

Maverick Minute

Cecil Hicks | June 15, 2020

Episode Description:

In this Maverick Minute, Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., chats with Cecil Hicks, Jr., about his new role as Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, Access & Inclusion.

Transcript:

Hello. I'm Jeff Gold and thank you so much for joining us today for this Maverick Minute. Our guest today is Mr. Cecil Hicks, and Cecil is our incoming Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, Access & Inclusion. Cecil, thank you so much for being with us today.

Chancellor, thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

You know, I know we've talked a lot about this position and it's going to be a first for the University of Nebraska at Omaha here and I know you're very excited about it. Maybe you could tell our audience a little bit why because we've had this discussion going on for months and now it seems even more critical that we get this position solidified and get somebody of your knowledge, your skill, your experience to guide us.

Thanks, Chancellor. First, let me just say it's an honor to be in this position, to be the first to hold this position, and I'm very excited about the opportunity. Like you said, we've been talking about this for a long time and –

Six months, I think.

Maybe a little bit longer actually –

Even longer, yes.

[Laughter]

And it is a great opportunity with the current things going on in the community and nationwide. It's an opportunity to seize that moment. But my responsibilities will deal primarily – I put in a couple buckets. I like to say one being the letter of the law, which is kind of the compliance piece. So, looking at Title IX and ensuring that's operating effectively, which it is. So, oversee that along with ADA 504. And I like to say there's another bucket called –

And you've had a lot of experience in both of those areas.

I have through my years here at UNO and in also some of the experience I bring from the corporate and the government side as well.

And the second bucket would be what?

So the second bucket I see it more as education and training. You want people to know what's going on with not only these compliance issues, but understand how do you create that environment that's welcoming and how do you value the diversity and inclusion piece of it. You want all the way from students, faculty and staff – you want to ensure that folks have the proper tools in place to do what they need to do.

And, of course, there's the listening part of the role, right? The learning, the better understanding, the incredibly diverse community that UNO is and the diversity of the communities that we serve, which are probably as diverse, if not more diverse than the rest of the entire NU System.

That's absolutely right. Probably the number one function of this job is to listen, right? To listen. And a lot of what is going on now – nationally and locally – is the fact that folks don't feel heard or valued, and that's so important as part of the culture. And this role will facilitate some of those opportunities to listen and find out how we could be effective as both staff, faculty, students, and even the community. I mean, you want to bring in all those units to continue to be successful.

Well, I'm sure you're already thinking about what the first couple days and weeks are going to bring and can you share any of that with our audience or is it just going to be a surprise?

No, I think you hit right on it – it's the big L, right? It's the big listening. I know we have a listening session coming up on Wednesday that we're going to have an opportunity to have individuals ask some questions in Q&A – Zoom, of course. But I also want to take that time when I get started to go around and find out what's happening in the colleges, what's happening in the different units, find out a little bit more how we want to integrate some of this strategy and to really continue to build on our already very inclusive environment. I want to be able to build on that.

Sure. Absolutely. And I think that's something that we need to be very clear about is that we have a lot of structure. We've made a lot of steps forward under your leadership. And now we're ready to take that to the next step. I'm really excited that you've agreed to do this, and I know that this is something you thought about an awful lot and I sense – and you've been very clear about your excitement – and so I congratulate you and very much look forward to it. One of the things our audience may not know is that this position reports directly to the Chancellor's Office. It's a seat at the table, so to speak, with all of the Vice Chancellors and others. And it's recognition of how important this is to UNO and frankly, to the broader community that we serve. So, we'll see you at Cabinet real soon.

I will be there. Thank you for the time.

Thank you for being with us today.

You bet.

And thank you for being with us today on this Maverick Minute.