

# The Student Voice

## **Subject: Increasing Diversity and Inclusion at NDSU      Data Collected April, 2022**

**Overall Note on Findings:** As the data were examined it became clear that the terms diversity and inclusion carry divisive political connotations. An assumption that the terms are only considered to apply to underrepresented identities and issues on campus was evident. This assumption causes many students to actually feel excluded. One student reviewer summed it up what we saw in the data, "In our (NDSU) mission for inclusion, we can't exclude people for not having been excluded". A deep desire to be included was expressed throughout the data, no matter what identity is possessed by the individual. Almost all respondents, regardless of whether the identity expressed is considered over or underrepresented, conveyed feelings of being excluded in different scenarios because of their identities. All students want each facet of their identities to be welcomed and included, for the value of the diversity each individual brings to be recognized and celebrated.

### **Prompt 1:** *What, where, or who has made you feel more included on campus?*

Organizations and clubs provide feelings of inclusion, providing venues for people with similar identities and interests to gather. Many people cited particular individuals on campus as helping them feel included. Students are aware of faculty and staff who try to be inclusive (and others who don't). Supervisors for campus jobs, resident assistants, and hall directors were often cited as inclusive staff members. Service offices and cultural events make a difference in inclusion, and Safe Zone stickers were cited several times as increasing feelings of inclusion. A few respondents did say that "nothing" has made them feel included. There was also a call to bring back the Bison Bridge program.

### **Prompt 2:** *What has made you feel less included on campus?*

This prompt sparked a wide range of responses. In general, low diversity levels among faculty and staff and a lack of diversity of thought were brought forward as issues. Both sides of the political spectrum feel excluded for their beliefs. Experiencing racism as well as the fear of making mistakes or being labelled racist were cited as generating feelings of exclusion. Several students reported experiences of having their identity or accommodations questioned (having to prove it). Some mentioned events and policies not considering health and ability needs. Masking policies, created feelings of exclusion regardless of pro- or anti-mask beliefs. Students cited some inequitable policies in academic programs, particularly selective ones. Status as a commuter or transfer student also made inclusion more difficult. Some individual faculty were cited as non-

inclusive, but fewer specific people or offices were mentioned in this section when compared to those that made people feel more included.

**Prompts 3 & 4:** *What are big changes that would need to be made to increase diversity and make NDSU truly inclusive? What are small changes that can be made immediately to increase diversity and make NDSU more inclusive?*

There was considerable overlap in the answers for these two prompts. Increasing representation in faculty/staff/leadership positions was a clear theme in both. Doing better promotion for cultural events and organizations/clubs was also a common suggestion. Many identity specific ideas came forward, as did a desire to increase the number of culturally-related events and classes. Other suggestions included updating language we use, and encourage more freedom of opinion. Several students gave an opinion that small changes don't matter and that NDSU should "think big", and in one pointed comment a respondent encouraged NDSU to "drop the façade of caring".

**Demographic Notes:** Reported age ranged from 18-46 years old. Racially, a majority of respondents identified as white, with others identifying as Black, Asian, South Asian, Native American, Mixed or multi-racial, and Middle Eastern. People identified as American, international, born outside the U.S. and North Dakotan. Respondents identified as both able-bodied and disabled. All socioeconomic classes were represented in responses. Physical and mental disabilities were both cited multiple times. Veteran status or connection to the military is also present. Gender responses included cisgender, agender, gender neutral, non-binary, and transgender. Responses related to sexuality included bisexual, gay, pansexual, heterosexual, lesbian, sexual minority, panromantic, asexual, and demisexual. Religious/spiritual affiliation included Catholic, Christian, Atheist, Agnostic, Omnist, religious, Jewish, Reform Jewish, non-religious, Muslim, Lutheran, spiritual, Protestant, and Imago Dei. Student status responses included undergraduate, graduate, independent, international, and first-generation. Other identities mentioned include spouse, educator, political, single parent, father, human rights advocate, queer ally, Gen Z, and human.