

Campus Life Council Meeting

Date: Monday, February 12th, 2023 | Time: 5:00pm | Location: Duncan W246

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Continuing the Conversation: The Sense of Community at Notre Dame
 - A. Daniel Jung: Father Gerry is coming at 5:30. He doesn't really have any specific things to say, but he is coming to create conversation based around the conversation about community. Graduate Students and Res Life are topics we can talk about tangentially. Res life might be good to have its own meeting in two weeks. To start off, Emily has information about transfer students from her survey sent out during welcome weekend.
 - B. Transfer Students
 1. Emily Orsini: Every year we send out a survey during welcome weekend. I thought it would be helpful to share some of the info collected. We still have work to do with the transfer population. We asked students, in comparison to other colleges or orientations, was ND the same or more effective. Most say more effective. Even though it was on a smaller scale and not as much hands on. They are getting a different welcome than the first years. We are trying to get it right. They don't need all the things first years need because they've been to college before, but they need a welcome to ND. During covid, there were lots of changes. I want to note that when I say transfer students, I am including gateway. During COVID, transfer students came on the last possible day they could move in. The last two years we are back to bringing in

transfer students on Thursday. Father John has given a welcome to transfer students and guests. We want to give them an intentional welcome from Father John, Father Gerry, and Senior Leadership from Undergraduate Education. Parents love it. Students love the intentional time and time together as a transfer community. We have a Thursday night dinner with fun bonding activities. Also, transfer students are invited to everything during the welcome weekend, other than the first lecture and Moreau courses. During time with first year specific programming, we try to do something with transfer students to allow them to spend time together and get to know each other. We have also tried to add transfer students to the welcome weekend team. We hope they can help with bettering the experience for the next class of transfer students coming in. We are hoping for better than that first initial welcome. It is helpful to have transfer students be eager to join the welcome weekend team to better the experience and welcome that group to ND.

2. Daniel Jung: Was this year the first year you had surveyed them?
3. Emily Orsini: This welcome weekend survey has been going on for years. I could pull from past years. This year and last year were about the same. People want more transfer events to help build community. Every year, the welcome experience has been more effective compared to their other experiences. Overall the ND family helps.
4. Daniel Jung: Are there any questions for Emily related to transfer students and their experience?
5. Emily Orsini: They have a good month of two to give feedback before they give it out.

6. Daniel Jung: Does anyone know a transfer student that hasn't experienced a positive experience and transition here to ND?
7. Eric Styles: Sure. That's part of life. Everything isn't good. Sometimes they feel in between or left out. There are times when students have not stayed. The discomfort of starting over is the thing. There's no way around the fact that they're starting again.
8. Megan Moore: I think the biggest part is the expectation from new students. First years or transfers expect that they will find their people and find their people quickly. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes that dissolves and they find new people. It takes time to find their niche. I work with students and have found that managing their expectations is a big part of what rector's do in first year experience.
9. Eric Styles: I guess it is harder and more complicated for gateway students. Gateway students typically come with the expectation that they shouldn't feel any discomfort because they have lived adjacent to ND. They have clear desires about what they're going to get. Transfer students are open to what their halls will offer them. "I know what's going to happen and if it doesn't happen that way it's wrong" is the gateway perspective, which is harder.
10. Emily Orsini: Within transfer students, gateways have a very strong community. And then you have true transfers. There are sub groups within that large group. We try to just say transfer and not engage in the gateway so they mix. That experience might look different for gateways.
11. Daniel Jung: Eric, do you think there is any need for a systematic change in the way we are incorporating these transfer students into community?

12. Eric Styles: I don't know. I'm skeptical. I don't know if we need institutional change.

I'm grateful that adjustments were made a couple years ago. Getting transfer students to come to things for the community is hard. I am grateful that it has shifted. They need to feel welcome. It's about what a community is like and expectations. There is something in every community where we initiate them. We have to remember that they are not first years, they are transfers. We need to separate them out to some degree. But, they also need those basic things. There was a time when that was hard to do.
13. Megan Moore: Something I've heard expressed from my transfer and gateways is that they desired more of that traditional welcome weekend and that they wished the welcome weekend team would be walking with them. I don't know how many of them spent solid time on campus and feel integrated with the ND campus.
14. Emily Orsini: Something we've gotten feedback on is even the language. People don't know that DomerFest is for all students, not just first years. We are trying to get the language fixed within St. Andre. This is based on feedback heard from transfer students. We will make sure to fill the gaps and coach students and everyone to make sure that doesn't happen.

C. Non-Catholic Students

1. Daniel Jung: I have two graphs to share with you all from the inclusive campus survey that's done every two years. This is from the 2022 survey. It is filtered by religion. The question is: to what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel a sense of belonging at ND;? It is on a scale out of 6 (with 6 being the highest). Catholic

students recorded a 5.2, but rates of other religions tend to go down. No religion goes down as well. This second graph is the same graph. just over time. Nearly across the board, students feeling a sense of belonging at ND has essentially gone down. These are the last three times this survey has occurred. I don't know why this trend exists. I want to get all of your thoughts on why this might be occurring. Is this covid? ND? Something students are doing?

2. Lily Condodina: I think this can be partially attributed to COVID and the effects of COVID naturally on a college experience. I am interested to see when the survey was taken. ND, compared to other universities, did a great job, but those effects still happened and maybe the community wasn't strong until sophomore year and took a bit longer. Even SUB structures have noticeably changed regarding student engagement. Not as many students are actively involved in activities.
3. Daniel Jung: Do you think that, for something like this, breaking it down by religion doesn't even matter? In other words, is a student's sense of belonging not tied to religion?
4. Lily Condodina: I think religion plays a part. It is hard to say on an individual level. It would be reasonable to say it does because it is a big thing. We are a Catholic university. Some people come here for a faith sense of belonging.
5. Amy Stark: If it was Covid, I would expect all the groups to have the same pattern. It's hard to see all of the labels. The two groups on the far right seem to look a bit different in terms of their drop. It doesn't seem like it is the same pattern across all of the religious groups. If it was Covid, i would expect it to be the same

6. Matthew Amante: I think since there is a 6 point scale. Agnostic being an entire point lower than Catholic means there is a reason to break it down by religion. I don't know the cause of the downward trend, but it is consistent. The downward trend isn't the same, but there's a downward trend. There might be societal issues going on. Breaking down by religion makes it clear there is a gap between Catholics and non Catholics.
7. Eric Styles: I would like to know what the numbers looked like before. Has this trend already started? What is the qualitative data that goes along with this that helps us understand? What do the students say about their experience? How does that help us understand if there is a particular drop? There are important questions like what does spiritual-no religion even mean? To me, it's hard to know without more information and someone telling us how to read it.
8. Daniel Jung: I agree. Context is important and I'm sure there's a ton of context behind these numbers.
9. Koryn Isa: Just to clarify, this question is about religion?
10. Daniel Jung: No, it is about belonging.
11. Peter Schimpf: Were these the only categories?
12. Daniel Jung: Yes, based on what I found from the campus inclusion survey, yes.
13. Peter Schimpf: You can see that the label gets blurrier.
14. Eric Styles: For example, if I'm doing the survey, does it say "other religion", or does it say a whole series?
15. Daniel Jung: You're right. "Other religion" is very broad. This other graph is basically the same question. This is just for 2022.

16. Amy Stark: Anecdotally, of transfer letter requests and letters of rec that I've written for people hoping to transfer out of ND, they cite Catholic exclusivity as one of the reasons. They lack that sense of community. They feel outlier-ish and that's why they want to transfer. It is a small sample size, but there have been at least half a dozen since I've been here.

17. Daniel Jung: The next big question we can tackle at the next meeting is how do we fix this? Thank you Father Gerry for coming, he's here to share.

D. Graduate Students

E. Residential Life

F. Other Areas

IV. Conversation with Fr. Gerry Olinger, VP for Student Affairs

A. Father Gerry: Daniel invited me to come over and talk a bit about the sense of belonging. I thought, to begin, I would mention why we think this is so important. There are a couple of areas within the Division of Student Affairs. We research into students thriving at ND. Students at TeamND or hall staff orientation heard four things: identitive protective factors student flourishing and improve health specifically mental. Sense of belonging. Students feel part of community that feels for them; support one another. People get sufficient amount of sleep. Fourth, that faculty and staff take a personal interest in them, things like mentorship. It is important to keep in front of our minds. About the sense of belonging, there are a number of ways we try to understand student experience. The inclusive campus survey is one of the ways. Quantification is important, but only as a way to understand the experience. But then we need to have conversations with students. After the administration of the last inclusive campus

survey, we created opportunities to have focus groups focused on groups and identities. We also identified clubs and organizations with unique identities. We noticed they reacted well when we came to them in student clubs and organizations and had these conversations. We take quantitative data and qualitative information to help identify action items and devices about changes to make. The survey is not the only place we collect data. We also have a senior survey that is administered to all graduating seniors. We have the opportunity to compare ourselves against other institutions with the same survey. It is about the sense of connection, rather than belonging. We have the ability to benchmark other institutions. Other institutions have lower percentages. We also have the hall life survey and BCHA, etc. All of these are utilized by the Division of Student Affairs to help others to understand student experiences and how to refresh.

- B. Daniel Jung: When you talk about the sense of belonging, in your experience, what are the main places where students encounter belonging? Is it in residential halls? The classroom?
- C. Father Gerry: Firstly, what do we mean by the sense of belonging. Are you not accepted, but a member of the community. Can we bring fullness of self and gifts to this place and contribute to making it what it is? I think residence halls are a really important place. When I think about what the differences are between ND and other highly selective private institutions, an idea on what might account for differences in the senior survey is strong residence communities. These communities stay with students for all four years. Everyone is randomly assigned for the first year. A mistake made is to say the only sense of belonging is in the residence hall. That overlooks important places. Student clubs and organizations are really important places for them to connect. For student athletes, a team. Academic settings, like classrooms, research,

and experiential learning. All of this helps build a sense of belonging. My goal is that you find multiple places to do that. No one carries all of it. I want to continue to strengthen the residence halls. I am excited about Karen Kennedy, the new VP of Res Life. But, it is important to remember that that's not exclusive where a sense of belonging comes from. Divisions within Student Affairs talk about how they work together like intramural and club sports. Student clubs and involvement. Student spaces. We are proud of opening the DEI center on the second floor of LaFun. The three offices connected to the DEI center are really important as well as the clubs associated. For example, PRISM ND has an office in that space. One of things I can share with all of you is that we just reorganized the Division of Student Affairs to have a new Director of Diversity and Engagement. We are in the process of trying to find someone right now. This will be the 6th division of Student Affairs. It will be an important place in how to engage the division in these places and how to engage the students.

- D. Lily Condodina: On surveys, is the senior survey looking back at four years? Are there specific questions that separate places where you feel belonging? On a macro level and micro level, it is harder to have an effect on a higher level.
- E. Father Gerry: It is probably multifaceted. We are trying to tease out some of that info. I do a theme each year. We just decided with the leader's team that the theme next year is on belonging. I hope to engage in a lot of these conversations because it is such a critical piece of student feeling part of ND. We need to think about how to retain students? How can they have a positive experience? It also allows for student flourishing.
- F. Daniel Jung: How many years have we been asking seniors that question?
- G. Father Gerry: I don't know.

- H. Daniel Driscoll: Do you have any idea of trends? Tenure data? It dipped a bit for all institutions. There are policies and realities on campus that impact belonging, but also things happening across the country, some things happening on a state level, such as sports. National discourse, apart from ND, impacts experience. There are national issues on divisiveness. Covid as a health pandemic, but also racial injustice. The Summer of 2020 will impact our students, but all students across the country. We can make an impact here but there are still things happening nationally.
- I. Daniel Jung: Yes. When we see things on a macro view, that can impact our micro view on what's happening at ND. I think students can sometimes see ND as a bubble, which can be good or detrimental. I don't know how to widen the student perception or help getting them out of the bubble. It affects students belonging at ND.
- J. Eric Styles: It feels like there are things happening outside of institutions that impact wellness and sense of belonging. But, the view of how they grow up is different. People come to this institution with different expectations that are different from students that came 20 years ago. How do we get to know what those things are? What is our institutional responsibility to respond to those things? If this question is around resilience and face to face community, if it is harder for students, how do we shift so they leave better than when they came? How do we do formation given the circumstances? I perceive that things are different. People come to institutions with different expectations, skills, experiences. For example, I did not grow up with social media.
- K. Father Gerry: That is art and science of the work we do. I am proud of the survey, but if we just looked at it alone, it wouldn't be sufficient. Things like identity and characteristics and

grouping. No one is based solely on identity or characteristics. The reality is that multiple things impact experience. That is one of the reasons why I live in a residence hall. Unless we are grounded in the student experience, how would I know what works? That is why we rely on rectors, club advisors, and coaches. They give color and texture to the work. We need to understand the realities of the situation. How do we respond to these realities for a new generation of students?

- L. Elizabeth Clarke: I like how you said looking beyond the community in residence halls. We need to be mindful of a place so steeped in tradition, what if someone does not find community in the place you are supposed to? Housing applications open. People come to me saying they love McGinnis and you, but my friends are in this hall and I want to transfer. I want them to thrive where they find it the most. It doesn't need to stay in that hall. We have tradition but need to make room for other narratives.
- M. Father Gerry: I have a friend that is a psychologist and was an ND undergrad who studies suicide. I asked her what she learned from experiences. She shared two things: there are some people on the road to recovery and others that are actively struggling. I think we are programmed as humans to see in binary; either/or. But, it is a both/and experience. In residence halls, there is something unique. We can't disregard the uniqueness of tradition and what we do, but not everyone finds that in residence halls. We need to find a number of robust communities. Part of the ND story can be that you didn't find community in the hall versus someone staying for 4 years and is an RA. How can we hold two truths??
- N. Megan Moore: Something we've been talking about in rector meetings is where in their lives did students experience voice. Not to make Covid the scapegoat, but there are generational

impacts. Some of you experienced Covid during your first year at ND. Some were seniors in HS. Now, we are seeing students where their experiences were impacted in middle school. We want to know what transformative experiences they missed out on? It is the belongingness related to experience.

- O. Father Gerry: That is true in how we build relationships. There is a social-emotional component. It is not something that goes away in two years. Interesting.
- P. Koryn Isa: I know this focused on students, but did the sense of belonging follow the same trends with faculty and staff? This all seems very connected.
- Q. Father Gerry: I feel I have genuine relationships. I am cared for and I care for my colleagues. This is transformative in the way we work. I engage in personal health and wellbeing. To know and be there is extremely important. It is important to have good friendships and to have people that know us fully. Not my perfect self, but know me. I know my friends and colleagues. I know them. I think that's transformative and becomes the ground of where we build. Don't always trust in that. If you think you are only loved for the perfect self we present, we will also doubt if we are really loved. I think it's an important conversation.
- R. Daniel Jung: One final question, I think everyone here cares very deeply about the ND community. What can we do as we go to DH, dorms, and class? How can we make ND more inclusive?
- S. Father Gerry: Reach out to someone we don't know well. In class, club, hall. Ask them their story. Hopefully you have an opportunity to share your story with them. Get to know someone on a deeper level. Sharing stories is a super easy way to begin that. If we can do that outside of our circles, that is a pretty significant first step.

V. Next Meeting + Adjournment

- A. The meeting is adjourned.