

The Student Voice

Subject: Policing at NDSU

Listening Session: 10/6/2020

University Police and Safety Mission Statement:

To provide professional services and resources to help the campus be a safe and secure place to live, learn, work and visit, while being prepared to respond to the emergency services needs of the campus community.

Prompt 1: *Given this mission statement, what would you expect your interactions with NDSU police to be like?*

Common words related to what students expect from NDSU Police included: safe, professional, friendly, fair and equal treatment, providing assistance, respect, compassionate, understanding, discreet, secure in stressful situations.

Prompt 2: *Please describe your interactions with and observations of NDSU police.*

As expected, Speaker Statements revealed a wide variety of perceptions/desired levels of interaction. Some observed a willingness to assist in matters of safety and security such as providing rides across campus and the emergency phones. Purposeful programs were also mentioned positively such as officers visiting wellness classes and Coffee with a Cop. One organization mentioned having an NDSU police officer as an advisor for their organization.

Others saw these types of events hosted by NDSU Police as photo ops or “cop-ganda,” and felt the intent behind the programming is not authentic. Some indicated a desire for interactions to be as minimal as possible, with one group stating, “...do not want to interact with police due to brutality occurring across the nation. There is a lack of trust.” A barrier to conversation and approachability was acknowledged, with a sense that students are in a tough spot knowing there are not a lot of positive interactions when both populations meet usually.

For the most part students feel relatively safe until they have to reveal that they are trans, they are a member of the LGBT community, or they are outed. If the reason they have to call the police has to deal with their LGBT identity, they would be hesitant to call unless absolutely necessary.

Prompt 3: *How does your perception of NDSU police differ from your perception of other police departments in the Fargo/Moorhead area?*

Overall the perception is roughly the same. A lot of people did not know they were different. NDSU PD are seen as very responsive in relation to their regional counterparts, but also more administrative, serving as the “middle man” between the Fargo police and campus.

Some students feel better working with NDSU PD rather than FPD due to ND not having very good anti discriminatory laws or protection. Issues with NDSU PD, can be reported to the title 9 office, or to the police directly. There is a way to hold them accountable if there are concerns.

Prompt 4: *Thinking of the current national conversation on policing, what can our police do to make this a better place for you?*

“Again, treat everyone with equality.” Be open about difficulties when inviting students into conversations. In some groups it was felt that conversations could open the door for both parties to grow and develop a better relationship.

Some students want to see police acting as role models for the student body and for individuals on campus, and ask them to be here not just to enforce the law, but to help in general.

One group felt it was important to acknowledge that, “...everyone at our meeting was white and we want BIPOC (students and community members) to lead the conversation and occupy that space. As a bunch of white people, it is not our platform or place to speak to issues we do not experience.”

Another group recommended NDSU officers wear body cameras, and receive more training in regards to issues the specific population of their group faces.