

ALUMNI

National American University Alumni Spotlight

Kim Stambaugh:

NAU degree gives alumna's life the meaning she was searching for



While in high school, going to college was not on Kim Stambaugh's radar. At that time, she never really considered college as something she needed to pursue.

"No one in my family went to college," explained Kim. "We struggled but we survived and I just figured I would do the same."

Kim coasted for the first few years following high school graduation, working mostly in fast food, including in management positions. Yet, when new employment opportunities came along, she always felt as if she was starting over.

"Management in fast food establishments does not amount to much," said Kim, reflecting back on what caused her to re-think the need for a college degree. "Even you were the manager at one store, if you changed jobs you were back at square one. It was a struggle."

"I finally decided I needed an outlet. I didn't want to struggle anymore and I really felt trapped with no real opportunity for change."

Kim admits she knew little about how to begin the process of applying for college, and less about financing options to pay for it.

"I started looking around online to see what my options were," said Kim. "At that point, I didn't even know about National American University."

Her search ultimately led to conversations with different colleges, including NAU.

"The NAU admissions advisor I spoke to was really helpful," said Kim. "What I remember clearly is when she said I didn't have to wait until September to get started. She said I could start next week."

"I was so ready at that point to change my life, yet at the same time, if I waited until fall to start, I'm not sure I would have followed through."

So, in December 2013, Kim enrolled at NAU-Zona Rosa in Kansas City, Missouri. She took a pragmatic approach to selecting her degree, looking at the options she knew would make finding employment relatively easy, wherever she wanted to live.

“I chose nursing,” said Kim. “I wanted to be able to move with my degree and my career and not have to start over with each change.”

Kim had been working toward her nursing degree for about 18 months when a brochure for the university’s Clinical Laboratory Technician degree caught her eye.

“It totally got my attention,” said Kim. “I thought, ‘this is what I want to do.’”

Kim’s advisor helped her change programs and Kim excelled.

“I can’t thank the faculty and Zona Rosa Administration enough for all their help,” said Kim. “The lab tech program was still pretty new and some classes were only offered once a year. So, if you didn’t pass a class, you would have to wait a full year to re-take it which could really delay graduation. The faculty and staff understood this and went above and beyond to help all of us not fall behind.”

While approaching graduation, Kim secured a position with Quest Diagnostics Inc., a Fortune 500 company that provides clinical laboratory services across the world.

Kim graduated in November 2016 with honors, earning a 4.0. She also passed her ASCP (American Society for Clinical Pathology) certification. Quest Diagnostics kept her on, and in 2017, promoted her to a Medical Technologist I position.

“This is really everything I worked so hard for,” said Kim. “I am now able to help my mom financially so she can finally retire and, with Quest being located around the world, there is opportunity for me to branch out and not start over.”

Kim is so grateful for the extra support she received as a student that she now donates her time on NAU’s Advisory Council, providing input as a recent graduate on ways to improve the program for current students.

She also volunteers her time mentoring current students.

“I tell them, ‘call me. If you need advice or help with a class, let me know,’” said Kim. “I couldn’t have done it without the help NAU gave me. Helping current students is the best way I can think of say ‘thanks.’”