



Food, Friends & Fun

Summary: Ten of the DucksRISE cohort plus one guest joined Sandra and I on Thursday, April 14, 4-5pm in the Swindells Room of the EMU. Mucho Gusto catered a buffet. Students spoke of their appreciation of being part of a group in which they could see that some of their experiences and identities were shared by their classmates. Students made suggestions on how we could build community through using a popular gaming and socializing platform and how they would like to celebrate DucksRISE with branded stickers, t-shirts, water bottles, and other items. We took turns introducing ourselves and describing our academic, professional, and personal interests. To commemorate our fun time, we took a group photo.

Narrative:

We pulled and pushed tables together and dug into our tasty food sitting family-style in the Swindells Room. Sandra had put lighthearted music on in the background. Everyone signed in and put on a nametag before serving up.

An undercurrent of excitement and social connection crackled in the air, while at the same time, a deeply chill vibe pervaded the room as we ate together. Once we had mostly cleared our plates, we began to talk. We spoke about building community and their agency as the first DucksRISE cohort with unique influence in shaping the program. Students chimed in agreement that we need a DucksRISE Discord for getting to know each other, watching movies together in the comfort of our rooms, and connecting over gaming and other shared hobbies. We learned several of us share an interest in plants and gardens and discussed getting a DucksRISE garden plot over the summer.

I mentioned that we have a budget and need to spend some cash before the end of the year. Students excitedly asked for merch and swag. DucksRISE stickers, t-shirts, water bottles, notebooks, folders, and tote bags.

In the second half of the hour, with everyone relaxed, laughing, and having fun, cohort members expressed relief at having found classmates with backgrounds and identities similar to

their own. Students described feelings of alienation and isolation at the UO as BIPOC, first gen, and low-income students. The conversation quickly shifted to optimism as they promised to “know each other” when they saw each other next on campus. I opened the floor for feedback and constructive criticism and the only note was students not really liking the room (123 GSH) and wishing we could sit together around a big table in class as well.

Then we went around the table, and everyone introduced themselves and shared fun personal facts. We discovered shared passions for Anime & Manga and widespread enthusiasm for the MCU and Star Wars. Debates and laughter filled the room.

Finally, we posed together for a group photo! After several of us filled to-go containers that Jackie and Alicia, the terrific Mucho Gusto caterers, had thoughtfully left for us, we said our goodbyes.