have been great.
      3. My professors have helped me out a lot. If I ask for help or advice, they drop what they are doing to help. They don’t brush things off, it matters to them
      4. UND can recognize our veterans better at athletic events (such as hockey). If they recognize a veteran who stands out for a reason. If UND does this, then more veterans will want to come here.
      5. Veterans box for Hockey. During halftime if the announcer asks a veteran to come down to be highlighted.
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?~~
6. ~~As a student, what concerns you most about UND?~~ 
   1. ~~What do you think needs improvement?~~
7. **What would be your vision for UND’s future?**
   1. **Do you have any ‘big dreams’ for the institution?** 
      1. In Aviation if we have issues with the FAA they will defer you to AME- those are not nearby. We do not have a single one in North Dakota. With such a huge aviation program here so we should have one. This is confidential information if you need a psych eval or neurological eval only they have this information- it is a closed network to assist the students (PTSD, depression, drug and alcohol eval)- anything that would disqualify you from the FAA process. To drive 5 hours and 2 days makes no sense when we have such a prestigious aviation program at UND. Perhaps if we had a on campus psychologist that could certify that would be meaningful.
      2. Free or reduced childcare. I am charged full price for my two kids, so my wife cannot work since she has to stay at home with the kids. So I need to work full time and go to school to support us. There are no discounts to help cover this. I am paying rent, all the bills, daycare- makes it tough. This is not just veterans issue- what about single parents? Statistically, nontraditional students are more likely to have kids.
      3. Would like to be able to rent an airplane- be able to take our families places or build flight hours. Only one rentable plane here- we could use more.
      4. Lack of rentable planes and mental health access for aviation is surprising to me when we have such a prestigious aviation school. Surprising there is not a single AME in North Dakota. We need to have at least one in each state- so why not in Grand Forks. It costs almost $7,000 to just get a psych eval to go to school here. Would be great if we could get somebody in the Counseling Center to be certified in this process.
      5. The Veteran Organization at Iowa State meets every Thursday night to get people together and have dinner. This was a great community builder. Vet Organization also volunteered together to help out with 5k’s or soup kitchens- to help out the community. Also, they offered math tutoring before the dinner, because many of the veterans were not doing as well in math. They would pay the veterans $5 to attend the tutoring – and we saw a huge rise in the average GPAs for in math after implementing this.
      6. Would love to create a veteran club where if people are struggling with things (math, languages, cooking, etc.) you can get help each other. This should be a friendly, free environment. The club can help the community as well.
      7. For some of the basic classes it would be great to have veteran only sections.
         1. Some disagreed with this idea, thought that it was important to integrate veterans with other students.
      8. Would love to have a place at the MU where we could display some of our military memorabilia. Even non-vets, but those with veteran family members can lend their things to this display case.