



Photo by Steve Bosmer

University Studies graduate Kathleen Avery explains her life as a student.

Usual approaches fell short

By Ron Ruggless

University Studies is a nontraditional program which can suit the needs of the nontraditional student, and UNL has its own work-in example.

Kathleen Avery, administrative assistant to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, is one nontraditional student who graduated from the University Studies program with high distinction.

"Being a nontraditional student and after being here (at UNL) a year," she said, "I found the traditional approaches weren't fulfilling all the things I had hoped to accomplish."

"I was interested in the correctional and criminal justice system," Avery said, and "through University Studies I was able to do a combination of psychology, history and criminal justice."

Before returning to school, she had worked for the municipal court counseling in the probation department and said she wanted to continue in some aspect of counseling.

She used this job to gain credit through the University Studies program and to help determine future directions of study.

"That is the one really nice thing about University Studies," Avery said, "it allows you to do outside professional work to get academic credit."

"A lot of people don't need it (University Studies) because they are going to take all the courses offered in a certain program anyway," she said.

"But, for the student who sees an interest in two or three fields and has the opportunity to seek work and gain outside experience, which is complimentary to an academic program, University Studies is great," Avery said.

Input from the "real world" and an important interaction with people are two of University Studies best aspects, she said.

Avery entered the program during its second year, and, working with the program faculty, planned her own curriculum.

"University studies allows such a broad range of options and such an open-ended program," Avery explained, "that there is a great amount of freedom in determining your program."

"I had always thought I would like to do counseling, as I did in the probation department," she said, "and I had worked as a freshman counselor on campus, so I decided to pursue the field further."

When the administrative position opened in the Arts and Sciences office this summer, her age and her University Studies program focused on counseling, qualified her for the position.

"Now that I have gone through the program, I can see it has made me more aware of the things that are possible at the University," she said.

"You meet people who are interested in a whole spectrum of things which you do not run into in traditional programs," she said.

Avery mentioned that a student not in the program tends to meet only those doing work in his own area of study, with the exception of a few elective courses.

"In University Studies you mix all the time with students who do a number of different things," she added, "so you have all kinds of exposure to new experiences, new attitudes and new ideas."

She said she would suggest University Studies to any student who has a wide variety of interests.

One of her daughters, who is 19, may go into the University Studies program, but is only attending the university part-time.

With a husband and three children still at home, Avery said the University Studies program was ideal because she could regulate her school hours better with the independent studies taken in the program.

Even her husband was delighted with the program, she said.

University Studies pleased him, she said, "because he could see I was getting much better training than I would have through a traditional course."

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