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Core Values In Higher Education: Students, Faculty, Staff, And Administrator Alignment At A Midwestern Research University

Rodney Deshan Lewis

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CORE VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATOR ALIGNMENT
AT A MIDWESTERN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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Title Core Values in Higher Education: Students, Faculty, Staff, and
Administrator Alignment at a Midwestern Research University

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July 21, 2023

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And most importantly, to my wife and children
who sacrificed our family time to allow me to fulfill this 7 F's dream!

ABSTRACT

A growing body of research exists on core values. However, limited scholarly research exists on core values in higher education institutions that operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. And yet, society entrusts higher education with our nation's most important resource—our future leaders.

University adopted core values serve as guideposts for institution stakeholders. Core values are important for an organization's identity by providing concise and powerful guidelines for collective stakeholder action. Core values provide a true north values vector, especially when ambiguity and uncertainty exist. This, in turn, helps increase judgement and decision-making skills that are clearly aligned with codified values.

This dissertation research focuses on the perspectives of four key internal stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—at a Midwestern university. However, in this study administrators provided limited feedback; therefore, the analysis is limited. The participants' perspectives relate to understanding their familiarity with the institutional core values and to what extent stakeholders internalize core values to guide their daily actions as members of the campus community. The four populations are critical to day-to-day higher education institutional operations.

Quantitative data collected from the four stakeholder groups totaled 209 completed responses that were statistically analyzed utilizing 12 core values. This analysis determined level of familiarity and the extent of agreement with the core values. All stakeholder groups were familiar with UND Core Values and UND President shared values in differing degrees with

faculty, staff and students providing the highest percentages in order. Of the six UND Core Values, *community and discovery* achieved the highest level of familiarity and the extent of agreement. While *creating a caring campus community* rated the highest from all stakeholders within the six UND President shared values. Statistical evaluation of both UND Core Values and UND President shared values did not produce statistically significant results when comparing all stakeholders' responses to familiarity. The research serves as the basis for future manuscripts from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Today, higher education institutions operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments, in many cases with limited means. And yet, society entrusts higher education with our nation's most important resource—our future leaders. Higher education leaders must remain mindful that institutions of higher education have a remarkable responsibility of providing a solid educational foundation for their students, which includes upholding high academic and ethical standards (de Russey & Langbert, 2005). University embraced core values serve as guideposts for institution stakeholders. However, there is limited research on the ethical dimension, i.e., core values of leadership.

Core values are important for an organization's identity by providing a concise and powerful guideline for collective stakeholder action. Core values show what an organization wants to be, often in contrast to what an organization is. If a higher education institution communicates consistent internal and external core values messaging to stakeholders, positive actions occur within the halls of higher education. Core values provide a true north values vector, especially when ambiguity and uncertainty exist. This, in turn, helps increase judgement and decision-making skills that align with codified values.

This investigation focuses on the perspectives of four key internal stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators. These perspectives relate to understanding the participants' familiarity with the institutional core values and to what extent

stakeholders internalize core values to guide their daily actions as members of the campus community. These four populations are critical to day-to-day higher education institutional operations. Data collected from this research serves as the basis for future manuscripts from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

A lack of scholarly research to date regarding core values in higher education led to this research project. Specifically, limited research designed to help senior leaders evaluate codified core values of their institutions from a key stakeholder locus of control. Key stakeholder perspectives are critical in the evaluation and research surrounding core values in the academy. This study is designed to fill gaps in core values scholarly research in higher education, while acknowledging themes from previous scholarly research. My research is an introspective look at evaluating a specific institution while overcoming past research gaps that traditionally focus on comparing like institutions during research. By focusing on a specific institution, a more robust and germane core values evaluation may be possible.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how a specific Midwestern university's core values align with selected key internal stakeholders. My research focuses on four internal stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—aligned at the University of North Dakota (UND). The goal is to understand their familiarity and internalization with the codified university core values.

This research also explores stakeholders' affinity toward potential future core values articulated by the current UND president. The investigation consolidates the six potential core values that the current university president has communicated since his inauguration in 2020.

Those six core values are evaluated in this study through the lens of the four stakeholder populations. Understanding how each of these critical groups internalize UND's Core Values will allow university leadership the ability to continue a scholarly, informed dialogue with key internal stakeholders as core values are revisited. The four identified study populations are key; however, although administrators' perspectives were sought they were limited in this study. Although minimal for some populations, all data collected from the four populations were used in this study.

Key Stakeholders

A multitude of internal and external stakeholder groups exist worthy of future examination. However, for the purposes of this research, the four populations of students, faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated. Higher education institutions exist to perpetuate learning, which includes numerous stakeholders. Students and faculty are two essential stakeholder populations in this learning process. Therefore, it is important to understand their awareness and perceptions of institutional values. Additionally, higher education institutions are reliant upon staff and administrators to execute the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the institution.

Each of the aforementioned stakeholder populations are critical for a holistic core values evaluation. "A higher education institution which strives to provide excellent quality of education should strive to fully understand the needs of its stakeholders. One of the best ways to do so is through direct feedback from its internal and external stakeholder proportionally, i.e between student and lecturer" (Abidin, 2015, p. 185).

Thesis

Notwithstanding a lack of scholarly literature detailing higher education core values, this research proposes that within internal key stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff and administrators—core values are familiar at differing degrees. The six current codified core values at UND may constitute different validity scores aligned among those four groups.

Additionally, the proposed new core values from the current university president may align with specific current core values among key internal stakeholder groups. The current UND Core Values was adopted in 2016, under the direction of former President Mark Kennedy within the framework of his OneUND vision. A 45-person UND Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was used to facilitate actions to engage key stakeholders and develop a draft of several versions of the UND Core Values to propose to the institution president. Per the article “Core Values bring us closer to OneUND” (UND Today, 2016), “more than 250 students, faculty, and staff provided feedback during the engagement process” (<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2016/11/core-values-bring-us-closer-to-oneund/>, para. 5). Open and honest feedback on developing UND’s Core Values was solicited through engagement opportunities, online blog activities, and 11 Campus Conversations held over a two-week period (UND Today, 2016).

I used the outcome of those 2016 deliberations about UND’s Core Values as the cornerstone of this research. Ultimately, the purpose of my research was to determine if the four stakeholder populations at the University of North Dakota are familiar with the six current codified university core values and potential new university core values articulated by the current UND president.

In addition, my investigation determined if key stakeholders internalized core values, measured by level of familiarity and the extent of agreement using a 6-point Likert-type scale.

The Likert-type quantitative assessment tool was used to evaluate internalization of both codified core values, and potentially new university core values.

Research Hypothesis

A quantitative null hypothesis was created to test the relationship relative to participants' perceptions about the core values. The hypothesis that was utilized for this research study states, "there is no significant difference between stakeholders on familiarity with core values".

Research Questions

Desired research data outcomes are core values that are emblematic of UND's desired culture. This would state to all stakeholders the values that should serve as a guiding north star for the university, for individual stakeholder actions, and as a guide for resource allocation actions of the university. Ultimately, UND's president sets the tone-at-the-top determining the core values that are relevant to his ethical strategic vision.

In this quantitative study, I sought answers to the following research questions:

1. Are members of the four evaluated UND stakeholder groups familiar with the UND Core Values?
2. To what degree are the study participants familiar with the UND Core Values?
3. Are the UND President's espoused core values familiar to the four key university stakeholder populations?
4. To what extent are the core values internalized among key stakeholders?
5. How do the six potential new core values compare with the codified core values among the four key stakeholder populations?

Discussion of Core Values

Core Values in Higher Education

University core values serve as guideposts for institution stakeholders. In many cases, these core values allow not only the university president, but every internal and external stakeholder to understand what the institution values. Anderson, Harbour, and Davies (2007) noted there has been considerable research on development of higher education presidents. However, there is limited research on the ethical dimension of leadership. Defining the institutional core values that are galvanized around the CEO's internal ethical value system and strategic vision for the institution are critical. In some cases, institutional core values are inherited. At UND they are passed along from one president to the next without entirely understanding how or if the codified core values are internalized and exercised within the institution. It is imperative university values align with the CEO's vision.

Core values are important for an organization's identity by providing a concise, and powerful guideline for collective stakeholder action. Core values show what an organization wants to be, often in contrast to what an organization is. "Core values capture shared ambitions. Whilst most modern universities do have such values, they often exist on paper alone, certainly not in such an active way that the university community is familiar with them" (van der Zwaan, 2017, p. 185). Not only should core values exist on paper and within the halls of the institution, but these values should also exist within the university setting embedded in the very fabric and culture of the university.

What are Core Values?

Collins and Porras (2000) outline core values as the "essential and enduring tenets of the organization" (p.66). These values are the "glue that holds an organization together as it grows,

decentralizes, diversifies and expands globally, and develops workplace diversity” (p.66). Core values remain static while business strategies and practices adjust endlessly to a changing world (Collins & Porras, 1996). As universities adjust to their volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments, like other public and private organizations, core values provide the mooring that helps steady decision makers, both individual and organizational, to align with the espoused values.

Values are core values when their influence on what people do supersedes that of most other values in a value system (Pant & Lachman, 1998). In this study, UND’s Core Values were established in 2016, based on the results of 45 institutional stakeholders chosen to serve on the SPC designed to provide strategic feedback to the CEO president for planning.

Core Values Provide a True North

If a higher education institution can communicate consistent internal and external core values messaging to stakeholders, positive actions occur. Acknowledging the values that permeate organizational members’ day-to-day actions helps CEOs better understand what motivates people when they are doing their job. Core values provide a true north values vector, especially when ambiguity and uncertainty exist, which helps increase judgement and decision-making skills that are clearly aligned with codified values.

Institutions operating with core values that are not internalized by key stakeholders risk inconsistent behaviors that may be incompatible with the stated organizational values. For example, Major General Timothy A. Kinnan articulates this concept with the United States Air Force core values: “Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do” (Simmons, 1997, p. iii). General Kinnan highlights well-publicized cases that amplify core values failures among some Air Force officers, which suggest a crisis in character that threatens the very fabric

of the institution if not addressed in military officer accession schools and professional military education programs.

Without core values communicated and inculcated within key stakeholders, any institution is subject to a crisis in character among its members. Ouchi's (1979) research indicates it is preferable to manage an organization by stressing such values rather than relying on bureaucratic or personal mechanisms of control. As van der Zwaan (2017) stated in his research, it is imperative stakeholders are familiar with the codified core values and they exist in practice, not just on paper, to elicit value-added properties for higher education.

Familiarity with Core Values Matters

Familiarity with the institutional core values among key stakeholders is the first variable to measure to help understand if actions are needed to reinforce institutional values. Core values may exist on paper or be embedded within university websites or displayed on main campus entryways or hallways; however, without understanding if these core values are truly internalized by key stakeholders, presidents will never know if the values are inculcated within the higher education institution.

Organizations express their values both in ideology and through actions (Abravanel, 1983). There may exist a say-do gap with university core values among specific groups of stakeholders. A say-do gap exists when there is divergence in what is espoused by the university leadership and what actions occur within the organization. It is important for the CEO president to understand how specific stakeholder populations interpret codified, espoused core values within the university setting. "This contradiction between espoused values, and daily life hampers the proper assessment of core values that are recognizable in what organization members do" (Van Rekom et al., 2006, p. 176). If we want to really understand which core

values effectively motivate higher education members in what they do, it is a safer bet to start from concrete action and establish the sense people make out of what they have done with the help of empirical evidence (Van Rekom et al., 2006).

Scholarly Research Approaches

Core values, specifically in a higher education setting, offer limited scholarly research to date. “A lack of empirical research directly measuring behavior, particularly in field environments, is a continued shortcoming in studies about values” (Van Rekom et al., 2006, p. 177). The shortcoming of research is identified in “the striking fact that none of the methods available is grounded in daily behavior” (Van Rekom et al., 2006, p. 177). However, two well-known standards for measuring values are Milton Rokeach’s (1973) *List of Values*, and Shalom H. Schwartz’s (1992) *Values Survey* (Van Rekom et al., 2006). Both Rokeach and Schwartz offer theoretical approaches that provide an excellent way for comparing organizations with each other. And yet, “they suffer from important drawbacks when establishing the core values of a specific organization” (Van Rekom et al., 2006, p. 176-177).

This research study attempts to overcome identified drawbacks by evaluating a specific higher education institution without comparing it to a like organization. Two drawbacks are identified in both Rokeach’s and Schwartz’s methods. First, truisms are difficult to separate from values instantiated in daily life. Within the core values context, a truism is a statement that is obviously true and says nothing new or interesting such as a statement espoused by a CEO suggesting their higher education institution values all knowledge. Second, there is no guarantee that their lists include the specific core values of the evaluated organization or higher education institution. This is consistent with Meglino and Ravlin’s (1998) research within the body of

scholarly literature reviewed that no exhaustive list of ubiquitous core values existed for higher education institutions.

In this investigation, I sought to overcome earlier identified research drawbacks by first evaluating how stakeholders interpret truisms espoused within the context of UND Core Values, and second by introspecting specific core values within the framework of a specific university vice comparing against like higher education institutions. This method allowed me to better understand if current core values are germane to key stakeholders. I evaluated UND Core Values to determine if they are emblematic of university culture, if they are stated to all stakeholders, and if the values are familiar to key stakeholders.

Core Values Scholarly Mosaic

Other research methods exist to help understand organizational core values. However, based on previous research none exist that truly help frame core values for a specific higher education institution that can be utilized by the CEO president to guide a core value discussion among key stakeholders. This research study attempts to fill that void for a Midwestern higher education research institution.

According to Van Rekom's (2006) research, Bernstein (1986) offers a more inductive method to understand institutional core values by calling a meeting of the board of management and have them agree in a group discussion on eight long-term corporate values, which they jointly agree have been institutional in building the company or will be instrumental in future growth (Van Rekom et al., 2006). The shortcoming to Bernstein's (1986) method is that core values that emerge from the board of management may only reflect their top management view. In higher education, this would be similar to university leadership at the highest-level offering core values without understanding the views of other stakeholders on the subject. A

contemporary approach to Bernstein's method is to establish a committee to define essential core values for the institution, like the actions UND took in 2016. Based on the university's SPC conclusion, approximately 97 percent of stakeholders supported their presented list of core values (UND Today, 2016). Again, within the scholarly body of literature it is important to note that organizational core values are deemed important for providing a values-based ethos for organization leadership to communicate values that help both individuals and the organization make decisions consistent with those espoused values.

Theoretical Framework Used to Bound Core Value Research

Institutional theory offers several variants to explain the theoretical framework; moreover, there seems to be an underlying similarity among the various approaches to institutional theory. The version of institutional theory used for this study is bound by research founded on the work of Philip Selznick, who borrowed from Robert Michels and Chester Barnard in creating a distinctive model of institutional theory (Scott, 1987). Selznick viewed organizational structures as an adaptive vehicle shaped in reaction to the characteristics and commitments of participants to influence the organization while acknowledging constraints from the external environment (Scott, 1987). Selznick distinguished between organizations as fundamental technically devised instruments, mechanical, and disposable tools. Selznick (1957) stated organizations are technical instruments, designed as means to definite goals. They are judged on engineering premises; they are expendable.

Institutional Theory. This theoretical framework also claims that institutions have a natural dimension. They are products of interaction, and adaptation—they become the receptacles of group idealism. A key aspect of Selznick's institutional theory approach is that he emphasized the importance of history within the organization. He offered that an institution is

within the space of natural history and that it is adaptively changing over time. Selznick stressed a holistic, and contextual approach (Scott, 1987). Organizational core values fit neatly within the institutional theory theoretical framework based on the emphasis that institutions instill value, supplying intrinsic worth to a structure or process (Scott, 1987). The value created within an organization propagates long-term stability, much like codified core values promote institutional stability with shared values. Institutional theory defined by Selznick emphasized that effective leaders could define and defend the organization's institutional values—its distinctive mission—which is the foundational premise of core values (Scott, 1987).

Rationale for the Research Study

Core values matter to organizations as a way of communicating what they value to the rest of the world. As previously stated, many universities have codified core values; however, further research is needed to better understand if these values are familiar, internalized, and practiced within key stakeholder populations. Communicating core values and understanding how values are interpreted by all stakeholders is critical to successful execution of shared values in a higher education setting. Utilizing core values as the guiding compass for complex decision making, and strategic placement of limited university resources is essential for successful outcomes. Some solutions for one group may cause another stakeholder group to have a different perspective of the potential solution to the problem. Ultimately, integrating codified core values into the decision-making process allows the higher education institution to communicate values to all stakeholders, and helps explain institution decisions at the highest levels.

Significance of the Research Study

Core values provide the basis to help shape the culture of UND by providing guiding values for all stakeholders to aspire to achieve. This research has the potential to increase

scholarly knowledge and understanding of the extent to which stakeholders internalize core values to guide their daily actions as members of the campus community. The university president is ultimately the CEO responsible for the institution's core values. As the current president considers institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in strategic decision making in a VUCA environment, it is important to understand which core values resonate with key stakeholders to better align the president's strategic vision for the institution. A SWOT analysis is a simple tool to assist faculty and other stakeholders to initiate meaningful strategic change in a program and to use the data for program improvement (Orr, 2013).

As decisions are made by the university president to introduce potentially new core values, this study provides research concerning which values resonate with stakeholders. Additionally, this study provides awareness to understanding the statistical degree that core values differ in alignment among the four stakeholder populations. This research investigation provides a scholarly foundation for future core values research and advances the scholarly conversation of reinvigorating university core values.

Beyond the scope of this study exist other important internal and external stakeholders, such as alumni, community leaders, board of trustees, and vital members of the university community that warrant future evaluation. Based on past scholarly research, evaluating a specific university offers a roadmap to understanding how to evaluate other like universities, colleges, and community college core values within their respective stakeholder communities.

Research Study Roadmap

Within the subsequent sections of this investigation, a review of scholarly literature on core values relevant to the research is offered along with context regarding using institutional

theory as the research theoretical framework. Additionally, a detailed methodology section employing a prior UND Core Values pilot study conducted during my College of Education and Human Development Department, Educational Foundations graduate course titled “Research Statistics II EFR 516” is used to build upon past research methods. The overall research coalesces around methods for evaluating UND’s Core Values among the four key stakeholder populations. This research concludes with a detailed discussion of key findings that synchronizes with the literature review and theoretical framework. Implications of this study along with suggestions for future research conclude the investigation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly Debate

Scholarly debates that may emerge from this research include discussions about creating a quantitative ranking of core values from the University of North Dakota (UND) with a population of more than 13,700 undergraduate and graduate students and 2,450 faculty, staff, and administrators as a basis for other like colleges and universities (<https://und.edu/about/index.html>). Today UND has six codified Core Values. In 2016, the University’s Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) endorsed seven UND Core Values, however “service” was omitted from the six codified values (<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2016/11/core-values-bring-us-closer-to-oneund/>, para. 5). One wonders if those six core values are the right ones. Historical questions remain, such as should the current UND president consider adding more core values? Or should he change any of the existing core values to align closer with his internal ethical vision for the university as he seeks to execute a future strategic vision for the university? These are important questions that remain relevant to the five research questions addressed in my research.

In 2022, UND’s President appointed a committee to review the strategic vision for the University, which included a conversation about values (<https://blogs.und.edu/press-releases/2022/02/a-bold-new-plan-for-the-future-of-und>). The Strategic Planning Committee focused on articulating five strategic pillars for the university (<https://und.edu/about/strategic-plan/index.html>). The University’s overarching core values are encapsulated within these pillars,

which provide a foundation for the campus community (<https://und.edu/about/strategicplan/index.html>). How UND's five strategic pillars and core values compare with peer institutions of higher education within the scope of executing their missions is a central question within scholarly debates surrounding this research.

Even more important to answer in this research is: do university students, faculty, staff and administrators live by the codified university core values when making strategic decisions impacting themselves and the university? For example, when unexpected challenges or opportunities manifest themselves, are UND's Core Values central in decision making? Debates regarding these questions can and should serve as a foundation to help leadership evaluate the current core values as the University president considers potential modifications to UND's strategic vision.

Scholarly literature highlighting core values in higher education is limited. However, research detailing core values within certain segments of the education population, such as future educators or students, produced sufficient literature to understand the themes and gaps in analysis. These themes and gaps help articulate a mosaic of scholarly research values within a theoretical framework. Institutional theory, such as the theoretical framework applied in this study, allows researchers to view institutions through the lens of a changing environment that may impact culture and values while keeping the central purpose and mission of the academy to educate front and center (Scott, 1987).

Organizational core values fit neatly within the institutional theory theoretical framework based on the emphasis that institutions instill value and supply intrinsic worth to a structure or process (Scott, 1987). The value created within an organization propagates long-term stability, much like codified core values promote institutional stability with shared values. Institutional

theory, as defined by Selznick (1957), emphasized that effective leaders could define and defend the organization's institutional values—its distinctive mission, which is the foundational premise of core values (Scott, 1987).

Utilizing institutional theory (Selznick, 1957) as the research framework for a scholarly lens of evaluation was critical in my investigation. Several germane themes developed that gave insight into organizing research on core values in higher education. After researching scholarly peer reviewed articles, 11 themes emerged that created a mosaic of ideas that were used to refine and influence core values research in higher education. The 11 themes, with example citations, include:

1. United States vs International Core Values

Shrivastava, Shailaj. (2017). Promotion Of Moral Values Through Education. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 7, 103-108.

2. Quantitative vs Qualitative Evaluation

Van Rekom, J., Van Riel, C. B. M., & Wierenga, B. (2006). A Methodology for Assessing Organizational Core Values*. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(2), 175–201.

3. Changing Cultural Influences

Ferdman, B. M. (2018). Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion as Core Values in Organization Development Practice. In D. W. Jamieson, A. H. Church, & J. D. Vogelsang (Eds.), *Enacting Values-Based Change: Organization Development in Action* (pp. 157–167).

4. Economic and Political Impact of Core Values

Promoting Higher Education Values: A Guide for Discussion (2020). Scholars At Risk Network. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/promoting-higher-education-values-a-guide-for-discussion/>

5. Stakeholder Differences

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7. Responsibility of the University/Community College President

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10. Student Perspectives

de Agrela Gonçalves Jardim, M. H., da Silva Junior, G. B., & Alves, M. L. S. D. (2017). Values in Students of Higher Education. *Creative Education*, *08*(10), 1682–1693. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2017.810114>

11. Impact of Core Values

Longenecker, P. D. (2013). The Positive Impact of Individual Core Values. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *115*(3), 429–434. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1409-0>

The 11 themes identified provide a basis to understand the scholarly literature core values mosaic surrounding higher education and to recognize gaps in research. The themes also provide a roadmap for future scholarly literature and a general roadmap for my dissertation research. My review of literature, however, was not exhaustive given the lack of research on educational core values.

In an effort to organize the research, Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the initial literature review synthesis with the 11 themes. In addition, it reveals the overall research plan

exploring UND’s Core Values and detailing the four key stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Figure 1 also includes a visualization of the six current codified University of North Dakota core values and the potential new core values articulated by UND’s current president. An example of 27 ubiquitous core values found within like organizations were derived from the numerous scholarly articles that were researched and are listed at the bottom of the figure.

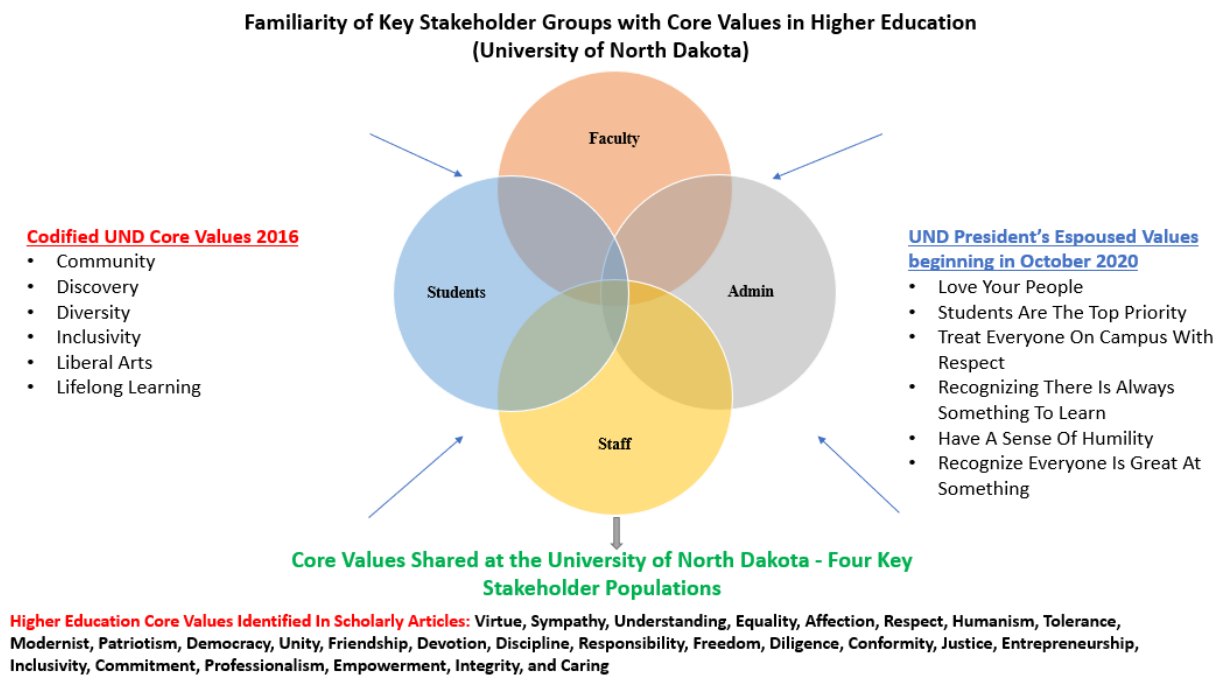


Figure 1. Familiarity of Key Stakeholder Groups with Core Values in Higher Education.

Scholarly Articles

A review of the literature reveals that core values exist in higher education organizations. However, these values are segmented among institutions that are like in size and type. Most of the core values literature obtained in my research did not specifically detail current core values among specific institutions, rather the locus of control was from an administrator perspective as well as segmented between community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education. In

addition, there was limited data that detailed how core values shaped mission, vision, goals, and objectives of higher educational institutions (Roper et al., 2016; Nelson, 2007; Trent & Pollard, 2019).

President CEOs Serve as Critical Link

University and college presidents wield a vast amount of power in shaping mission, vision, goals, and objectives of their institutions of higher education. Trent and Pollard (2019) state the presidents are ultimately responsible for the ethical leadership of their institutions. Society has witnessed the breakdown of leadership in the last decade that included scenarios where top-level executives were involved in fraud, greed, and corruption (De Russy & Langbert, 2005; Thomas, 2008). These lapses have occurred across all landscapes, including not only the entertainment and sports world, but also the corporate, political, health, and education realms (Anderson, Woods, and Walker, 2019, p. 1). Presidents serve as the critical link between all stakeholders and can guide universities and colleges toward specific value-sets. Core values must be critically linked to ensure the mission, vision, goals, and objectives fit within the ethical scope of the institutions stated values. In guiding these institutions, the college presidents must have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, while moving the institution in a direction consistent with stated core values. “These deeply personal characteristics must manifest authentically in the decisions that span the academic, fiscal, operational, and advancement efforts of the organization” (Trent & Pollard, 2019, p. 66).

Today university and college presidents are challenged to do more with less. Therefore, they must align limited resources to achieve their institutions stated objectives. Universities and colleges are seen as highly complex businesses and much of the lessons learned is obtained from

leading private non-educational organizations. “For college presidents, effective decision-making necessitates the ability to strike a balance, which stems from one’s personal ethical perspective, between stakeholders needs, and college resources, mission, vision, and values” (Trent & Pollard, 2019, p. 66).

Although presidents operate in this Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) arena and exercise a vast amount of control within shaping the organizations mission, vision, goals, and objectives, limited literature exists that helped provide a common set of core values germane to like universities and colleges that could be tailored to fit the president’s needs. “Further, in these times of increased scrutiny to produce more college-educated people ready to enter the workforce, college leaders are facing a climate that is rampant with fiscal constraints, countless demands from stakeholders, and government mandates” (Trent & Pollard, 2019, p. 65).

An abundance of scholarly research exists on leadership development and the tools necessary to lead in a complex environment. For example, leadership development scholarly research revealed six categories and ways of understanding leadership development: (1) one’s own development, (2) fulfilling a leadership role, (3) personal development, (4) leader and organizational development, (5) collective leadership development, and (6) human development (Kjellström et al., 2020).

Additionally, numerous books have been written that serve as the modern underpinnings for executive leadership such as John P. Kotter’s book titled “Leading Change” published by Harvard Business School Press in 1996. The link between leadership and institutional core values formulation deserves more scholarly attention.

In office, presidents should pay attention to make the core values and beliefs of the university the ground of their tenure and then, and only then, contribute

personal vision and aspiration to form an imprint they can hope to leave behind
(Nelson, 2007, p. 31).

However, the literature reviewed specifically for this study detailed that research is lacking in the area that would help guide presidents in their review of core values. Specially, “there is limited research on the ethical dimension of leadership. This limited research is unfortunate given that college presidents operate in a world ripe with potential ethical calamities” (Trent & Pollard, 2019, p. 67).

A review of scholarly research revealed that common paradigms exist for presidents to use as they develop their ethical leadership styles. Wood and Hilton (2012) suggest higher education leaders employ the five ethical decision-making paradigms of justice, critique, care, profession, and local community as a framework for making ethical leadership decisions.

Much is written on ethical leadership that must emanate from the president. Messick and Bazerman (1996) researched ethical leadership and the psychology of decision-making. Their research suggests that by understanding theories about the world, other people and ourselves, executives better understand how they make judgements that they base their decisions on (Messick & Bazerman, 1996). By understanding these underpinning theories, working in a VUCA environment, presidents and others can learn to make better, more ethical decisions.

The scholarly debate linking ethical leadership and common core values is also limited. This important relationship between exercising ethical leadership and sustainable core values is closely aligned (Nelson, 2007). For example, Trent and Pollard (2019) state,

Presidents must be mindful of how the institution’s mission, and vision align with its accountability measures. They must also simultaneously bear in mind that the mission

shapes the character, and values of the institution, and drives it toward a specific path (p. 69).

Presidents must display ethical leadership traits and vision within their roles leading universities and colleges. Their personal leadership of what is right and what is wrong has a tremendous impact on the mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the higher educational institution. As Nelson (2007) states:

College presidents certainly cannot lack vision, but in context of the academy, their vision is and must be joined in a seamless and symbiotic way to the basic foundations of the university. The values, beliefs, and principals of that foundation constitute the core vision for the academy and for the presidents who lead it (p. 30).

Again, limited scholarly literature was found that specifically helped guide president CEOs toward common core values utilized in higher education that provided a foundation to build on as they determined their specific priorities in higher education.

Institutional Environment Matters

The environment is critical to achieving lasting results with clear core values and objectives. Research indicates that positive organizational change is possible even in the most challenging settings with the deployment of presidential strategic guidance and focused positive organizational change (Nelson, 2007).

In the future as in the past, debate about education, the nature of the university, and its role in society will best be shaped and informed by the leadership that, in many ways, presidents alone can and must provide (Nelson, 2007, p. 33).

This is important because it helps confirm in an academic setting that grounded values and strategy can help align all stakeholders toward a common goal, even in extremely complex, volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous environments. Recognizing that core values, along with the proper theoretical framework, provides an opportunity for research in this complex environment (Nelson, 2007).

Institutional theory is the theoretical framework that bounds core values research for this research study. The work of Philip Selznick (1957) to influence institutional theory provides an influential framework because he “viewed organizational structure as an adaptive vehicle shaped in reaction to the characteristics, and commitments of participants as well as to influences, and constraints from the external environment” (Scott, 1987, p. 494). Higher education institutions are organizations that create value with actions, ideas, and values. Institutional theory can serve as a framework to evaluate how value is created with codified core values (Scott, 1987).

According to Scott (1987), institutionalization refers to this adaptive process: “In what is perhaps its most significant meaning, ‘to institutionalize’ is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (p. 494). Core values are the foundational philosophies leaders communicate to constituents with the goal of creating long-term value within organizations.

Core Values as the Compass for Decision-Making

The literature suggests that decisions in higher education are complex with many stakeholders and perspectives to consider (Trent & Pollard, 2019). Utilizing core values as the compass for complex decision-making and utilization of limited resources is critical for successful outcomes. Some solutions that solve an issue for one group may cause another stakeholder group to have a potential problem. Utilizing core values in decision making allows the university or college to communicate its values to all stakeholders and helps explain decision

making at the highest level. Establishing core values help build a framework to debate issues that impact the institutions of higher learning to ensure the ultimate decisions are consistent with codified core values (Nelson, 2007). In addition, Anderson and Weede (2011) state that “these clearly-defined core values are precisely what allow our profession to evolve in a thoughtful, deliberate manner” (p. 4). Core values are the compass that all strategic decisions should derive in a higher education setting.

Core values provide a moral compass when making critical decisions that impact the student body, faculty, community, and any stakeholder (Trent & Pollard, 2019). The literature is replete with topics that core values provide a framework to help shape decisions and the conversations that support decision making. Again, no specific core values existed in the literature exploration that supported common core values that proved to be successful for higher education institutions. Core values were highlighted as critical to making effective decisions in higher education grounded on trust between all parties. As Anderson and Weede (2011) noted,

...the most important, and problematic core value: Trust. Often each opposing side can legitimately say to the other, ‘Trust us to make decisions that are in the best interest of students.’ It is at that point when the other core values must serve as our compass as we wrestle with how to reconcile our differences, and move forward in service to our colleagues, our institutions, and our students (p. 6).

Anderson and Weede (2011) agree, core values must serve as the compass for the institution. Additionally, the development of those values require input from all campus community stakeholders. Finally, trust is the key ingredient in the development of transparent core values within the academy.

Declaring and Affirming Core Values

Adopted core values are critical in multiple academic settings within universities or colleges. Roper et al. (2016) found that student affairs professionals benefited from codified core values when they built frameworks around the issues that exist today. The core values framework allowed them to address issues they believed supported students as well as issues that troubled them because it limited their support to students.

Core values allowed these professionals to frame their positive and negative issues in a way to make decisions consistent with the organizational values. For example, social media and incorporating a more diverse student body were two issues seen as opportunities and challenges. The literature review suggests that declaring and affirming core values is a way to ensure during changing conditions and competing resources focus remains on what truly matters (Roper et al., 2016).

Specifically, researchers argue “as student leaders attempt to chart new, and productive futures for themselves, their organizations, and the student affairs field, they must, and reinforce the core values that motivate their work” (Roper et al., 2016, p.62). This is excellent research to help strengthen the argument for higher education institutions to lean on their core values amid changing environments. It is even more important to have viable core values that individuals working in the organization can lean on when trying to determine the best course of action dealing with new technologies or situations in higher education without previous experiences.

It is also interesting that among the student affairs administration professionals, many of the strategic opportunities were also strategic challenges such as navigating the social media landscape (Roper et al., 2016). Research indicates that higher educational institutions must

navigate in the same environments as any other complex organization in the 21st century.

Codified core values are a way to help ensure value-added decisions occur at all levels.

Additionally, student affairs administrative professionals must navigate a complex and changing moral and ethical environment when it comes to university and college policy of prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (Roper et al., 2016). Research suggests that core values can help guide decision making supporting students on issues arising from ethical standards, and ethical climate (Roper et al., 2016). As student affairs administrators wrestle with making the right decisions to support students, the research suggests that “over the past twenty-five years, a dramatic shift has occurred in the intellectual, and ethical climate of most colleges, and universities, away from the foundations of the modern university, and toward a postmodern perspective” (Blimling, 1998, p. 68).

The guiding documents that student affairs professionals utilize are a compilation of seven decades worth and focus on the whole student. In some cases, “administrators sometimes tread heavily on these core values in making decisions for reasons of expediency or institutional survival, the principals remain fundamental to higher education as a community” (Blimling, 1998, p. 72). Ultimately, the research of scholars, such as Roper et al. (2016), Nelson (2007), and Trent & Pollard (2019) suggest institutional values within the context of student affairs should not compete with but expand upon overall institutional core values.

Students, Faculty, Staff and Administrators are the Key Ingredients

José Antonio Bowen is the President of Goucher College. In an article titled, *Nudges the Learning Economy, Relationships, Resilience, and Reflection*, adapted from his acceptance speech for the national Ernest L. Boyer award, President Bowen wrote about unleashing the minds of young students to solve complex problems that currently do not exist (Bowen, 2018).

Core values should provide a framework within which young minds work as they develop new solutions to important issues; they serve as guideposts to ensure creative ideas are consistent with university and college embraced values. President Bowen argues that in the new economy these are the tools that students will need, essentially to be life learners. His foundation is the three Rs—relationships, resilience, and reflection (Bowen, 2018). These new imagined three Rs are the essential keys for the new economy.

Bowen (2018) introduces the new three Rs, but in a deeper sense he speaks to setting the cultural condition to allow the new three Rs to flourish in a campus setting. Research helps validate that as higher education organizations evolve, students' ideas are critical, and having a framework centered around university and college core values is complementary to the discussions.

The theoretical framework of institutional theory supports Bowen's claim of setting a cultural condition for growth because the bounded premise is that organizations are adaptively changing overtime. Faculty and administrators serve as catalysts to students' higher education experience. In a higher education setting designed around students it is important to understand learning is shared between key stakeholders, "faculty, administrators, and students" (Bowen, 2018, p. 31). These key stakeholder groups represent three of the four populations that I considered in this research study.

Conclusion

In this literature review I described scholarly work pertaining to core values in higher education. Overall, there is limited research that pertains to the subject of values in institutions of higher learning. Core values, in general, are replete in scholarly literature; however, most literature is framed within the context outside higher education institutions. This literature review

provides a foundation for scholarly debate emerging from core values inculcated in the academy, specifically within the University of North Dakota community campus fabric.

The important aspects of the existing literature detail future educators or students, which reveals gaps and themes within overarching higher education institutional core values scholarly work. For example, 11 themes emerged from conducting this literature review, each providing context for scholarly debate. Those 11 themes include international versus American core values, where the promotion of moral values through education, in some cases, differs among countries. The literature review also reveals the impact of cultural influences, economic, political, stakeholder differences, and educator values. Evaluating an existing higher education institution within the scope of codified values inculcated within the fabric of the institution resulted in the acknowledgement that there is a clear gap within current scholarly literature.

Additionally, the research suggests that the tone-at-the-top from the university president, and the university's environment, mission, vision, goals and objectives play a significant role in shaping values. In my review of scholarly literature, I uncovered 27 specific core values pertinent in higher education. Moreover, those identified values are ubiquitous without any specific framework for application within a defined higher education setting.

In summary, I found there is limited scholarly literature relating to higher education core values; however, I was still able to identify 11 themes and 27 specific values germane to higher education core values. Evaluating those themes and core values offers opportunities for future studies. This research study provides initial research into questions concerning familiarity and stakeholder internalization of selected values. In the next chapter, the research methodology, a quantitative method for evaluating core values at UND is provided in detail.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY
Research Overview

In his methodology chapter I include the purpose of the study along with five research questions. Furthermore, the research approach is addressed and I explain the benefits of using a quantitative method for the investigation. This chapter is closely aligned to the University of North Dakota (UND) Core Values pilot study that I conducted during my College of Education and Human Development, Department of Educational Foundations graduate course titled “Research Statistics II EFR 516”. The method is suited to addressing UND’s Core Values among the four key institution stakeholder populations.

For the purpose of this research study, the terms Chief Executive Officer (CEO), college, university, and community college president are used interchangeably. College and university presidents operate as top administrators, serving as CEOs of their respective higher education institutions. They are responsible to political leaders, special interest groups, not-for-profit organizations, community leaders, board of trustees, and stakeholders who are germane to the day-to-day operation of their organizations.

Additionally, this study measures some form of agreement which is based on the 6-point Likert-type scale with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree (all some form of agreement), 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (all some form of disagreement). Some form agreement is the measurement of scores that are rated either 4, 5, or 6 on the Qualtrics instrument for that specific question.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how the University of North Dakota's codified six core values align with selected key internal stakeholders—students, faculty, staff, and administrators. This research focuses on understanding the stakeholders' familiarity and internalization of the university's adopted core values. In this investigation I also explore the key stakeholders' affinity toward potential future core values articulated by the current UND president. In my investigation I consolidate the six potential core values that UND's current president communicated since his inauguration in 2020. Both the codified six UND Core Values, and the six potential future core values espoused by the president are evaluated in this study through the lens of the four key stakeholder populations. Understanding if each of these critical stakeholder populations are familiar and internalize these core values will allow university leadership the ability to continue a scholarly and informed dialogue with key campus community stakeholders as core values are revisited at the university.

Research Questions

In this quantitative study, I seek answers to the following research questions:

1. Are members of the four evaluated UND stakeholder groups familiar with the UND Core Values?
2. To what degree are the study participants familiar with the UND Core Values?
3. Are the UND President's espoused core values familiar to the four key university stakeholder populations?
4. To what extent are the core values internalized among key stakeholders?
5. How do the six potential new core values compare with the codified core values among the four key stakeholder populations?

Research Approach

My philosophical worldview regarding this study is derived from a pragmatic view of a basic set of paradigms that center my research. Higher education unlocked and accessible to all qualified individuals and learning environments open to new ideas are central paradigms that ground my research. This practical view allows my research to focus on the five research questions of understanding core value familiarity, and internalization within the defined populations and offers the opportunity to utilize all approaches available to understand the problem.

The quantitative method allows the utilization of quantitative aspects of collecting data using a 6-point Likert-type scale questionnaire instrument. This method allows for nonexperimental design utilizing correlational statistics to measure relationships between variables such as differing core values. However, “qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires or psychological instruments” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 14). The 6-point Likert-type scale is central to my research design, and it provides the best quantitative data collection for this study.

Research Design

The preponderance of my doctoral coursework and cohort research focused on understanding institutional core values. Several courses afforded the opportunity to focus my research and design methods to evaluate core values. To date, the most significant project completed researching core values was a pilot study I conducted during my College of Education and Human Development, Department of Educational Foundations graduate course titled “Research Statistics II EFR”. This pilot quantitative research produced a manuscript focused on

both UND's Core Values and its Mission Statement to determine if students were familiar with both, and to determine if these strategic guidance documents were familiar and internalized by the sample graduate students. The project allowed me to determine key statistical methods to employ during research, and to understand critical independent and dependent variables to apply statistical analysis to help introduce meaning from the data collected.

Of the 20 UND graduate students surveyed in the pilot study about their level of familiarity and the extent of agreement with the core values and mission statement, 30 percent were familiar with the core values and 50 percent were familiar with the mission statement. These results indicated a need to investigate the findings in more detail to determine if this data was consistent among other UND stakeholders.

The two independent variables measured in the pilot study were familiarity with the UND's Core Values and Mission Statement. The dependent variables used were the constructs of confidence in three of the six current UND Core Values—Diversity, Inclusivity, and Lifelong Learning—and the UND Mission Statement highlighting Research/Discovery, Transformative Learning, and Community Engagement Opportunities.

Three of the six core values were not evaluated during this pilot research. Therefore, an opportunity exists for a holistic review of the six-current codified core values along with the potential new core values. The additional core values, not included in the pilot study, are included in this dissertation.

Based on my pilot research and professional feedback, I decided to remove the UND Mission Statement from my research dissertation and concentrate exclusively on UND's Core Values. This focus allowed me to expand my research to include the codified core values as well as the six potential core values in my research.

Research Setting

The University of North Dakota was founded in 1883, several years before the state was established. Today the university is nestled on a 521-acre campus. The university has a rich tradition in engineering, medicine, aviation, space, and unmanned aircraft systems. As the state's oldest and largest university, it is classified by Carnegie as a research university high activity and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (<https://und.edu/about/index.html>).

UND's enrollment is approximately 13,772 graduate students and undergraduate students, and it employs more than 2,450 benefited personnel. The potential pool of key stakeholders for this study, then, is about 16,200 students, faculty, staff, and administrators (<https://und.edu/about/index.html>).

Research Boundaries

The two key demographic identifiers that were asked on the research questionnaire were related to time at UND and gender. Those demographics served as an opportunity to understand the makeup of the campus community in more detail. Although for this research study each population was evaluated without specific consideration for gender or time at the university, additional statistical analysis may identify familiarity with values at differing levels for all stakeholder populations.

In this investigation each subject self-identified in only one of the four subject categories – student, faculty, staff, and administrators. It was acknowledged that a subject may classify into more than one stakeholder population; however, participants could only self-identify in one population. Self-identification proved to be the best method to classify which community campus stakeholder population a subject should be aligned with for research purposes.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

All participants were advised that their responses will remain anonymous and no personal identifying information will be captured on the survey. In addition, no gifts or cash or prizes were offered to participants for completing the questionnaire.

Throughout the research I worked closely with university administration, specifically UND's president to request support for emailing a questionnaire to campus community stakeholders within university guidelines. Additionally, college deans and faculty were contacted, and their support was requested. Outreach to students and staff via UND Human Resources & Payroll, and UND Admissions standards was achieved. Individuals identified within the four stakeholder populations received an email with a direct link to the Qualtrics questionnaire requesting their participation in the research study.

Based on past research studies, a small percentage of responses was anticipated, especially in smaller populations. Therefore, a strategy to oversample the four populations was employed to meet the target sample size of 200 (50 per sample group). The strategy consisted of reaching out to every college dean to illicit their support creating an opportunity to reach every student, faculty, and staff member at the university. A timeline of four weeks during the academic year was determined to collect data.

Participants

Classification of the four populations evaluated within the university structure are important to understand for this research. Job classifications are created to align knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for institutional job positions to ensure the organization can meet its defined mission. Job classifications are important to the research for facilitating proper

population classification of individuals who are providing their feedback during the data collection phase.

The North Dakota University System (NDUS) utilizes broadbanding as a method for job classification, and compensation is based on job scope, employee knowledge, skills, and abilities, job market data, and employee performance. Job bands at UND are managed by the senior human resource manager and the NDUS Human Resource Council executes statewide oversight (<https://ndus.edu/neud-broadband-job-classifications/>).

For this research study students are classified as graduate or undergraduate. However, it is important to understand that some students are also UND employees. These student employees are considered staff personnel and are identified within the broadband 8000 series. In my study, random data collection may include students within the 8000 band, or traditional students without employee ties to UND (<https://ndus.edu/ndus-broadband-job-classifications/>).

The more traditional faculty role falls within the broadband 2000 series. These faculty are salaried employees of UND. The following job families are identified as band 2000: Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Program Administrator, Professor, Research Professor, Clinical Professor, Associate Professor, Research Associate Professor, Clinical Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Research Assistant Professor, Clinical Assistant Professor, Instructor, Research Instructor, Clinical Instructor, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Part-time Academic Staff, Graduate Research Assistant, Graduate Service Assistant, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Graduate Research Fellow, and Graduate Teaching Fellow (<https://ndus.edu/ndus-broadband-job-classifications/>).

Staff is identified within several band series to include 3000 (Professional), 4000 (Technical and Paraprofessional), 5000 (Office Support), 6000 (Crafts/Trades), and 7000 (Services). This is the most expansive population of employees at the university. Professional

includes all positions performing academic support, student service, and institutional support activities. These employees are college graduates or possess experience that amounts to comparable college graduation such as librarians, accountants, systems analysts, and computer programmers (<https://ndus.edu/ndus-broadband-job-classifications/>).

Technical and Paraprofessional series includes jobs that require specialized knowledge or skills that are acquired through experience or 2-year technical institutions, junior colleges, or on-the-job training. These employees may serve as technicians in supportive roles, such as a computer programmer with less than a bachelor's degree, drafters, engineering aides, junior engineers, mathematical aides, licensed practical or vocational nurses, dietitians, photographers, radio operators, scientific assistant, technical illustrators, technicians (medical, dental, electronic, physical sciences), and similar occupational activity categories that are institutionally defined as technical assignments (<https://ndus.edu/ndus-broadband-job-classifications/>).

Administration is identified in the broadband series as 0000 and 1000.

Executive/Administrative is identified as 0000 band; it includes Executive, Dean, and Officer. These are the most senior administrative positions within the higher education institution. Additionally, administrative managerial falls within this band. These positions are identified with knowledge, skills, and abilities that require primary and major responsibility for management of the higher education institution. The individuals lead departments or subdivisions of the institution and are traditionally supervisors of university professional employees (<https://ndus.edu/ndus-broadband-job-classifications/>).

The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education policy manual 100.5 Principals and Core Values of the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE), in section 1.e. states "The SBHE believes: The students, faculty, and staff are the foundation of the NDUS" (North Dakota University System State Board of Higher Education Policies, April 25, 2022, Policy Manual:

100.5, Effective July 22, 2021). Four internal UND stakeholder populations are supported during this research, which includes the groups identified as key by SBHE. The four groups are defined in greater detail as:

- 1) **Graduate and undergraduate students within any program of study at the university.** Per the NDUS policy handbook, a degree seeking student means graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in courses for credit who are seeking a degree, certificate, or other formal award (<https://ndus.edu/sbhe-overview/sbhe-policies/>).
- 2) **Faculty from any program of study at the university.** For the purposes of this study faculty are considered adjunct faculty, full-time instructors, assistant professors with terminal degrees, associate professors, and full professors. Per the NDUS policy handbook faculty are individuals tasked with providing scholarship, academic research, or teaching, including tenured and nontenured professors, adjunct professors, visiting professors, lecturers, graduate student instructors, and those in comparable positions (<https://ndus.edu/sbhe-overview/sbhe-policies/>).
- 3) **Administrators, as defined by UND Human Resources & Payroll Support broadbanding and North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Policy Manual.** Administrators are not faculty. Per the NDUS policy handbook individuals whose primary responsibility are administrative or managerial are not considered faculty unless the individual also teaches at least one credit-hour (<https://ndus.edu/sbhe-overview/sbhe-policies/>). Administrators act on behalf of the university. Per North Dakota State Board of Higher Education policy manual, administration means any person who has acted on behalf of the institution under State Board of Higher Education Policy 605.3. Policy 605.3 is titled, Nonrenewal, Termination or Dismissal of Faculty, effective April 29,

2021(<https://ndus.edu/sbhe-overview/sbhe-policies/>). These individuals are identified as department chair, dean, or other person authorized under institution policies to give such notice.

- 4) **Staff will be encouraged to participate in this research project.** For the purposes of this project, staff is defined by UND Human Resources & Payroll Support broadbanding, and information obtained from the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education. No specific definition was found; however, staff was referred in the policy documents as academic staff, professional staff, support staff, security staff, and construction staff. (North Dakota University System State Board of Higher Education Policies, April 25, 2022) <https://ndus.edu/sbhe-overview/sbhe-policies/>.

In this research study individuals self-identified as student, faculty, staff, or administration. The total key stakeholder populations number 16,200 for this research study with a response rate of 1.3% (209 participants). Student stakeholder response rate based on a population of 13,772 was 35 (0.25%). Per UND's website, the university enjoys a 17:1 student to faculty ratio; based on this ratio the total number of faculty would approximate 810 for a study response rate of 88 (10.9%), (UND Faculty Reports, July 8, 2023, <https://und.edu/analytics-and-planning/dashboards/>). For this research study the overall response rate for staff and administration was unavailable based on the data collected. Within the campus community students provide the abundance of data opportunities while administration represents the smallest group of subjects.

Table 1. Number of Participants in Stakeholder Population.

Key Stakeholders	Participants (209 total)
Stakeholder Population	
Students	
Undergraduate	8
Graduate	27
Faculty	88
Staff	82
Administrator	4

Prior to addressing the five research questions, understanding the sample sizes and demographics of stakeholder participants is important. The research goal employed was a targeted sample size of 200 (50 per sample group). Overall stakeholder participation numbers met or exceeded the overall targeted number. Qualtrics online data survey total numbers indicated 232 people responded to the survey; 209 completed the survey. However, within some specific stakeholder populations those numbers fell below the 50 per sample group designed efforts.

Overall population stakeholder student data collected totaled 35 (8 undergraduate and 27 graduate students). Faculty and staff provided the most robust data collection with 88 and 82 respectfully. A potential limitation earlier identified in the Methodology chapter was for each of the four populations evaluated to meet a 50-survey threshold. In this research study administrators produced the smallest set of data with total numbers as low as 4 participants.

Demographic data was collected from the participants to provide additional background information for research purposes such as time spent with the UND campus community and gender. Collected demographic details from all four stakeholder groups are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographics of the sampled population of students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage of 209 Surveys
Stakeholder Population		
Students		
Undergraduate	8	3.8
Graduate	27	12.9
Faculty	88	42.1
Staff	82	39.3
Administrator	4	1.9
Time at UND		
0-4 years		34.9
5-9 years	73	22.5
10-14 years	47	10.5
15 or more years	22	32.1
Gender		
Male	87	41.6
Female	113	54.1
Non-Binary	1	0.5
Prefer to self-describe	1	0.5
Prefer not to say	7	3.3

Based on the research goals and design, all collected data was utilized. This includes data collected from the stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff and administrators—regardless of the sample size. As previously identified, small sample sizes may prevent obtaining statistically significant outcomes in data analysis. The following data is presented in support of the five research questions.

Instrument

A 6-point Likert-type scale instrument, a questionnaire, was created exclusively for this research project utilizing experience obtained from the pilot study instrument. Upon completion

of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval of this research questionnaire, the survey was emailed to members of the respective stakeholder populations.

The instrument created for this study was titled, “Core Values Questionnaire Based on 6-Point Likert-Type Scale.” This instrument was created from a pilot project survey I created during the spring 2021 EFR 516 cohort assessing two constructs of confidence regarding UND Core Values and UND Mission Statement and their familiarity. The current instrument included six demographic questions to provide background insight on all participants and to correctly categorize them into the proper stakeholder population. An additional question was asked to understand participant involvement in the then ongoing UND strategic planning process.

Similar to the pilot project the instrument utilized a two constructs of confidence regarding familiarity with both UND Core Values and the UND President’s articulated values. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on six affective questions using a 6-point Likert-type scale with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree (all some form of agreement), 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (all some form of disagreement). The dissertation questionnaire asks identifying questions to ensure data are attributed to the correct population surveyed, but otherwise the basic elements of the pilot instrument was utilized for this research project (see Appendix A).

During the pilot project I created a survey titled, “University of North Dakota Mission & Core Values.” That survey was emailed to the spring 2021 EFR 516 cohort utilizing the course Blackboard email account for all students. Based on the best available information and class count, I achieved 100% participation. The project focused on assessing two constructs of confidence regarding the current UND Core Values and UND Mission Statement, and their

familiarity to the student population. The survey consisted of two demographic questions, collecting data on gender and current level of degree program.

In addition, the pilot survey posed two questions to the participants about their familiarity with the current UND Core Values and the Mission Statement. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on six affective questions using a 6-point Likert-type scale with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree (all some form of agreement), 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (all some form of disagreement). The pilot study instrument was redesigned to remove all questions regarding UND's Mission Statement.

Variables

Demographic Variables

My research investigation relied on quantitative methods utilizing independent and dependent variables. I also collected demographic variables that were used to better understand the characteristics of the sample.

During this research study the University of North Dakota continued to refine core values and long-term strategic planning. Therefore, a question was added to the survey to help promote scholarly debate surrounding the strategic planning process by understanding if research participants were involved in the ongoing efforts, and to collect germane data surrounding the UND Learning, Equity, Affinity, Discovery, Service (LEADS) initiative. The information represented by Q6 provides additional data for this ongoing university conversation.

The four demographic variables collected during this research study are:

Q1. Which demographic population are you a member of (please select only one)

Student (graduate or undergraduate), Faculty, Staff, Administrator?

Q2. How long have you been associated with your demographic population?

0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15 or more years

Q3. Which gender do you identify?

Woman, Man, Non-binary, Prefer to self-describe, Prefer not to answer

Q6. How involved have you been in the current strategic planning process? (check all that apply)

I have attended presentations and/or town halls on the progress of the strategic plan (1)

I have participated in focus groups and/or workgroups organized by the strategic planning committee (2)

I have read drafts of the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (3)

I have provided comments on the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (4)

I have helped lead and/or organize strategic planning activities (5)

Independent Variables

The two independent variables measured in this study are self-identified familiarity with UND's core values and self-identified familiarity with the core values communicated by the president via strategic communication messaging to university stakeholders. The variables are:

Q4. Are you familiar with University of North Dakota's current Core Values?

Yes/No

Q5. Are you familiar with the personal core values that UND President Andy Armacost shared since his October 2020 inauguration?

Yes/No

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables used are the constructs of confidence in the six codified core values and the six potential new core values, a total of 12 dependent variables. They include Community, Discovery, Diversity, Inclusivity, Liberal Arts, Lifelong Learning, Care, Development, Humility, Learning Organization, Respect, and Talent.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability of a 6-point Likert-type instrument used for this research study provides scholarly reliability based on past use of the instrument. The consistency and repeatability of the 6-point Likert-type tool is acceptable for this research project. In addition, the internal consistency of the 6-point Likert-type tool is acceptable. The sets of items on the scale behave in identical ways and address the same underlying construct. For this research study to score internal consistency Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated (see Table 3).

The validity in quantitative research using the 6-point Likert-type tool is well documented obtaining meaningful inferences from participant scores from the instrument. The 6-point Likert-type instrument has been utilized in previous scholarly quantitative research. This instrument allows researchers to address the three traditional forms of validity: content validity, predictive or concurrent validity, and construct validity (Creswell, 2018). Finally, the 6-point Likert-type scale allows study participants to have more options to respond to on the numerical scale without a neutral option. This scaling leads to non-neutral responses, which is advantageous for statistical analysis.

Table 3. Correlation of Subscale Constructs and Measures of Internal Consistency for Survey Data.

Construct Number	Subscale Constructs	Question Numbers	C1.	α
C1.	Confidence in UND Codified Core Values	q1_1, q1_2, q1_3, q1_4, q1_5, q1_6		.92
C2.	Confidence UND President Articulated Core Values	q2_1, q2_2, q2_3, q2_4, q2_5, q2_6	.48*	.91

* $p < .05$

Limitations

This research has several strengths that provide a foundation to evaluate core values at a higher education institution. My research scope to evaluate only UND Core Values overcomes past research drawbacks by evaluating a single institution without comparing it to a like higher education organization.

However, the research study does have limitations. Minimal scholarly research exists pertaining to core values in higher education. Although limited research presents opportunities for research, these limitations highlight disparities for research to build upon past scholarly work. The lack of research guideposts may lead to a flawed methodology, weak design and analysis protocols for this research study.

The four populations evaluated are students, faculty, staff, and administrators. A limitation may be that these four populations are not emblematic of the holistic campus community to draw conclusions for overarching core values research.

Collecting demographic data from the participants is critical to my research, where I have articulated the definition of each population within the North Dakota University System broadbanding job classification guide. A limitation may exist from shared population demographics within the scope of this study. Some campus community members fall into two or

more population groups within this study; therefore, self-identification is used. A limitation may exist because self-selection provides opportunities to incorrectly code a participant into their closest broadbanding classification population.

Another potential limitation may be the critical questionnaire instrument and the potential for insufficient demographic or quantitative data collected to support additional statistical analysis. Additionally, working with UND's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to receive approval to move forward with this research study requires access to campus community population emails. Limitations exist without proper access to email addresses to send potential participants the questionnaire link. Without adequate email addresses and responses from all four populations, small sample sizes may occur. This limitation may prevent obtaining a statistically significant number of questionnaire responses for small populations.

Finally, bias may be a limitation. Researcher bias may occur in the methodology construction, questionnaire formulation, data collection, statistical analysis, and overall research conclusions. Personal researcher bias for this study is acknowledged based on personal experiences as a military member for more than 30 years studying leadership and understanding organizational core values are the underpinnings of what organizations aspire to become.

Summary

This methodology chapter is closely aligned to the core values pilot study that I conducted during my College of Education and Human Development, Department of Educational Foundations graduate course titled "Research Statistics II EFR 516". All research was conducted at the University of North Dakota, the state's oldest and largest university; it is classified by Carnegie as a research university high activity and is accredited by the Higher

Learning Commission (<https://und.edu/about/>). The potential pool of key stakeholders for this study, then, is about 16,200 students, faculty, staff, and administrators (<https://und.edu/about/>).

The primary instrument used in this research study was a 6-point Likert-type tool. This instrument is a commonly used approach in scaling questionnaire answers. Participants were asked to mark their agreement or disagreement on a symmetrical scale. Utilizing a 6-point scale eliminates a neutral response, which provides a scale that encourages the Qualtrics questionnaire participant to make a choice that is positive or negative. Independent variables of familiarity (yes/no) with the codified Core Values and UND's President-articulated values were obtained. Twelve dependent variables were analyzed during this research investigation. Instrument reliability and validity were addressed in this chapter, as were research limitations. The next chapter concentrates on the research findings relevant to each campus community population.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research investigation was to understand how the University of North Dakota's (UND) Core Values align with selected key internal stakeholders. The study focused on the four key UND internal stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—to understand their familiarity and internalization of the university's adopted core values. Five research questions were addressed in this quantitative research study. These research questions remained central in all data collection and analysis.

In this research I explored how a specific Midwestern university's core values align with four key internal stakeholder populations. I consolidated the six potential core values that the current university president communicated since his inauguration in 2020. Both the codified six UND Core Values and the six potential future core values espoused by the university president are evaluated in this study through the lens of the four key stakeholder populations.

Understanding if each of these critical stakeholder populations are familiar with and internalize the core values will allow university leadership the ability to continue a scholarly informed dialogue with key campus community stakeholders as core values are revisited at the university.

Research Question 1

R1. Are members of the four evaluated UND stakeholder groups familiar with the UND Core Values?

Research data was collected from 208 respondents to support answering R1 via the research instrument, a 6-point, Likert-type scale, administered in the Qualtrics online survey tool. All four key stakeholder groups—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—were represented in the research data.

Faculty and staff were the two largest stakeholder response groups, while administrators was the smallest with only four participants. Table 4 summarizes the overall stakeholder response percentages (yes/no) of familiarity with the current UND Core Values.

Table 4. Stakeholder Familiarity with the University of North Dakota Core Values.

Q4. Are you familiar with the UNDs Core Values?	YES	Percentage
Stakeholder Population		
Undergraduate Student	4	50.0
Graduate Student	11	44.4
Faculty	55	62.5
Staff	45	54.9
Administrator	3	75.0
Total Count	118	

Overall, 118 of the 208 total respondents who answered Q4 said they were familiar with the UND Core Values. The number of participants who answered no, they were not familiar with the UND Core Values totaled 90. Total Qualtrics survey participant numbers (N=232) were reduced because of respondents not answering Q4 on the online survey. Data collected revealed that most respondents are familiar with UND Core Values; the differences in responses between the four groups are relatively small for the samples.

The highest percentage of survey participant stakeholders that were familiar with UND Core Values resides with faculty (62.5%), while the lowest percentage was among graduate students (44.4%). However, both highest and lowest percentages must consider the total sample

sizes, which may not provide adequate amounts for analysis. The data collected allows the researcher to utilize the information to continue this research study.

Research Question 2

R2. To what degree are study participants familiar with the UND Core Values?

To answer R2, the participants were required to go beyond the superficial language of overarching core values to the degree they were familiar with the specific six core values of the university. Again, what is a core value? Core values are the central and enduring tenets of the university which binds all actions of participants. Understanding each value and being familiar allows the key stakeholders to evaluate each codified core value.

To answer research question two, each of the six individual core values were assessed from the perspective of each key stakeholder group. To accomplish this task effectively, each participant rated each individual core value, q7_1 thru q7_6, utilizing the 6-point, Likert-type scale. This assessment allows the researcher to determine the degree participant stakeholders are familiar with the UND Core Values by rating them individually on the Likert scale. Utilizing the 6-point scale also provides a basis to determine level of familiarity and the extent of agreement, or not, for each individual core value.

The six core values accessed to answer R2, are detailed in Table 5: community, discovery, diversity, inclusivity, liberal arts, and lifelong learning. Additionally, the percentage of some form of agreement (slightly agree, agree, strongly agree) is shown in Table 5 for each of the six core value questions. The two highest agreements of 90.4% and 89.3% were for q7_1 and q7_2, UND values community and discovery. The two lowest agreements 78.4% and 81% were for q7_4 and q7_5, UND is welcoming, inclusive and creates a supporting environment for all, and UND values liberal arts. The majority of respondents agreed the six core value questions could

be considered high based on the percentage level of familiarity and the extent of agreement among participants.

The calculated means were consistent with the entire survey population. The lowest calculated mean score was M=4.5 for the three core values of diversity, inclusivity, and liberal arts. This was also true regarding the standard deviation with the highest recorded of 1.2 for diversity, inclusivity, and liberal arts.

Table 5. Percentage of Some Form of Agreement with University of North Dakota Core Values.

Question	% Some Form of Agreement	M	SD
C1. UND Core Values are internalized by stakeholders			
q7_1. UND values community (Community).	90.4	4.8	1.0
q7_2. UND values discovery (Discovery).	89.3	4.7	1.1
q7_3. UND culture is understanding and appreciates diverse people, experiences, and ideas (Diversity).	82.0	4.5	1.2
q7_4. UND is welcoming, inclusive and creates a supportive environment for all (Inclusivity).	78.4	4.5	1.2
q7_5. UND values liberal arts educational foundation (Liberal Arts).	81.0	4.5	1.2
q7_6. UND values lifelong learning, civic engagement and community leadership (Lifelong Learning).	87.5	4.7	1.1

Research Question 3

R3. Are the UND President’s espoused core values familiar to the four key university stakeholder populations?

Similar to R1, research data was collected from 208 respondents to support answering R3 via the research instrument, a 6-point, Likert-type scale, administered in the Qualtrics online survey tool. All four key stakeholder groups—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—were represented in the research data.

Table 6 displays the responses to Q5, Are you familiar with the personal core values that UND President Andy Armacost shared since his October 2020 inauguration? R3 is answered based on participants self-identified responses, either yes or no, to the question of being familiar with President Armacost’s shared values. Again, faculty and staff were the two largest stakeholder response groups, while administrators was the smallest with only four participants. The breakout of only the affirmative responses to Q5 is presented below in Table 6 with their overall stakeholder percentages identified as being aware of President Armacost’s communicated core values.

Table 6. Stakeholder Familiarity with the University of North Dakota President’s Values.

Q5. Are you familiar with the President Armacost’s Core Values introduced since 2020?	YES	Percentage
Stakeholder Population		
Undergraduate Student	1	12.5
Graduate Student	9	33.3
Faculty	44	50.0
Staff	38	46.3
Administrator	1	25.0
Total Count	93	

Overall, 93 of the 208 total respondents answered Q5 saying they were familiar with the personal core values that UND President Armacost has shared since October 2020. The total participant numbers (N=209) were reduced by one because a study participant did not answer Q5 on the online survey. The majority of the respondents, 115, answered they were not familiar with the personal core values of the UND President.

To add additional context to R3, the percentage of some form of agreement to President’s Armacost’s shared values is included in Table 7. This allows R3 to also address the question: to

what degree are study participants familiar with President Armacost's communicated values, similar to R2. This combined evaluation of R3 provides an opportunity to express all relevant data within the context of answering R3.

Similarly, each of the six core values must be assessed individually from the perspective of each key stakeholder. Each participant rated each individual core value, q8_1 thru q8_6, utilizing the 6-point, Likert-type scale. The 6-point Likert-type scale provided a bases to determine level of familiarity and the extent of agreement, or not, for each individual core value.

In this case, the six core values assessed to answer R3, are detailed in Table 7: care, development, humility, learning organization, respect, and talent. Additionally, the percentage of some form of agreement (slightly agree, agree, strongly agree) is shown in Table 7 for each of the six core value questions. The highest agreement was 96.0% for q8_1, creating a caring campus community is important. Three values tied for the next highest form of agreement at 94.9%, which were for q8_2, q8_4, and q8_5 pertaining to development, learning organization and respect. The two lowest forms of agreement 90.3% and 90.9% were for q8_6 and q8_3, recognizing talent and humility. The percentage of some form of agreement was above 90% for each of the six articulated personal core value questions. This is an interesting fact that the values communicated by the University President scored higher than the codified values of the university.

Again, calculated means were consistent with the entire survey population. The lowest calculated mean score was $M=4.9$ for the core value of humility. This consistency was also true for the standard deviation with the highest recorded of 1.1 again for humility.

Table 7. Percentage of Some Form of Agreement for Familiarity with President Armacost’s Values shared since October 2020.

Question	% Some Form of Agreement	M	SD
C2. UND President Values shared/internalized since October 2020			
q8_1. Creating a caring campus community is important (Care).	96.0	5.1	0.9
q8_2. Student development should be UNDs top priority (Development).	94.9	5.1	0.9
q8_3. Humility is important within the campus community (Humility).	90.9	4.9	1.1
q8_4. Creating a learning university campus community atmosphere is important (Learning Organization).	94.9	5.2	1.0
q8_5. Respect for all campus community members is important (Respect).	94.9	5.4	1.0
q8_6. Recognizing individual talents, by understanding everyone is great at something is important (Talent).	90.3	5.0	1.0

Research Question 4

R4. To what extent are the core values internalized among key stakeholders?

Each of the four key stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff and administrators—provide their own perspectives about UND Core Values and President Armacost’s communicated values. To address R4, it is important to understand if there was a difference between the consolidated perspectives of students, faculty, staff and administrators and the internalized perspectives about the two constructs of UND Core Values and UND President Armacost’s shared values. Core values are embedded tenets of an institution that are derived from inner belief (Collins and Porras, 1996). Additionally, core values are “a small set of timeless guiding principles, core values require no external justification; they have intrinsic value

and importance to those inside the organization” (Collins and Porras, 1996, p. 66). To exist as a core value, it must be internalized based on the researchers interpretation of scholarly literature.

Building upon the data in Table 8, it is possible to create a correlation of subscale construct for UND Core Values and President Armacost’s Values, and a measure of internal consistency of the questions and correlation between both constructs, which is presented in Table 9.

The subscale constructs used are codified UND Core Values and UND President’s shared values. Each subscale construct is supported by the six corresponding core values questions embedded in the Qualtrics online survey instrument. Table 8 below is presented for ease of viewing by combining previously displayed data from Table 5 and Table 7. This combined data is utilized in calculating correlation of subscale constructs C1. and C2., based on q7 and q8 questions.

Table 8. Percentage of Some Form of Agreement for Familiarity with University of North Dakota Core Values and Core Values Articulated by the UND President.

Qualtrics Survey Question	% Some Form of Agreement	M	SD
C1. UND Core Values internalized by stakeholders			
q7_1. UND values community (Community).	90.4	4.8	1.0
q7_2. UND values discovery (Discovery).	89.3	4.7	1.1
q7_3. UND culture is understanding (Diversity).	82.0	4.5	1.2
q7_4. UND is welcoming (Inclusivity).	78.4	4.4	1.3
q7_5. UND values liberal arts education (Liberal Arts).	81.0	4.5	1.2
q7_6. UND values lifelong learning, civic engagement, and community leadership (Lifelong Learning).	87.5	4.7	1.1

C2. UND President shared values since October 2020

q8_1.	UND values creating a caring campus (Care).	96.0	5.1	0.9
q8_2.	UND student development is the top priority (Development).	94.9	5.1	0.9
q8_3.	UND values humility within the campus community (Humility).	90.9	4.9	1.1
q8_4.	UND values creating a learning university (Learning Organization).	94.9	5.2	1,.0
q8_5.	UND values respect for all campus community members (Respect).	94.9	5.4	1.0
q8_6.	UND recognizing individual talents (Talent Recognition).	90.3	5.0	1.0

Table 9. Correlation of Subscale Constructs.

Construct Number	Subscale Constructs	Question Numbers	C1.	α
C1.	UND Core Values Internalized by stakeholders	q7_1, q7_2, q7_3, q_7_4, q7_5, q7_6		.92
C2.	UND President's shared values since October 2020	q8_1, q8_2, q8_3 q8_4, q8_5, q8_6	.48*	.91

* $p < .05$.

Table 9 shows the reliability and correlation of both constructs C1, UND Core Values and C2, UND President's values shared since October 2020 averaged for all stakeholders. The correlation was $r = .48$ for C1 & C2. This is a relatively low correlation, below $.5$; however, it does indicate some correlation between the constructs. More importantly, the Cronbach alpha scores for C1 of $.92$, and C2 of $.91$ signify internal consistency of the questions asked of the stakeholders, which indicate that each pair of six designed questions were measuring the same thing for their respective construct. According to Warner (2013), the internal consistency reliability of multiple-item scale, in this case the six questions asked for both C1 and C2, tell us the degree the items on the scale measure the same thing. An α score above $.75$ is considered excellent for this study.

Research Question 5

R5. How do the six potential new core values compare with the codified core values among the four key stakeholder populations?

Two independent *t*-tests were used to answer R5. The independent variables used were the stakeholders' familiarity with UND Core Values—yes or no—and familiarity with President Armacost's articulated values since October 2020—yes or no. The dependent variables were the constructs, supported by corresponding values of stakeholder feedback to the corresponding questions pertaining to UND Core Values (q7_1 thru q7_6), and the UND values articulated by President Armacost since October 2020 supported by questions (q8_1 thru q8_6). The descriptive statistics measured the difference between each construct from the lens of the combined student, faculty, staff and administrator perspective.

Independent T-Tests for UND Core Values

The independent sample *t*-test results conclude there was no statistical significance differences between the student, faculty, staff and administrator mean responses to UND Core Values as familiar or not based on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) calculated Sig. (2-Tailed) value. The Sig. *p*-value results were greater than .05; therefore, I was unable to reject the null hypothesis that the means were equal. The combined stakeholder population answered their familiarity with UND Core Values with “Yes”, which resulted in $M=4.6$. The combined stakeholder population that answered their familiarity with UND Core Values with “No” had a calculated mean of $M=4.5$. Therefore, we can conclude that it made little to no difference that the combined stakeholders were or were not familiar with the UND Core Values. The independent sample *t*-test result was not statistically significant, $t(176) = .617$, $*p > .05$. ($p = .538$).

Independent T-Tests for UND president’s shared values since October 2020.

Additionally, the independent sample *t*-test results conclude there was no statistical significance in differences between the combined student, faculty, staff and administrator responses to UND President’s shared values since October 2020, based on SPSS calculated Sig. (2-Tailed) value. In this case, the Sig. (2-Tailed) results again were greater than .05. Participants responded with “Yes” had a calculated $M=5.1$ and those that responded with “No” had a calculated $M=5.1$ to the question of familiarity with UND President Armacost’s values shared since October 2020. The difference was not statistically significant; therefore, we could not reject the null hypothesis that the means were equal, $t(173) = .221$, $*p > .05$. ($p = .825$).

Data collected and analysis did not produce statistically significant results when comparing all stakeholders’ responses to familiarity to both UND codified values and UND President communicated values since 2020. The combined data collected from four key stakeholders were considered in the calculations. Future evaluation may produce different results if each key stakeholder population is compared individually between both C1 and C2, and larger samples sizes are used in the calculations.

Additional Analysis

UND 2022 Strategic Planning

Question 6 was added to the Qualtrics online questionnaire as additional data gathering based on the 2022 UND strategic planning process occurring during this research timeframe. Q6 produced 188 responses that were recorded from the combined four key stakeholder populations. Q6_1 received 67 responses; Q6_2 received 27 responses; Q6_3 received 66 responses, Q6_4 received 24 responses, and Q6_5 received 5 responses.

Q6 How involved have you been in the current strategic planning process? (check all that apply)

- I have attended presentations and/or town halls on the progress of the strategic plan (1)
- I have participated in focus groups and/or workgroups organized by the strategic planning committee (2)
- I have read drafts of the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (3)
- I have provided comments on the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (4)
- I have helped lead and/or organize strategic planning activities (5)

In addition, a q8_7 question was added to the Qualtrics online survey to collect data regarding the UND LEADS outcome of the UND Strategic Planning Committee. Question q8_7 received 173 responses of the possible 232 to the question, UND LEADS provides a strategic vision for UND. Some form of agreement was calculated at 90.8%, with M=4.9 and SD=1.1 (see Table 10).

Table 10. Percentage of Some Form of Agreement for UND LEADS (Learning, Equity, Affinity, Discovery, Service).

Qualtrics Survey Question		% Some Form of Agreement	M	SD
q8_7.	UND LEADS (Learning, Equity, Affinity, Discovery, Service) provides a strategic vision for the University of North Dakota	90.8	4.9	1.1

Summary

After analyzing the research data, I concluded that the combined calculation for students, faculty, staff and administrators, utilizing SPSS software for calculations, did not produce statistically significant results in both of the independent sample *t*-tests. There was no statistical difference in campus community stakeholders who responded to familiarity, or to the UND Core Values or UND President communicated values since 2020.

Additionally, as UND leaders continue their conversations regarding strategic plans utilizing UND LEADS, campus community stakeholder participants in this research study were asked for their feedback. The additional analysis provides some descriptive statistical analysis on the results of q8_7. Based on the information data collected it would be difficult to provide a final conclusion; however, early indications based on Table 10 data collected provides affirmative feedback with level of familiarity and the extent of agreement scoring above 90% with a median score of 4.9, and 1.1 standard deviation. This data may serve to provide initial feedback from the aggregate stakeholder populations as very positive feedback on the UND LEADS campaign.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The limited amount of scholarly research about core values in higher education provided the impetus for this research study, i.e., that core values provide a key foundational element of successful institutions within the academy. Higher education institutions, much like any other outwardly facing organization with key stakeholders, exist in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. Understanding change is important for organizations and that values are central to change is a significant concept for scholarly research in higher education. Core values and core purpose “defines the enduring character of an organization—a consistent identity that transcends product or market cycles, technological breakthroughs, management fads, and individual leaders” (Collins and Porris, 1996, p. 66).

The chosen theoretical framework for this research—institutional theory—provides a scholarly lens through which to look to make sense of this changing VUCA environment in higher education. Some may argue that the academy is isolated from change; I, however, resist that position based on the fact that reoccurring strategic planning and execution are always in preputial motion within any organization. Institutional theory acknowledges change, even in higher educational institutions. This theory has been utilized to help frame past scholarly work focused specifically on higher education. “Institutional theory proposes that many organizations—like colleges and universities—operate in normatively defined environments, where success is more attributable to perceptions of legitimacy than to the quality of an

organization's products" (Morphew, 2009, p. 245). In this investigation into higher education core values, institutional theory provides a framework to view the educational environment and perceptions of its key stakeholders.

The purpose of this study was to understand how a specific Midwestern university's core values align with selected key internal stakeholders. This scholarly research focuses on four key internal stakeholder populations within the campus community—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—aligned at the University of North Dakota (UND). The goal was to understand their familiarity and internalization with codified university core values and potential future core values articulated by the UND president.

The investigation consolidated the six UND Core Values and six espoused values that the current university president communicated since his inauguration in 2020. Twelve (six-and-six) core values were evaluated in this study through the perceptions of the four stakeholder populations. Understanding how each of these stakeholder populations internalize UND's Core Values may allow university leadership to create an avenue of continued and informed scholarly dialogue surrounding university core values.

Key stakeholders' perspectives are critical in the research and evaluation of surrounding core values in higher education. This study is designed to add to the existing gaps in core values scholarly research in higher education by evaluating a single Midwestern university rather than comparing it to a peer university, while acknowledging 11 themes from previous scholarly research. By focusing on a specific higher education institution, a more robust and germane core values evaluation may be possible.

Discussion of Key Findings

This scholarly research focused on four key internal stakeholder populations within the campus community—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—aligned at the University of North Dakota. The goal was to understand their familiarity and internalization with codified university core values, and potential future core values articulated by the UND president. To test the relationship a quantitative null hypothesis stating there is no significant difference between familiarity on core values was utilized for this research study.

Subscale constructs C1, UND Core Values internalized by stakeholders and C2, UND President's shared values since October 2020 were evaluated. The independent variables used were the stakeholders' familiarity with UND Core Values—yes or no—and familiarity with President Armacost's articulated values since October 2020—yes or no. The dependent variables were the constructs, supported by corresponding values of stakeholder feedback to the corresponding questions pertaining to UND Core Values (q7_1 thru q7_6), and the UND values articulated by President Armacost since October 2020 supported by questions (q8_1 thru q8_6).

Determining familiarity with C1 and C2 values and determining some form of agreement with the core values was critical to the research study. For UND Core Values, 118 of the 208 totaling 57% of the respondents were familiar with codified university values. Respondents were also familiar with UND President Armacost's shared values since October 2020; however, at a lower rate, 93 of the 208 surveyed for a 44.7% familiarity rate. The overall percentages of key stakeholder familiarity with the core values were less than anticipated for research study results.

Based on scholarly literature familiarity is the essential step to accessing stakeholder values. Rekom et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of understanding values within all levels of organizations to help align vision. "Precise knowledge of which core values motivate

organization members' behaviour helps to improve the fit between envisaged strategy and workforce motivation to implement such a strategy" (p.176). The familiarity rate of study participants between 57% and 44% indicates an opportunity to continue the discussion to inculcate UND Core Values within the population to better access their internalization. In both cases faculty rated the highest percentage of familiarity, and undergraduate or graduate students responded with the lowest percentage of familiarity.

The finding shows that for some form of agreement with C1 core values, community scored the highest with 90.4% and inclusivity scored the lowest at 78.4%. C2 values reported for some form of agreement, caring rated the highest with a score of 96.0% and recognizing individual talent scored the lowest with a score of 90.3%. The data reveals participants, slightly agree, agree or strongly agree with the UND Core Values and UND President's espoused values. The opportunity exists to understand the culture that exists which created an environment where community and caring were the highest rated values among participants. Additionally, with inclusivity and recognizing individual talents although rated positively were the lowest rated values. Understanding these observations in detail may help align strategic actions of the university. Without alignment, "management will have a hard time implementing a strategy incompatible with these values (Pant and Lachman, 1998)" (Rekom, 2006, p. 176).

Reliability and correlation of both constructs C1, UND Core Values and C2, UND President's values shared since October 2020 was also calculated utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results yielded correlation was Pearson's $r = +.48$ for C1 & C2. Pearson's r typically describes the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables. "Pearson's r value range is from -1.00 to +1.00. The positive nature of +.48, indicates as scores on the predictor increase, scores on the outcome also tend to increase. A correlation

near 0 indicates that as scores on the predictor increase, scores on the outcome neither increase nor decrease in a linear fashion” (Warner, 2013). This is a relatively midrange correlation, below .5; however, it does indicate some correlation between the constructs.

More importantly for this research study, the Cronbach alpha scores for C1 of .92, and C2 of .91 signify internal consistency of the questions asked of the stakeholders, which indicate that each pair of six designed questions was measuring the same thing for their respective construct. According to Warner (2013), the internal consistency reliability of multiple-item scale, in this case the six questions asked for both C1 and C2, tell us the degree the items on the scale measure the same thing. An α score above .75 is considered excellent for this study.

Two independent *t*-tests were used in this research study. The independent variables used were the stakeholders’ familiarity with UND Core Values—yes or no—and familiarity with President Armacost’s articulated values since October 2020—yes or no. The dependent variables were the constructs, supported by corresponding values of stakeholder feedback to the corresponding questions pertaining to UND Core Values (q7_1 thru q7_6), and the UND values articulated by President Armacost since October 2020 supported by questions (q8_1 thru q8_6). The descriptive statistics measured the difference between each construct from the lens of the combined student, faculty, staff and administrator perspective.

In both independent sample *t*-test results concluded there were no statistically significant differences between the combined student, faculty, staff and administrator mean response to UND Core Values and UND president’s values expressed over time as familiar or not based on the SPSS calculated Sig. (2-Tailed) value. In both cases the Sig. *p*-value results were greater than .05; therefore, I was unable to reject the null hypothesis that the means were equal. Essentially

there was no significant difference between a key stakeholders' familiarity with either set of core values and their internalization rating on the individual core values presented.

For UND Core Values, the independent sample *t*-test result was not statistically significant, $t(176) = .617$, $*p > .05$. ($p = .538$). For UND President Armacost's values shared since October 2020 the independent sample *t*-test results were, $t(173) = .221$, $*p > .05$. ($p = .825$). Again, in both cases the difference was not statistically significant; therefore, I could not reject the null hypothesis that the means were equal.

Discussion of General Findings

The key stakeholders for this research included students, faculty, staff and administrators. The administrator stakeholder population provided four completed questionnaires for both UND Core Values and UND President Armacost's values articulated since October 2020.

Based on my research the findings indicate the UND Core Values are being communicated to key internal stakeholders; however, the opportunity exists to continue improving key internal stakeholder familiarity. Although approximately 50% of the participants were familiar with the values, they seemed aligned with the institution's internalization of the values. There did not seem to be a substantial say-do-gap with any of the subconstruct values evaluated. Therefore, the actions of the UND President's tone-at-the-top to inculcate specific values within the institution, aligned with his ethical strategic vision, appear consistent and effective. However, the data does support determining ways to increase individual talent recognition, and inclusivity at the university.

The Qualtrics online survey tool provided outstanding flexibility for this research study. The online tool was an ideal resource to capture data for seamless analysis in SPSS or Microsoft

Excel to sanitize data. The program allowed the researcher to easily overcome a participants incomplete survey result while utilizing all the data that was provided.

Based on the relatively small sample size of the university administrator population feedback, it is difficult to make any conclusions on this specific population regarding UND's Core Values. For future studies, it is imperative to determine strategies to meet all data collection requirements for the success of the research study. Power analysis may have provided the exact number of participants needed within the stakeholder populations for statistical analysis. "If your analysis plan consists of detecting a significant association between variables of interest, a power analysis can help you estimate a target sample size" (Creswell, 2018, p. 151).

Familiarity was the first step to understanding if core values are inculcated within the fabric of the university. To access core values, understanding familiarity with core values matters. As the literature states, organizations express values both in ideology and through actions (Avranel, 1983). Without understanding if key stakeholders are familiar with the university core values it is difficult to perform statistical analysis.

Familiarity also allows the researcher to begin understanding if what is espoused by university leadership is being heard by key stakeholders. Without familiarity, the say-do-gap may exist which may create a contradiction in acceptable actions. The literature states, "This contradiction between espoused values, and daily life hampers the proper assessment of core values that are recognizable in what organization members do" (Van Rekom et al., 2006, p. 176).

Demographic data was collected using the Qualtrics online instrument. Moreover, with a more robust strategy to collect demographics data, additional opportunities to investigate core values from multiple statistical analysis perspectives exist. For example, resident, nonresident or

international student perspectives on UND Core Values and the UND President's shared values could be determined in future studies if demographics questions are obtained.

This investigation was conducted when the University of North Dakota leadership began a review of its strategic plans. The Strategic Planning Committee was formed, and the issue of values was discussed. Much of the research and data utilized for this study was from the initial 2016 UND Core Values conversation. The balance between recognizing that a new SPC effort was ongoing while keeping this research grounded in original direction was confronting. Acknowledging the 2022 SPC process and adding several questions to the Qualtrics questionnaire provided additional analysis on university values.

Re-Engaging the Theoretical Framework

Scholarly literature research specifically addressing core values in higher education was limited. The inability to find vast amounts of research that addressed core values in the academy allowed me to focus more deeply on understanding core values and its application in other organizational settings. A more holistic review of core values provided the foundation of my literature review for this research study. However, a critical element determining the theoretical framework for this research study was essential. Institutional Theory provided the research framework because it indicates that institutions exist for a purpose, with stakeholders, they evolve, and organizational history matters. This framework fits neatly into higher education, especially as higher education institutions represent a microcosm of society with diversity of thoughts, ideas, cultures all amalgamated at the academy.

Organizational core values fit neatly within the institutional theory theoretical framework based on the emphasis that institutions instill value and supply intrinsic worth to a structure or process (Scott, 1987). The value created within an organization propagates long-term stability,

much like codified core values promote institutional stability with shared values. Institutional theory, as defined by Selznick (1957), emphasized that effective leaders could define and defend the organization's institutional values—its distinctive mission, which is the foundational premise of core values (Scott, 1987).

In 1948 Selznick addressed organizations in his scholarly writings in *Foundations of the Theory of Organizations*, building upon institutional theory as a theoretical framework to view organizations. In his scholarly lens of evaluation, he stated that:

The frame of reference outlined here for the theory of organization may now be identified as involving the following major ideas: (1) the concept of organizations as cooperative systems, adaptive social structures, made up of interacting individuals, sub-groups, and informal plus formal relationships; (2) structural-functional analysis, which relates variable aspects of organization (such as goals) to stable needs and self-defensive mechanisms; (3) the concept of recalcitrance as a quality of the tools of social action, involving a break in the continuum of adjustment and defining an environment of constraint, commitment, and tension (p. 32)

Research findings suggest that UND Core Values are aligned with day-to-day actions based on the results of the survey. This is important because higher education institutions operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. Although the university remains aligned with values, according to the data collected, research suggests that a VUCA event can quickly challenge stakeholder outlook on espoused values from leadership. Consistent messaging on what values are deemed important and critical within the university remains important. Institutional theory framework reinforces the academy is subject to changing social, cultural and other external forces that systematically challenge overarching values. For example, institutional

theory provides a framework to understand changes in higher education from external pressures such as institutional required adjustments to receive state and federal funding.

Institutional theory provides the theoretical frame of reference to ground my research into core values in higher education with the understanding that organizations exist in VUCA environments with a purpose. In the case of higher education, the responsibility of providing a solid educational foundation for its students includes upholding high academic and ethical standards (de Russy & Langbert, 2005). Core values are central to the mission of higher education.

Eleven themes surrounding core values in higher education were found applicable for this research study. Those themes provided context and texture to determine ways to view core values during my research. The investigation did not address all 11 themes in the quantitative statistical analysis; however, they were powerful influences understanding the application of core values in this research study.

The data collected was critical to the analysis because it ties directly to supporting scholarly literature. The literature states that there are no ubiquitous core values that align with a specific university. Of the 27 core values found in literature inclusivity, caring and respect are the only three communicated within the university codified and president shared values at the university. Evaluating the other 24 values within the context of UND may produce differing values among key stakeholders and may provide a foundation for future values conversation. This is consistent with Meglino & Ravlin's (1998) research that within the body of scholarly literature no exhaustive list of ubiquitous core values existed for higher education. The literature also suggests within the framework of Selznick's institutional theory approach, institutions are shaped by history and continue to evolve thus creating new opportunities for core value

conversations (Scott, 1987). A question that arose for this researcher in interpreting the data is: do the values shared by the president rate higher because they were communicated directly and more often to key stakeholders than the codified university values?

The lack of a consolidated list of core values used in higher education created an opportunity to assemble such a list from scholarly articles. Research assembled 27 core values that were revealed in scholarly articles pertaining to education (See Figure 1.). Of the 27 core values identified during my literature review, 3 of the values from those 27 were used in this research study. Data from the four key stakeholder populations presented data on inclusivity, caring and respect in this research study.

Inclusivity was one of the UND Core Values where data was collected. Question q7_3, asked the participants to rate UND as “welcoming, inclusive and creates a supportive environment for all (Inclusivity)”. The participants rated some form of agreement at 78.4%. This was the lowest rated core value among the six evaluated by stakeholders.

Care and respect were evaluated with UND president’s values shared/internalized since October 2020. Question q8_1, “creating a caring campus community is important (Care)”, received a rating of some form of agreement at 96%. This was the highest rated core value throughout the entire research study. The final value of respect was addressed on question q8_5, “respect for all campus community members is important (Respect)”. This value tied for the second highest percentage of some form of agreement at 94.9%, along with the values of development and learning organization.

The literature indicates that there is no ubiquitous list of core values for any institution. Therefore, in this research study data was collected on three of the 27 values from scholarly peer reviewed articles identifying core values. Regarding collecting data on UND values, it would be

value-added to understand how UND key stakeholder populations would rate the other 24 core values on some form of agreement.

Implications of the Study

The four key campus community stakeholders were identified as students, faculty, staff and administrators. However, the most intriguing comparison of the research study was understanding differences in familiarity and internalization between any of the key stakeholder populations evaluated. Based on scholarly research, I envisioned divergence would occur to support rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between familiarity on core values.

All stakeholder population data collected was deemed value-added; however, the relationship between administration and students was highly anticipated. A lack of understanding of how difficult it was to get administrators to complete the survey was underestimated. To that end, the large number of staff who participated in the research survey was not anticipated. Understanding the relationship between faculty and staff to complete surveys at UND was underestimated. Also, the key stakeholder in this research was students—both graduate and undergraduate students. A more direct appeal to both graduate and undergraduate students to support the survey may have produced larger sample sizes.

UND proliferation of values to the four key internal stakeholder populations appears to be effective based on the data. It is important to note that all respondents were in agreement (slightly agree, agree, strongly agree) based on the calculated mean. The implications of the findings for this research study serve as the underpinning for future research on core values at the University of North Dakota. Increasing the number of key stakeholder participants and

expanding the demographics may yield different outcomes that prove to be statistically significant between familiarity and internalization of core values at the university.

It is also important to understand that although the null hypothesis could not be rejected during the statistical analysis the fact remains that internal UND stakeholders survey scoring rated high with some form of agreement (slightly agree, agree, strongly agree). UND must be doing something right to achieve the alignment in both UND Core Values and UND President Armacost's espoused values.

Scholarly literature research identified 11 core values themes in higher education. These themes offer a scholarly lens for evaluating UND core values. Specifically, one theme researched may also offer an explanation for the strong alignment between the UND Core Values and UND President's espoused values at UND. The promotion of moral values through higher education from a multicultural lens provides a perspective to consider for the alignment at UND. The United States higher education system has systematically remained consistent in promoting values. Some of these values are embedded in higher education through fraternities, sororities, honor codes, and codified core values like at UND. From a multicultural lens many countries comprehend that education and values are inextricably linked. For example, in India, the role of parents, teachers and higher education institutions form a critical role in the promotion of moral values (Shrivastava, p.103-108).

UND leadership has created a values structure and medium to promote conversations surrounding values and other important events at the university. The President routinely produces video content available to internal and external stakeholders to ensure values are aligned. Additionally, he reintroduced the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to review long-term value creation for the organization. Much like multicultural universities, UND has embraced a

conversation about values. “Education being a multipurpose process not only inculcates social, economic and cultural awareness in humanity but is also an important medium for grasping and promoting life enhancing values among human beings” (Shrivastava, p. 104). UND has embraced a conversation about values, which promotes understanding from all stakeholders. Based on the familiarity data, there is still work to be done; however, the conversation seems to be working and it aligns both UND Core Values and the UND President’s espoused values. The conversations are active at the university, which may offer some explanation for the values alignment at this Midwestern university. As Shrivastava noted in his scholarly article:

“Education with value is not only useless but also very harmful. The realization is particularly relevant at the present juncture of history, when social, moral, cultural and spiritual values are disintegrating, when the horizon of knowledge have been immensely widened and the media and incident of scams, scandals threaten to disrupt value system and destabilize cultural base” (p. 105).

Limitations

Minimal scholarly research exists pertaining to core values in higher education and highlight disparities for research to build upon past scholarly work. The lack of scholarly investigations limits past research to build upon, potentially leading to a flawed methodology, weak design, and analysis protocols for this research study.

The four populations evaluated were students, faculty, staff, and administrators. A limitation may be that these four populations are not emblematic of the holistic campus community to draw conclusions for overarching core values research. Should other stakeholder populations be considered for this research project? North Dakota SBHE Policy Manual, Policy: 100.5 Principals and Core Values of the State Board of Higher Education, Effective: July 22,

2021 facilitated this research study population by stating the SBHE believes: “The students, faculty, and staff are the foundation of the NDSU.” As a researcher the literature suggests the university president and administrators are central to the overarching core values conversation; therefore, this population was also included in this research study. However, the data collected from self-identified administrator stakeholder population only totaled four participants.

Including more demographics questions into the research instrument would allow for future statistical analysis on values within more segments of the campus community. For example, Quick Facts 2022-2023 provides data on full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, law, medicine and international students (https://und.edu/analytics-and-planning/_files/docs/factbook/quick-facts-brochure-2022-23.pdf). The research instrument used for this study collected graduate and undergraduate demographics data; however, overall analysis classified them collectively as student stakeholders. By collecting additional demographic data on subjects, additional population analysis may impact the research study.

Additionally, limitations exist without proper access to email addresses to send participants the questionnaire link. Without adequate institutional support from college deans, faculty, and staff, a lack of email addresses to forward the questionnaire could occur. This may be a direct link to small population sample sizes. The timing of sending the questionnaire, and the amount of time allowed to complete the Qualtrics questionnaire is critical. This research study questionnaire was sent in April 2023, prior to the end of the semester. Lack of data from key stakeholder populations can limit the research study from obtaining statistically significant number of questionnaires to perform adequate statistical analysis.

Another limitation may be with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I did not gain a direct link to full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, law, medicine, and international

students. Working more closely with IRB may be the best course of action to get robust data directly from the student body.

Additionally, more refined stakeholder populations are possible with this method of requesting direct student support for research. Because of the size of the key stakeholder administrator population, requests for support may need to emanate directly from the office of UND's president for successful research data gathering or an official encouragement of research data collection support.

Finally, researcher bias may be a limitation that manifests in methodology construction, questionnaire formulation, data collection, statistical analysis, and overall research conclusions. My personal researcher bias for this study was acknowledged based on personal experiences serving outside of higher education. The preponderance of my professional experience was gained by serving more than 30 years studying leadership, organizational core values, mission, vision, goals, and objectives of organizations.

Future Research

For this section I have identified six key considerations for future research based on the outcome of my research.

1. Conduct additional research on core values at UND. Expand the sample sizes of the key stakeholder population and ensure adequate data for statistical analysis, which may yield statistically significant outcomes.
2. To compare research outcomes, consider expanding research beyond a Midwestern university to a peer university located in a different geographical location within the United States to compare research outcomes.

3. Identify other voices within the campus community to understand their impact on core values.
4. Include a discussion surrounding core values utilizing the scholarly research that identifies 27 values germane to higher education. Those values may serve in the scholarly debate to determine senior leader vision for the institution.
5. Inputs from students, faculty, staff and administrators should serve as a framework for future core values discussions at UND.
6. A research investigation into the high scores (percentages of some form of agreement) for UND president's values is warranted. Each of those values scored above 90%, which indicates acceptance by key stakeholders. Should those values be considered for future adoption based on the UND president's vision?

Conclusion

Core values are not static; thus, they require research, conversation, debate and action. Moreover, they provide the foundation for decision making for the institution and the individuals who want to be members of the campus community. This investigation confirms that core values require scholarly debate at the University of North Dakota and that current values are aligned with the campus community. A continued implementation of core values at UND is appropriate; however, it is worth considering that the values be aligned better based on the president's vision for the university. Core values exist on paper and within the halls UND, they must remain embedded in the very fabric and culture of the academy. Core values can reveal what an organization wants to be... often in contrast to what an organization is.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Core Values Questionnaire Based On 6-Point Likert-Type Scale

UND Core Values Questionnaire

APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Institutional Review Board

Study Information Sheet Title of Project: An Examination of Higher Education Core Values: Students, Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Alignment at a Midwestern Research University

Principal Investigator: Rodney D. Lewis, 843.324.1378, rodney.lewis@und.edu

Advisor: Dr. Deborah L. Worley, 703.777.3140, deborah.worley@und.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand how the University of North Dakota's core values align with selected key internal stakeholders. My research focuses on four significant UND internal stakeholder populations—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—to understand their familiarity, and internalization of the university's adopted core values.

Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to answer 19 questions on a questionnaire. The first section of 6 questions are focused on participant demographics such as classifying your status as a student, faculty, staff, or administration. The remaining survey items ask for you to indicate the extent you agree with core values that have been or are currently in place at UND.

Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings regarding this study, you are encouraged to contact The University of North Dakota's Counseling Center at 701-777-2127 which provides counseling services to UND students at no charge. If you are not UND student, the State of North Dakota provides a wide variety of resources to support behavioral health. A free and confidential 24-hours a day/7-days a week hotline is available, just call 211 for immediate support.

Benefits:

- You might learn more about yourself and personal values by participating in this study. You might also have a better understanding of how important institutional core values are to you.
- This research might provide a better understanding of how institutional core values affect students, faculty, staff, and administration. This information could help inform future institutional core values to support the entire UND campus community.

Duration: It will take about 10-minutes, or less to complete the 19 questions.

Statement of Confidentiality: The questionnaire does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses. All questionnaire responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the questionnaire can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Rodney Lewis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Dr. Deborah Worley at 701.777.3140 during the day. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irm@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team. General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html>

Compensation: You will not receive compensation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation: You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. You must be 18 years of age older to participate in this research study. Completion and return of the questionnaire implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research. Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Q1 Are you a student, faculty, staff member, or administrator at UND? (If you occupy more than one role at UND, please select your primary role based on the amount of time allocated to each.)

- Undergraduate Student (1)
 - Graduate Student (2)
 - Faculty (3)
 - Staff (4)
 - Administrator (5)
-

Q2 How long have you been a student, faculty, staff member, or administrator at UND?

- 0-4 years (1)
 - 5-9 years (2)
 - 10-14 years (3)
 - 15 or more years (4)
-

Q3 Which gender do you identify as?

- Woman (1)
 - Man (2)
 - Non-binary (3)
 - Prefer to self-describe (4)
 - Prefer not to say (5)
-

Q4 Are you familiar with the University of North Dakota's current Core Values?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q5 Are you familiar with the personal Core Values that UND President Andy Armacost shared since his October 2020 inauguration?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q6 How involved have you been in the current strategic planning process? (check all that apply)

I have attended presentations and/or town halls on the progress of the strategic plan (1)

I have participated in focus groups and/or workgroups organized by the strategic planning committee (2)

I have read drafts of the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (3)

I have provided comments on the proposed mission statement, vision, core values, and/or strategic plan (4)

I have helped lead and/or organize strategic planning activities (5)

DESCRIPTION PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN UND'S CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Q7 CORE VALUES

Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)	DISAGREE (2)	SLIGHTLY DISAGREE (3)	SLIGHTLY AGREE (4)	AGREE (5)	STRONGLY AGREE (6)
UND values community (Community) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UND values discovery, creating a culture of inquiry, creativity, and innovation (Discovery) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UND culture is understanding and appreciates diverse people, experiences and ideas (Diversity) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UND is welcoming, inclusive, and creates a supportive environment for all (Inclusivity) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UND values liberal arts educational foundation stimulating intellectual curiosity (Liberal Arts) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UND values lifelong learning, civic engagement, and community leadership (Lifelong Learning) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 ARMACOST'S CORE VALUES

Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)	DISAGREE (2)	SLIGHTLY DISAGREE (3)	SLIGHTLY AGREE (4)	AGREE (5)	STRONGLY AGREE (6)
Values creating a caring campus community are important (Care) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student development should be UNDs top priority (Development) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humility is important within the campus community (Humility) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating a learning university campus community atmosphere is important (Learning Organization) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect for all campus community members is important (Respect) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognizing individual talents, by understanding everyone is great at something is important (Talent) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

UND LEADS
(Learning,
Equity,
Affinity,
Discovery,
Service)
provides a
strategic
vision for the
University of
North Dakota
(7)



BOTTOM OF SURVEY All participants will remain anonymous; no personal identifying information will be shared. Thank you for your participation.

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