

The Student Voice

Subject: Inclusion

Listening Session: 2/09/2021

Prompt 1: *At the rallies last semester, Fred Edwards said, "Diversity without inclusion is meaningless." What are your thoughts on that statement?*

It is absolutely true. Diversity is a publicity statement, but with no inclusion, it is meaningless and useless. The statement evokes the question about being able to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Actions speak louder than words, inclusion is bringing people together and making people feel welcome, whereas diversity is just having different people in one space. Inclusion is more than just what we say. It is how we act.

Prompt 2: *What does inclusion mean on a campus like ours?*

We are a PWI (predominantly white institution), and inclusion means that every student feels safe, included, and that they are not being judged for not fitting the predominant body. Inclusion means celebrating everyone's backgrounds and acknowledging everyone's experiences are different. It means bringing BIPOC and other underrepresented groups to the center. It is continual promotion of the freedom to choose, supporting difference - not something that separates, but unites us. It is making sure that all students will have equitable opportunity. It is having physical space and other physical evidence of representation to ensure that our words are aligning with our actions.

Prompt 3: *How will we know when NDSU is fully inclusive?*

NDSU will never be fully inclusive because it is always a work in progress. Inclusion is an ongoing effort. There will always be room for improvement as a community and as individuals. New students come every year.

It is not something that happens quickly, and it will take time. We will know that we are making progress as long as there is continual visitation to policies and conversations. We will know we are making progress when underrepresented students feel that progress is being made and experience improvements. We have to always revisit evaluate if we are listening to all of our groups. A whole mindset change is necessary for the entire campus in order to bring inclusivity to campus. It is hard to do, but when everyone feels safe on campus, not bullied, and there is not judgement for who you are, we are there.

Prompt 4: *What current policies or practices function in ways that exclude your group or others?*

The following are statements made by individual student organizations, rather than the collective statements above. Two religiously-affiliated groups did not feel excluded on campus:

It is hard to think of these things because it's easy as students to accept where we are in our environment. We had not seen NDSU stating support of their cultural groups, such as shout-outs or publicity for other student organizations.

Specifically, as it relates to female students in the college of engineering, a few things that can be discouraging. There is a lack of female representation in leadership in the college - 1 of 7 departments has female leadership. More outreach to high school females, more scholarships for women in engineering, and more support or encouragement from the department to female students to continue would help. There is definitely not evident support for BIPOC students in engineering. This needs to be a point and priority.

The incidents from last semester made us feel excluded from campus and separated. There are not many black women on campus so that really affected us. We feel excluded because we feel unwelcome in many spaces and feel judged sometimes by the color of our skin. Not many black female staff or faculty and do not have representation.

NDSU is more focused on the traditional student, and most of the events put on are for the traditional student. We have seen multiple task forces created, and it feels that other student groups have been pushed off to the side. One thing that BSV (Bison Student Veterans) would like to ask of the staff and faculty is to remember other groups that are doing work that may not be visible.

Prompt 5: *In your opinion, what are the next steps towards inclusion in our community?*

Maintain respect for everyone around us to keep moving forward. Keep open lines of communication between students and University staff. Continue to follow up to ensure progress on areas that have been stated. Provide a community that is supportive of underrepresented students and student groups to ensure they accomplish their goals and dreams. That means hiring more staff, doing more outreach, and more financial assistance. Make sure all spaces and events are accessible and convenient. Hold events that bring the campus and our groups together. Acknowledge mistakes, right wrongs, and implement policies that make some training mandatory for faculty, staff, and students. Implement policies that deter exclusion and hold us all accountable for creating inclusion.