

# ODU Community Experience

## Overall Focus Group Results

### ***Student Affairs***

*Research Team:*

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## ODU Community Experience: Focus Groups

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### Purpose

- ◆ To assess university constituents' perceptions of the ODU community experience.
  - Groups within the University community
- ◆ To establish a basis for enhancing the ODU community experience.
- ◆ To guide Student Affairs efforts to create a viable, lively campus community.

## ODU Community Experience: Focus Group Framework

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### Research Questions

1. What is the ODU community experience?
2. What barriers exist to achieving the ODU community experience?
3. What role do participants play in the ODU community experience?
4. How do participants rate ODU as a community?
5. How do we promote/grow/foster the ODU community experience?

## ODU Community Experience: Focus Group Process

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- ◆ *24 focus groups* conducted between January and May 2007
- ◆ *3 -12 participants* in each group for a *total of 174 participants*
- ◆ *Teams of two moderators* conducted each of the focus groups (about 45 moderators in all)

## ODU Community Experience: Focus Group Process

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### ◆ *Groups*

- Student Groups (10)
- University Staff (4)
- University Administrators (2)
- Faculty (3)
- Adjunct Faculty (2)
- President's Cabinet (1)
- Alumni (1)
- Distance Learning (DL) (1)

## Analysis

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### Research team

- ◆ Conducted a focus group with the moderators for each constituency to gather and analyze the data
- ◆ Conducted qualitative content analyses of all of the warm-up and wrap-up questions using the 5x8 cards
- ◆ Conducted a quantitative analysis of all of the participants ratings using the 5X8 cards.
- ◆ Identified themes and trends that emerged across groups

## Themes Across Groups



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7

## What is community?

*When you think of the concept “community” what is the first thing that comes to mind?*

- ◆ A group of people who
  - Live and/or work together.
  - Have common purpose(s), interest(s), and goal(s).
  - Help and support each other.
- ◆ NOTE: There is a common consensus among all groups about what community is.

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8

## Community Described

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*When you think about a community in which you enjoy being a member, how would you describe that community?*

- ◆ Comfortable, accepting, safe and respectful atmosphere.
- ◆ Togetherness
- ◆ Supportive environment (Students and Faculty)
- ◆ Involvement (Students and Staff)
- ◆ Importance of diversity (Students)

## ODU Community

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*If ODU was not the community you were thinking of, how would you describe the ODU community?*

- ◆ Students were thinking about the ODU community.
- ◆ Faculty and staff did not think of ODU initially.
- ◆ No universal ODU community exists, instead there are multiple, smaller communities.

## ODU Community

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*What rituals, ceremonies, and traditions define the ODU community?*

- ◆ While many groups identified rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, there was minimal common agreement between groups.
- ◆ Staff and faculty identified few if any, while students identified a variety, including “riding the lion”
- ◆ *Note: Who is responsible for developing rituals, traditions & ceremonies? How?*



## Belong to ODU

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*To what extent do you feel you belong here at ODU?*

- ◆ Students and faculty felt like they belonged to their smaller communities rather than the University.
- ◆ Staff referred to opportunities for, and barriers to, involvement instead of directly answering the question.
- ◆ Students living off campus, did not feel as strong a sense of belonging as on-campus students.
- ◆ DL staff felt isolated from campus.

## Belong to ODU

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*To what extent are your academic and social needs being met?*

- ◆ Students felt their social needs could be met if they take initiative.
- ◆ Overall students felt their academic needs were being met
  - On campus and FYE students were enthusiastic
  - Commuter and near campus students had concerns about academic advising

## Belong to ODU

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*To what extent are your academic and social needs being met?*

- ◆ Note: While faculty and staff were asked this question it does not fit their circumstances as well as for students.
- ◆ Faculty and staff did not expect to have their social needs met by ODU, but appreciated the opportunities that exist.
- ◆ Meeting academic needs depended on their focus (i.e. tenure, taking courses, teaching courses)

## ODU's Community Experience

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*How would you rate your ODU community experience on a scale from 1 – 10, with 10 being highest? Please explain the reason for your rating in a word or phrase.*

- ◆ Staff and Administrators = 8
- ◆ Students = 7
- ◆ Student Affairs = 6
- ◆ Adjunct Faculty = 6
- ◆ DL Staff = 5

## ODU's Community Experience

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*Please explain the reason for your rating in a word or phrase.*

- ◆ Students and staff referred to the smaller communities and lack of a University community.
- ◆ Students living off campus and being less involved reported it was difficult to find community.
- ◆ Students living on campus, off-campus students found community in small groups, some of which they created.
- ◆ Staff and Administrators were very happy with their community experience.
- ◆ DL staff were unhappy with their community experience.
- ◆ SA staff had mixed feelings about their community experience.



## ODU's Community Experience

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*What aspects of ODU promote a sense of community?*

- ◆ Activities and other opportunities for involvement
- ◆ Many staff and students recognized that it was their responsibility to become involved.
- ◆ DL staff identified a need for an enhanced connection with the main campus.

## ODU's Community Experience

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*What barriers exist to achieving the ODU community?*

- ◆ Each group saw different barriers based on their circumstances.
  - Students focused on involvement as a personal choice, sometimes negatively impacted by attitudes about ODU from some faculty, staff and community members.
  - Staff focused on lack of communication and work overload.
  - Faculty focused on rewards for research versus student interaction.
  - Adjunct faculty focused on poor communication and having insufficient support services when needed.

## ODU's Community Experience

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*Student Affairs has drafted 7 items that they think contribute to the ODU community experience. To what extent do these things add to, or compare to, what we have discussed about the ODU community thus far?*

- ◆ NOTE: After discussing their views about community in general and the ODU community in particular, participants in most groups had difficulty transitioning to the discussion of the seven Student Affairs items.

## ODU's Community Experience

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*Student Affairs has drafted 7 items that they think contribute to the ODU community experience...*

- ◆ The draft items did not resonate with most participants either positively or negatively.
- ◆ The Student Affairs staff indicated they did not have knowledge of the items or a sense of ownership of them.
- ◆ The majority of the student groups identified with the spirit and pride item, which is a more practical application of community.

## Development of ODU's Community

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*What does ODU need to do to facilitate the further development of community?*

- ◆ Opportunities to come together.
- ◆ Communication about specific events and a common understanding of where we are going.
- ◆ *NOTE: Who is responsible for developing community?*

## Development of ODU's Community

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*If you had to select the single most important thing the university should do to develop the ODU community experience, what would it be?*

- ◆ Create a sense of spirit and pride in the University.
- ◆ Improve communication campus wide
  - A common understanding of goals and expectations
  - Awareness of events and opportunities for involvement

# Summary

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## 1. What is the ODU community experience?

- ◆ No universal ODU community exists, instead there are multiple, smaller communities.
- ◆ No commonly recognized rituals, ceremonies, or traditions.

# Summary

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## 2. What barriers exist to achieving the ODU community experience?

- ◆ Barriers were unique to each group but included communication, work overload, personal choice, and reward structure.

## Summary

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3. What role do participants play in the ODU community experience?
  - ◆ Most participants accepted it is their responsibility to get involved in the community.
  - ◆ Those who chose to be involved were participating in their special interest communities such as departments or clubs.

## Summary

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4. How do participants rate ODU as a community?
  - ◆ On a scale of 1 – 10 participants rated the ODU community experience fair to good (6-7).
  - ◆ *NOTE: Participants may have been rating their own, smaller community because earlier they indicated no universal ODU community exists.*

# Summary

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## 5. How do we promote/grow/foster the ODU community experience?

- ◆ Opportunities to come together.
- ◆ Be more purposeful in fostering a greater sense of spirit and pride in the University.
- ◆ Improve communication campus wide
  - ◆ A common understanding of goals and expectations
  - ◆ Awareness of events and opportunities for involvement

# Recommendations

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## ***Participants' recommendations reflect their original definition of community.***

- ◆ A group of people who
  - Live and/or work together.
    - Enhance opportunities to engage faculty, staff and students across campus and between the main campus and distance sites.
  - Common purpose(s), interest(s), and goal(s).
    - Communicate a common understanding.
    - Identify and address competing/conflicting purpose(s), interest(s), goal(s).
    - Purposefully foster a sense of spirit and pride in the overall university.
  - Help and support each other.
    - Improve this dynamic among and across our smaller communities including distance learning.

## What Are Our Next Step?

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- ◆ Define how we know when we have achieved the university community experience.
  - ◆ Revisit the 7 Student Affairs items that define the community experience to include practical application of theory.
- ◆ Develop a strategic plan focused on building the university community experience.
- ◆ Communicate findings to stakeholders.