

The Maverick Minute: Sammi Kaiser, Ph.D.

Description: In this Maverick Minute, Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., chats with Sammi Kaiser, Ph.D., Senior Director of Academic Advising and the Director of the Academic & Career Development Center about serving students over the past year.

Transcript

Gold: Hello. Welcome to this Maverick Minute. I'm Dr. Jeff Gold and thanks so much for being with us today. We have a very special guest today, and that's Dr. Sammi Kaiser. Known to the Maverick community, Dr. Kaiser is, of course, Senior Director of Academic Advising and also the Director of the Academic & Career Development Center, the ACDC. Dr. Kaiser, thank you so much for being with us today.

Kaiser: Thank you, Dr. Gold.

Gold: So, over the last year, and it's hard to believe that it's actually been over a year, UNO has done a tremendous pivot with our academic programs to deal with all things pandemic, and academic advising has been a very important part of that. And I'm wondering, as you reflect back over the last year, what are some of the things that have been most prominent to you and things that we've had to do to be able to provide these critically important advising services to our students? And then, what about them might just persist into the future?

Kaiser: Certainly. So, at the start of the pandemic, Academic Advising, much like our other campus services, had to do the big pivot of, "How can we continue to deliver quality service and quality academic advising to our students in this critical time?" And I am excited to say that Academic Advising, while UNO already did a lot of academic advising over the phone as needed with our students, created a more prominent presence via zoom, via phone, via email even just to get to the students in the way that they needed to be communicated with during this time. And a lot of what I imagine will continue is that flexibility in service, to ensure that academic advisors can connect to students where they're at.

Gold: And, over this same period of time, Dr. Kaiser, I'd be interested, did the students' questions and concerns evolve from where we were, let's say a year ago 'til, for instance, registration for spring semester and now as we're just about ready to register for summer and then hopefully thereafter fall?

Kaiser: I would say the questions have evolved really to the degree of you can tell students know a little bit more about the remote environment and have more questions regarding the academic setting, so what a remote class is versus online and also asking advisors on how they can be successful in these different classes, tips and tricks to

share and whatnot. So I've seen an increase in those types of questions, which is great to see and even more so exciting to see the return when we look ahead to the fall schedule and how some of the course schedule will shift.

Gold: Well, hopefully we will be pivoting back to a more traditional environment, but I'm going to guess that there are a number of things, including the flexibility, that you just referred to, that will persist long after this pandemic is over. You know, I've heard over and over again from folks that we're all advisors. I'm an advisor, our faculty serve critically important advising roles, our staff serve advising roles, so it's really a shared responsibility, but has that been as prominent as you might have expected as a result of the pandemic as well that everybody's pitching in to provide advice to our learners?

Kaiser: Absolutely. You know, I think with the pandemic it's been a challenge somewhat for students to know where to start and so I see our campus academic advisors as a great starting point, and then from that, you know, the course selection conversations, major exploration conversations, but then also next steps in campus resources and that's expanding that student network and really making sure the students understand who's a part of their family and how we all work together to advise them; not just those with the advising title.

Gold: Well, Dr. Kaiser, I would like to take this opportunity to just thank you personally and thank all our academic advisors. This has been a long year together for many of us. I am sure that the stress on our advising system, those that are working from home, those that are not working from home, those that are working through Zoom and text and so many other different ways, has been challenging. But I'll tell you, the advice and the feedback that I've gotten from our faculty, from our staff, and frankly, most importantly, from our students, is that it's been A plus. Not that anybody would want to live through this again, and I do see a lot of light at the end of the tunnel as we move forward through this stage of the pandemic and look forward to summer, and to fall semester ahead, but I just want to thank you and thank your team for a job well done. And kudos to those of you who continue to always lean in.

Kaiser: Thank you, Dr. Gold.

Gold: And thank you for joining us today on this very special Maverick Minute.