

Cathleen Borgman:

Hello. Thank you so much for joining us today. My name's Cath Borgman and I'm the director of the University Career Center here at Fairfield. Our panel today is Fairfield and Beyond. I am very excited to have some wonderful alumni join us so that they can speak about their experience here at Fairfield and how they were prepared for what they're currently doing today. So with us we have Olivia Foye, who is from the Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies; Paola Rivera, representing the Dolan School of Business; Stephanie Hill from the College of Arts and Sciences. And last but not least, Michael Rubertone, also from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Why don't we kick off by asking everyone to tell us what your major was, when you graduated, and where and what your current positions are? Why don't we start with Michael?

Michael Rubertone:

Hello, everyone. My name is Micheal Rubertone. I graduated from Fairfield University in 2011. I was a communication major with a focus on media, mass media. Currently, I work at Walt Disney World as a guest experience manager over in one of the parks down in Florida. I've been with the company for about nine years now, so I moved down three weeks after I graduated from college. And I've been doing that ever since. Good to meet you all.

Cathleen Borgman:

Okay. Paola, how about you?

Paola Rivera:

Hi, everyone. Welcome to Fairfield, first of all. My name is Paola. I graduated in 2019 from the Dolan School of Business. I was a finance major with a minor in business analytics and communications, and I currently work at Bank of America. I am a wealth management analyst in the private bank and I'm going on my first full year on July 8th.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yay! Olivia?

Olivia Foye:

Hey, Stags. My name's Olivia Foye. I was in the class of 2018. I'm an emergency room nurse at Northwell. I work at North Shore University Hospital and I'll be there two years in August.

Cathleen Borgman:

Steph.

Stephanie Hill:

Hi, I'm Stephanie Hill. I graduated in 2013 and my major was communications as well. I currently work for the industrial conglomerate Siemens. I've been there about six months and I lead executive employee communications for their software business, so communicating to all employees on behalf of the executives in the company. Yeah, six months I've been there.

Cathleen Borgman:

Great. Anybody can take this next question. How do you believe Fairfield equipped you either in the classroom or outside of the classroom to get to the point you are today?

Olivia Foye:

I could start us off, I guess, if that's all right.

Cathleen Borgman:

Perfect.

Olivia Foye:

I think Fairfield's core curriculum definitely makes you a very well-rounded human being as a graduate. I mean at the end of the day I am a nurse and constantly at people's bedside, but I'm a team member on a team with a lot of providers and a lot of different specialties. So there's an infinite amount of communication to keep things running for a shift.

I think as far as on the nursing perspective, I think all my clinical experience prepared me for everything at the bedside. I mean, I was nervous to start as a new nurse, but I felt very prepared immediately. And I think even on orientation you could kind of tell where you stood among the other people, and I definitely, I felt very prepared. I think it's all of the clinical experience that Fairfield gives you and all of the professors and their expertise in the clinical field that sets you up for that. Someone else wants to take over.

Cathleen Borgman:

Michael.

Michael Rubertone:

To add onto that, talking about the great experience you get from the classroom and from all the professors, the one thing that I also got out of Fairfield was all the extracurricular stuff that's offered. In my job, our job is very much relationship based and very much building relationships not only with my employees but with the guests who come to visit us. The one thing that Fairfield has taught me is the importance of building those relationships and the importance of keeping those relationships and maintaining them throughout the years to come. I think there are a lot of great opportunities. I was very involved with the student government.

I was very involved with career planning, with the admissions office, but it allowed me to broaden those horizons and broaden those skills and develop those skills that you might not necessarily get in a classroom, which helped me be a better person, a better professional as I got into my role with Disney to continue to grow and the importance of cultivating and developing and sustaining those relationships. So I think take advantage of every opportunity and that's what Fairfield does because of, just like Olivia mentioned, just the core curriculum looks at that broader person. But the extracurriculars also provide that broader person.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yes, Stephanie.

Stephanie Hill:

Michael, I think I met you the very first week.

Michael Rubertone:

Yeah. It was freshmen year in the Kelley Center, and we met Cath. And ever since then it's been 10 years now, 13 years now.

Cathleen Borgman:

13 beautiful years. Who'd like to go next?

Stephanie Hill:

I can, Cath. I think building off of what Mike said, I was involved in a lot of extracurriculars. Participated in orientation as an orientation leader, also as a resident assistant. I think some of those activities but also the career help that the career planning office provides really helped me get to where I am today. The network that Fairfield has from alumni is so strong and you develop such a strong community while you're at Fairfield that once you're gone, the alumni always want to help and are always excited to meet Stags out in the real world.

Both of my internships that I had during college I got through the alumni network, and then my first job out of Fairfield I worked for GE for six years, was through the alumni network as well. Those strong connections you make, it's not just the community you're building while at school for your four years, but it also stretches beyond and really helps advance your career along the line. So I'm grateful for that.

Cathleen Borgman:

Paola?

Paola Rivera:

I definitely have to agree with everything everybody has said. Starting off with the classes, just having the core, it honestly has brought me... Something as simple as taking an art class, an art history class, has also... You really don't think about it till after you take the course how much it's going to help you in the real world, whether it's just making conversation with everybody. It just shows all around that you're well educated not just in my case in the business school, but I had to take through my courses at Fairfield a philosophy class, an art history class, and so many different classes that actually broaden your horizons. And you have the opportunity to learn about different areas that you wouldn't typically learn if it wasn't for the core curriculum.

Additionally, being a part of so many extracurriculars, I was an admissions ambassadors. I gave tours around school, and I always tell this and I told Cath before, I'm like, "It's easy to talk about a school when you loved it your past four years and when you feel comfortable where you are." And Fairfield really does carry that over through the Jesuit core and all the different opportunities they have with extracurriculars, not only inside the classroom but outside the classroom and through your all four years at school, honestly.

Cathleen Borgman:

And for anybody who's listening in from Puerto Rico, I'd like to say that that's where Paola resides. Well, actually now she's here in the mainland, but she originally was in Puerto Rico and will be going back in the next few weeks for a visit.

Paola Rivera:

Exactly. I couldn't stay away from Fairfield and decided to stay close by.

Cathleen Borgman:

I just want to remind people that are on today that you can write questions in the Q&A portion of Zoom, so feel free to do that. Okay. My next question is we all know that your professional career can take many turns. Some of you may have actually experienced those either in the position you're in or past positions. Do you want to give a little insight into that and maybe did Fairfield, the background you received at Fairfield, help you to be resilient and navigate that whole process? Anyone want to take that one? Mike?

Michael Rubertone:

I can start. When I actually originally went to Fairfield, I was recruited as a baseball player and I was on a scholarship, an athletic scholarship at Fairfield, for my first two years. Then I got hurt and before, for anyone who's ever pursued an athletic career at a young age, there was not a lot of life outside of baseball for me. So my sophomore year when I injured myself for the second time, that put me in a position where I did not know what the next step was, and Fairfield helped me figure that out and helped me learn how to get back up when you get knocked down. I think that is what has propelled me into current opportunities like that even in my current role.

I know we're in this very interesting world that we're in right now of a global pandemic, which none of us have ever gone through. But I think the resilience that we learned from our opportunities and experiences 10 years ago, five years ago, a year ago at Fairfield has helped build us and prepared us for other things. There's only one way to go, and that's up and learning how to get back on that horse when you get kicked off. I think Fairfield taught me that.

In my job, every day is a new opportunity and something I've never seen before, but that's okay because of the stuff I learned at Fairfield. Whether it's building the relationships or putting yourself out there and taking the risks, has bettered my opportunities as I've grown in my career.

Cathleen Borgman:

Steph?

Stephanie Hill:

Yeah. I can kind of carry off on that. My first, I would say, six years out of Fairfield I worked at GE. And if you haven't heard, they've been in the news headlines for a significant amount over the last few years just with a lot of organizational changes. So I had started in GE Capital, where they after a couple of years were selling my business that I was a part of out from under me and had to find a new role from there. Luckily, was able to stay with GE, but then ultimately last fall had to take a layoff myself. So I think my time at Fairfield helped prepare me for those kinds of experiences because you learn to try new things, to be open to okay, when my first job was potentially going away and the business was going away, try new things.

So things like the core classes, you try classes that may be out of your comfort zone or you try activities that may be out of your comfort zone, but they ultimately build your skills to be a better leader, be more resilient when unexpected things happen and you have to think on your feet and be a little quick to adjust. Fairfield has prepared me for these things. The networking opportunities, the relationships you build and how you carry yourself, I feel like Fairfield really helped your whole person,

not just you academically but how you really carry yourself and the values you have. I think that has helped me be more resilient along the way as I face career challenges over the last few years.

Cathleen Borgman:

And of course, you always have alumni friends to fall back on and they'll whip you into shape if you need somebody to help lift you up.

Stephanie Hill:

Exactly.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yeah. Anyone else?

Olivia Foye:

Yeah. Like I mentioned before, I'm an emergency room nurse, so I don't think I ever could've predicted anything like this pandemic. Where I work was basically a completely different place for several weeks. Every time I went to work policies were changed. The wait in the waiting room was longer. We were short on oxygen tanks. I think I realized how well prepared I was for just being a resilient person in a new kind of environment. But yeah, I had no idea that was going to happen that way and it we seem to be on the better end of it now. But it definitely, you see how much you've learned over time.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yeah. Talk about jumping right in.

Olivia Foye:

Oh, yeah. Right in.

Cathleen Borgman:

Paola?

Paola Rivera:

I can talk quickly to that. Even though I'm still just, like I mentioned before, haven't hit the one-year mark on my full-time job and employment, but I really have had some challenges this past year. Even now with the pandemic and everything happening, my analyst program got put on hold and we've been switched over to help with the small business administration. Fairfield, honestly, taught me just the fact that change is okay, that it's fine to accept changes and not know what's happening, and you're just supposed to take it day by day. And throughout this whole pandemic it's also made me realize that nothing is set in stone, but we're all thankful that we're all employed and day by day and taking everything as a learning opportunity.

So as I mentioned, I am currently working in a completely different area, not part of my analyst program, but it has made me realize all the different opportunities that lie within the bank and all the different growth opportunities and exposure to a completely different area, just like something as similar as a core class where you wouldn't have thought you would've liked it. But just because you had the opportunity to take the class, you realize you might have an underlying passion, whether it's for

philosophy, art history, or a literature class. That goes hand in hand with the real world of all the different opportunities you can get out of school and in your job, whether it's a part-time opportunity or another full-time opportunity that might lead you to another passion.

Cathleen Borgman:

Super. Okay. We've got some questions here. Let me see if I can throw a few out. Let me see. Olivia, you're on deck. Are there additional steps a nursing grad needs to take to work outside the state of Connecticut and does Fairfield provide assistance?

Olivia Foye:

Okay. I won't get into it too much, but your boards when you graduate is called your NCLEX. They're a national exam, but you have to decide what state you're going to sit in when you register for them. Fairfield helps you. You fill out your state's information prior to even graduating, so I did the New York portion. And then they send your transcript to the New York Board of Nursing. Then you get a code to register for your boards eventually.

As far as getting a job out of state, like Michael and Stephanie and Paola talked about before, I did go through Cath in the career center. I shadowed a Stag both when I was a junior and a senior. I knew I wanted to work in Newark. I worked in two Newark hospitals; I shadowed them, I mean. I got an internship in New York the summer before and they ended up offering me a job full time. So you can do it very easily, I would say. Not a problem.

Cathleen Borgman:

Okay. Now here's another question. Fairfield is obviously a great school and graduates do very well. What is one thing Fairfield could have been better at that would have benefited you, for example, diversity? So if you could think of one thing that you wish you had done that you didn't do or that Fairfield would've helped you with? Michael?

Michael Rubertone:

One thing I will say, as someone who has kind of always had a passion for Disney and wanted to work for Disney, Fairfield does a great job of networking. And I think as the other three panelists have mentioned, how important the network is with Fairfield. However, Fairfield doesn't touch everyone. I mean it can't be. I mean it's impossible for them to be able to impact every potential career. So it would've been nice for opportunities for Fairfield to provide opportunities for a little bit more of a different career path. The theme park industry and the hospitality industry was not anything that Fairfield really focused on.

The good news is you get enough of that through the Dolan School of Business, school of management. The nice thing about the hospitality industry, there was not one major that does very well in that industry. It is a well-rounded industry. So I think having the opportunity, Fairfield because of its location and proximity to New York City and Boston and New Haven and all these major cities in the Tri-State area, Fairfield does a great job of networking within that.

I think in terms of networking further away from Connecticut makes it a little more challenging just because of the fact that while there are relationships, I had alumni that worked for Disney also who I was able to reach out, having those internship opportunities maybe were not as prevalent. It was a little bit more work on my own and being able to work with Cath in the Career Planning Center where the opportunities were not just presented themselves. You had to dig a little bit more for that. So I think

if you want to look at the diversity piece, I think the diversity in potential job opportunities would be a better thing for Fairfield. But at the same time, the size of Fairfield and the proximity of Fairfield, you have thousands of opportunities right in the Tri-State area.

Cathleen Borgman:

Anybody else have any suggestions? Okay. Let me see. Here's one I actually can answer, but if anyone wants to chime in. Can you have a major in two different schools? Yes, you can, but you have to pick a primary major and then you'd have a secondary major. Here's the other question: Did you guys all know what you wanted to major in before you came to Fairfield? Did you feel that Fairfield allowed you enough time to explore your interests so you could figure out what you wanted to do? Steph?

Stephanie Hill:

Yeah. I had no idea what I wanted to do going into Fairfield, and I think the core curriculum helped figure that out because I tried different classes in different subject areas. Again, you don't love everything, but one of the classes that I did find, I was taking a public speaking class because I figured, "I don't enjoy that personally, but that'll help me grow and be beneficial for future presentations and things that I knew would happen later in my career," or later in even your time at Fairfield.

So I tried the public speaking class, which was part of the communications curriculum, and actually enjoyed it more than I thought I would and tried out additional classes within the communications major before declaring it. I don't think I declared my major until the middle or end of sophomore year, so you have that time and you can work through your core curriculum and try out different classes first, at least before I declared it. I know it's a little different depending on nursing or business, but that was within arts and sciences I felt like I had enough time.

Cathleen Borgman:

Paola?

Paola Rivera:

I can completely agree with that. Specifically, within the Dolan School of Business I went in undeclared but in the business school. So I was already as a first-year student taking the business core, similar to general core, but it gives you the opportunity to come in undecided without knowing really... Either you know or you don't know, and that's completely fine. But I had the opportunity to take my first semester at Fairfield Accounting 101, and also my first year I took a marketing class, Accounting 200. You get all the different courses and you get an idea and a basis of what you like. It's great, just like the general core, to have all those different areas, whether it's accounting, marketing, management, finance under your skills just because you're going to use them sooner or later. And through taking those classes is that I realized that I wanted to be a finance major.

Similar to the general core, I knew I had an interest in communications, but I had no idea what the classes were or anything. And through the general core I had the opportunity to take a communications class as one of my electives, and that led to my minor. So you really do have the opportunity. You don't have to come in knowing exactly what you want to study, and that's bound to change. Also, you might realize after taking that first accounting class that you thought your whole life you wanted to be an accountant, you realize it wasn't for you and that's completely fine. Fairfield gives you the flexibility to be able to take all those different courses and learn what are your likes and dislikes.

Cathleen Borgman:

To that point, maybe you're not doing internships for credit until junior or senior year, but wouldn't you say that starting to find internships or internship-equivalent opportunities earlier rather than later helps you to figure that out?

Paola Rivera:

I would definitely agree. I am a firm believer that it's not till you have the experience firsthand whether you realize that you will see yourself in a full-time employment after getting that firsthand experience in an internship. I can speak for myself that it was those internships that helped me realize I did want to continue in finance and I wanted to get that business analytics minor in addition to communications because I felt those three together were a strong front for any opportunity that I would seek full time.

Cathleen Borgman:

Any other comments? Mike.

Michael Rubertone:

Just to go off of what Paola was saying, when I actually went to Fairfield, I went as a business major. I just thought, "You know, business is the right thing for me." By taking the core classes with the business classes, I realized it might not have been the right major for me. But then like Stephanie said, being able to take core classes in the College of Arts and Sciences, I realized that was more where my passion lied, which allowed me to focus more on the communication major. Just because you think you may know when you come into the school does not necessarily mean that that's what you're going to graduate with.

Fairfield, because of its core curriculum, allows you to move around and figure out what your next step is. And what you may think you want to do when you come in as a freshman may not be what you graduate with when you're a senior, and that's okay. Fairfield, I think, supports that and embraces that, and that's why they've introduced that core curriculum to let you make those choices and give you those options and see where your passion does lie.

Cathleen Borgman:

Super. Okay. Olivia, they name you by name here. "I'm entering the nursing program. As I'm looking toward the next four years, I'm thinking about possibly joining Fairfield's graduate program and becoming a nurse practitioner. Would you suggest doing this program in the future?"

Olivia Foye:

I honestly can't speak too much for the nurse practitioner program, but I think if it's something you're interested in, I don't see why not. I know they have similar faculty with the undergraduates, so you could definitely get information on that soon on. But yeah, I truthfully can't speak to it too great. But if it's something that interests you-

Cathleen Borgman:

Do you think it's better to get some experience under your belt first before you go straight through?

Olivia Foye:

A lot of people recommend that, yeah. I just got into NP school out of state, but I'm planning on still working and going to NP school at the same time in the fall.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yay! Paola, how helpful was the alumni from Fairfield in helping you get internships and ultimately the job you have?

Paola Rivera:

I to this day believe that was able to get my full-time job through an alumni connection. It's one of those opportunities that you don't realize. I am the first one to say that the career center is the place to go fresh off your first year at Fairfield and all throughout the four years in addition to all the different opportunities and networking events that Fairfield offers. I loved attending all the business programs.

There was a career night my junior year once I applied for my internship at Bank of America that I actually met an alumni that currently works at Bank of America. He was very useful and helpful in giving me tips, and I spoke with him several times on the phone after the career night and kept in contact with him. He even set up a mock interview for me with somebody that works in the same division that I work at within Bank of America. Ultimately, I like to say it's such a small world. He ended up being my current manager's boss several years ago, and it wasn't until I sent, after I completely... I'm honest, I completely forgot to mention his name during my interview because I was just so frazzled with everything that in my email to my manager when I was thanking her for the interview, I was like, "Oh, what a small world. My alumni connection at Fairfield that works at Bank of America seemed to be your manager."

And to this day I think, I don't know how it works, I think that really helped with the job having that alumni connection. Everybody smiles because you realize there's so many Stags everywhere you go, you're bound to meet one from several years ago. And you still have that Fairfield connection in common that brings you together. I think it also goes with being a Jesuit education, you find yourself... Stags are family no matter what year they graduated from, and you're always there to help each other out. So I am a firm believer that the alumni connection tool, whether it's through LinkedIn or through the Fairfield portal, is one of the best assets to whether it's getting an internship, a full-time job, or even just a mentorship opportunity.

Cathleen Borgman:

Once a Stag, always a Stag.

Paola Rivera:

Exactly.

Cathleen Borgman:

Okay. Here's a good one: What do you wish you knew when you got to Fairfield as a first-year student?

Stephanie Hill:

I can start. I would say it's okay not to know what you're doing, because I didn't know my major. Everyone else around you, you feel the pressure from your peers because they're in their business classes or they're in their nursing program or engineering. And you feel like, "Oh my gosh, I haven't figured things out yet." I think I always made myself panic that what am I going to do with my life? And I

don't think you need to have that figured out at 18 years old coming in freshman year. That's perfectly okay.

So if I could tell my previous self that everything will work out. I love my career. I have a job directly related to my major, which I wouldn't have necessarily guessed going in. I know some people think, "What are you going to do in communications?" It's not necessarily a direct path to something, or there's so much you can do. So it's okay not to have everything figured out and just enjoy the ride and try different things and get comfortable with it.

Cathleen Borgman:

Mike.

Michael Rubertone:

To piggyback off of that, I think another thing that I wish I'd knew is be a sponge. Do everything. Fairfield has so much to offer and don't go into Fairfield thinking, "All right, I know I like this, this and this. And this is all I'm going to do." Because there are opportunities, like Stephanie said, that who would've thought that she would've found a thing related to her major, a job related to her major and a job she loves so much.

It's such a formidable time during your college years to just try everything. Be a sponge, try everything. Don't say no to an opportunity because you don't know what you like until you try it. I think Fairfield has such diverse extracurriculars and such diverse classes that you have that opportunity to try. So just try, try, try. It's very easy if you don't like it to back out and do something else, but you don't know until you try it. I think just be open minded and be ready for everything. And don't say no to any opportunity you get.

Cathleen Borgman:

Okay. Here's one. I don't know if you can answer this, but I'm going to throw it out anyway. Now you've had a little time, all of you, since you were first-year students. And there are a lot of parents on this call here, this little session. What advice would you give parents of first-year students that you wish that your own parents had done starting out?

Stephanie Hill:

I can start. I guess just watch the amount of pressure you put on them on how many friends do you have; how many activities are you involved in; how are your grades going? I think it's just such a weird... Freshman year, you're trying to adjust. You're taking college courses versus the high school ones, and what is that like only going to class a couple days a week and living with your friends. Students are adjusting to so much in a quick period of time that I feel like you always get the pressure from your parents when you're calling home of, "How is everything going and is everything perfect?"

It's not going to be perfect. It's going to be messy, but that is what shapes the experience. You start with a certain group of friends, but then things shift and that's okay. I think just to watch the amount of pressure that you put on them just because they're all trying to figure things out as best as they can. Be as encouraging, as Mike said, to try new things, to be that sponge, to go to that event they may be only somewhat interested in or they're kind of interested in but are afraid to go. Just be encouraging and keep an eye on the amount of pressure you're applying.

Cathleen Borgman:

Mike.

Michael Rubertone:

I feel like I'm always going to follow Stephanie. I think another thing, let your kids, let them be comfortable with who they are. I think for most of us college was the first time we didn't live with our parents, and so we only knew who we were based on growing up with our family and growing up with our parents. I think those four years in college is an opportunity for the first time in your child's life, I know in my life, where I grew into the person I've become, started growing into the person I've become today. So support that and let your kids know it's okay to be who they want to be and that the only person they should really develop into is the person they want to develop into.

Now of course, you want to make sure they're making right decisions, but trust in... I know if I could go back and have my parents trust in themselves as parents that they taught us to make the right decisions and know when to make the right decisions, and I think that will help them develop into pretty spectacular people when they're done with this whole thing by having their freedom but also knowing you trust that they are going to make the right decision. And if they don't, that's why you're there to help them, but make sure they know they should be comfortable with who they are.

Because then I think Fairfield helped teach me that, as again, I was an athlete and that's all I knew. And then I don't play sports anymore. I still participate, but I don't play sports competitively anymore. My life changed drastically, but having the support from my parents and having the support from my friends and mentors at Fairfield helped me get over that and grow into someone different. Support them and be supportive of them becoming themselves.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yeah, Paola.

Paola Rivera:

And I would just reiterate everything both Stephanie and Michael have said, but just to add on, you realize it's a learning experience and an adjustment not just for the student but also for the parents. Whether it's for my case, I went from living in Puerto Rico to moving to Connecticut, and sometimes I'd find myself calling home one too many times. Or my parents knew I was always walking to class when I called them. But it was also just giving each other the space you need to grow. It's throughout those four years that you find yourself, like Michael said. It's through all the experiences that you have at Fairfield and, like Stephanie mentioned, with your friends.

You might have the opportunity where the friends you make your first year at Fairfield are your lifelong friends forever, but you might also make new friends your second, third and fourth year at Fairfield. I would just reiterate the fact that it's not only a learning experience for the students; it's a learning experience for the parents of being able to trust your kid and being able to know that you've raised them the right way. And now it's their turn to go out into the world and go out into Fairfield and carry on with everything they've learned throughout their years in elementary school, high school and at home.

Cathleen Borgman:

Olivia, any gems?

Olivia Foye:

No. I think I really agree. I think it's definitely a huge adjustment. I think giving space and letting them grow is very important, but going off what Michael said, at the end of the day you just want to make sure your kid's safe and making the best choices but to watch over them but in a nice space, give a little bit of time and everything.

Cathleen Borgman:

Also, probably keep in mind that if a student calls home upset, they're getting it off their chest. They hang up and all of a sudden there's a pizza party down the hall and things are fine. But someone's home, nervous wreck thinking, "Oh my gosh, they're in their room." Take everything in moderation. Let's see. I'll try and answer this, but if you want to chime in, any of you. With such large, expansive majors and field like... Whoops, can't see this. And field like business and the medical field, how does Fairfield help shape you to find specific careers? Can you elaborate on that process?

I think this goes back to, in my mind, the importance of the student taking the initiative to doing some of that work themselves and that there are people around who are more than happy to sit and investigate and provide recommendations, suggestions, but it's still up to the student to kick some tires. Get an internship, talk to people, network with alumni. Any other suggestions from your experiences? Yeah.

Stephanie Hill:

Yeah. I would say it's a little bit of trial by fire. So like Cath said, it's some of your internship experiences. You do some work and you realize you like it, or you don't and that helps you narrow in on what you want to do. But also, the career center has a ton of opportunities like the Alumni Job Shadow Program. Outside of Fairfield now, I have students who come and shadow me at work and they see what a day looks like in corporate communications. Maybe they're not actually doing the activity, but they see what a day in the job looks like.

I think that again helps you figure out what you do or don't like. Do you want to be in a cubicle, on meetings all day, or are you looking for a different kind of role? I think those experiences, the student has to seek them out because it's their own preferences, but I think they're always available. And Fairfield is happy to help point you in the right direction to get those internships or to connect with those alumni to just talk about what they do and if that's something the student might be interested in.

Cathleen Borgman:

Super. Let me see. Although we do not know the outlook for travel abroad in the future, did any of you study abroad, and if so, what did you gain from your experience and would you recommend it to future Stags? Olivia.

Olivia Foye:

I didn't do a full semester abroad, but I did the community public health class your senior year, I believe it was. Yes. They went to Nicaragua that year and it was the most amazing experience ever, honestly. Two of the professors in the School of Nursing have very close ties to the university they're partnered with there. You work directly with students from that university in the communities in Nicaragua and it was life changing. And the relationships they had there, they had been there several times a year and the students we worked with were so amazing and such interesting people, so knowledgeable. It was really cool work. I think it was really awesome. I didn't get to do a full semester, but that was just my own personal thing. But I thought being able to do that was incredible.

Cathleen Borgman:

So you didn't enjoy it very much. Paola.

Paola Rivera:

I actually had the opportunity to study abroad in Florence the second semester of my junior year, so the spring semester. I absolutely loved it. To this day, I wish I could go back and redo my study abroad semester just because it was one of the best experiences that Fairfield had to offer. I did go through a Fairfield program, so there were around a hundred students from Fairfield that did the Florence program. But it was also a great fact to just have everybody be on the same boat so we could always rely on each other, whether it's walking to class or we knew everybody was around, so that also gave you a sense of community. But I am an avid believer that if you have the opportunity to go abroad, you should do it.

I absolutely loved it and I also had the opportunity to intern while abroad. So I worked for a small Italian company, and even though there was a language barrier, we both spoke English. And I used my Spanish as well to my advantage. But it was a great opportunity to get a different experience, completely different experience in a different culture, and I interned for a company where I did communications for them and worked on their website. It just broadens your horizons and gives you that knowledge that you are prone to work in different cultures.

If you have the opportunity, you should honestly take that. With study abroad, it was the perfect combination of being able to take classes in Florence, experience the abroad opportunity while also having an internship under my belt.

Cathleen Borgman:

Super. Okay.

Stephanie Hill:

I also studied abroad in Galway, smaller program than Florence. For me it was 15 students from Fairfield but would always 100% recommend it to any student. Even if you can't do a full semester, Fairfield has the summer program or shortened spring breaks where you can take a course. I would recommend it. It's just, it's such another learning experience beyond the classroom.

Of course, you're taking classes too. But getting to know, like they said, a different culture and experiencing how a different country works and does their schooling or just living on your own, it's different than being in the dorm rooms. You're in apartments and stuff throughout the city you're in. I would always recommend it because I think it's an incredible learning opportunity for anyone if you're able to participate.

Cathleen Borgman:

Just think of all the different foods in all the different places. Okay. This one is for Mr. Rubertone. As a business student who's very interested in working in the Disney Corporation, is there any advice Mr. Rubertone could give about what I should do during my four years at Fairfield to work towards this goal?

Michael Rubertone:

That's a great question because I think one thing I learned from Fairfield, and I mentioned this before, is just do everything. I think in the Disney corporate world, in the Disney executive world, in any corporate

world, it's about relationships and it's about building and gaining experiences everywhere you can. So I think that, number one, is just be involved in everything you can be involved with because that will help you build those relationships.

I think one thing that Fairfield has taught me, and I think we all can attest to this, is things don't always happen as you think they're going to be and sometimes things happen very slow. So I think being involved will teach you patience because things don't happen overnight. I know speaking now in the real world and working for Disney, just like any major corporation, things don't happen overnight, but having that patience.

The other thing that I will recommend is while getting involved in everything will also give you the diversity of experiences, and I think that's what is important when looking to go into a corporate world is having a diversity of experience because you are going to be on a team that is in charge of a very large corporation. And they're going to want a diverse group of diverse experience on their team. So if you're able to go in, you may be a business major, but able to go in and say, "I have a background in these other opportunities," you now are going to showcase yourself even more.

I do recommend after those four years looking to go to further education. I think all of that stuff I think is what will help you get into that, but in those four years be involved in everything you can. Take every class you can take and not just business-specific classes. Focus on communication. Focus on arts and sciences. Focus on the math. Focus on things that may fall outside of your business realm because that's only going to help you down the road.

Cathleen Borgman:

Let me see. How well does the university encourage all the different schools to hang out with each other or do people just stay with their specific school classmates? Michael.

Michael Rubertone:

I think one thing that as mentioned multiple times in this panel, one thing that Fairfield does really well is yes, the schools do... Your Dolan Business School, your nursing school, your arts and science, you do take classes with the same students. The small classes allow you to personally get to know each student in that class, but I think the other opportunities, the extracurriculars is what allows you to blur those lines. One of my best friends from college was a business major, and I was in the arts and science school. So we got to know each other through the extracurricular activities, through living on campus and just being able to be involved in the culture and experience and environment of what Fairfield has to offer.

I know my sophomore year I participated in the residential housing over at Loyola Hall, which allowed us to focus more on other opportunity... a community-type sense as opposed to your traditional dorm. So it focuses on different kind of communities. I think Fairfield really does encourage you to get involved in other opportunities outside of your school. But as Cath mentioned, one expression I always like to go with is you can take a horse to water, but you can't force it to drink. So I think it is on the student a little bit to go outside of their school, but Fairfield has those opportunities that allow you to build those relationships outside of your major. But you have to make that effort a little bit because it's your path; it's your college career.

Olivia Foye:

I think going off that, the core classes are definitely a big part of that because everyone from the school has to take philosophy, so everyone sitting with you is from all different majors. I think also the people

you meet in your building, your friends down the hall, they're coming from all different schools in the university.

Paola Rivera:

And just to go off that also with FYE, which is the First Year Experience, that it typically starts with orientation and it goes throughout your first semester at Fairfield. In your FYE groups you have students from all different types of majors. So some of my best friends from Fairfield I met through FYE, and we weren't in the same major. We weren't in the same school, and just having that common ground.

Like all the panelists have mentioned, through your classes, through the core curriculum, through your building, you're not bound to just interact with people from the one school you're in. You will have interactions with all different students from all different schools. It's more so what you make of it also, stepping out of your comfort zone, making those friends, taking that first step. And after that, it all happens naturally.

Cathleen Borgman:

It's organic. Okay. How did each of you deal with stress, peer pressure, difficult classes, roommate issues? You had no problems, right? There were no problems, right?

Michael Rubertone:

So of course, the first thing, and Cath would know, the first thing I would do is I would run to Cath's office every time I had any stressful situation.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yes, it's true.

Michael Rubertone:

But realistically, I mean, I think stress is just a part of life, so you figure it out as you go. I think it kind of organically comes with it. Yeah, you're going to have peer pressure to do certain things. And as Stephanie mentioned, there may be an event you're interested in but none of the friends you've just met are interested in going, so you don't go. I think that's just a part of life and learning how to deal with it. But I think you also realize everyone who stepped foot in Fairfield and graduated from Fairfield and everyone who's going to step foot on Fairfield's campus and graduate from Fairfield has all gone through it together and have figured it out.

For me, running was a big thing and being an athlete, being able to go for a run just to clear my mind. You learn what you can do and learn to control what you can't control. It's going to happen, but know that all four of us have gone through it and figured it out. I don't know if there's one advice because I think all four of us deal with stress a little bit differently, but you have a support crew. I was lucky enough to meet Cath my freshman year. You have advisors. You have professors that you develop relationships with. You have administrators who you develop relationships with who can help guide you.

Because it's such a small school, you know everybody on campus. It's not a giant public university like you see in other states. You know everyone, so you can go to anyone you want and ask for that advice. And they'll help you navigate through those stressful times.

Cathleen Borgman:

Anyone else have tips on handling stress?

Stephanie Hill:

I guess one of the things for me has always been I usually would talk it out with my friends or whoever, professors, et cetera, like Mike said. But I also think just putting it into perspective. One of my friends at one point had said, "This isn't going to matter a week from now or a month from now." Pick the timeframe, but to try and frame up whatever you're currently stressed about and how it's going to impact you in the grand scheme of life. It's usually something small and so trying to gain that perspective a little bit to just take yourself out of the situation and how significant is this really going to impact you in the next week, month, year, whatever it might be, just to realize it might not be as big of a problem as you're worried about. Someone had told me to do that early on at Fairfield, and I tried to do it.

We all still get stressed, and I think, like Mike said, you will learn different techniques to how you best handle it depending on what the situation is. But the faculty and staff but also the friends you make at Fairfield are always willing to help be an open ear to talk through what you're worried about. But also, just putting it into perspective in the grand scheme of things has at least helped me.

Cathleen Borgman:

And there's always pizza.

Stephanie Hill:

There's always pizza.

Cathleen Borgman:

Was anyone involved in campus ministry out of this group? No, okay. There was a question about that, but we'll get back to them. How about who lived on the beach, anyone? Paola. The question, what was it like?

Paola Rivera:

I lived on the beach my senior year. Going to Fairfield as a first-year student, that wasn't on my horizon just because I didn't have a car. Coming from Puerto Rico, I was like, "I don't know how I'm going to make it work." But lo and behold, I ended up living my senior year down by the beach and I absolutely loved it. It worked out perfectly. I think it is a great opportunity that Fairfield has being close to the beach, and it's almost a safe haven to the point because you leave class, you get off campus and you're at Fairfield Beach. It's just a relaxing... It's just a good way to decompress when you want to just having the Long Island Sound as your backyard.

Just going off that, I don't think it's a must that you have to live on the beach your senior year. You're going to get an equally great opportunity whether it's on campus or off campus, and I think that's something very important that Fairfield fosters is whether you're living on campus or living off campus, you're still going to have the same opportunities. And all opportunities are given to both students. I wouldn't change it. I lived on the beach, but I also know I would've been happy living on campus.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yeah. Well, the rest of you who lived on campus, there's perks to living on campus. Does anybody want to say what they are? Would you like me to say? Michael.

Michael Rubertone:

The one thing I will say, living on campus encouraged me... I wish I lived on the beach. I think, to Paola's point, that is a very amazing opportunity that Fairfield offers. But I think if I lived on the beach, knowing my personality, all I would want to do is go back to the beach after classes and go back to the beach to be with my friends, to be in my house and not a townhouse or a dorm-style house and be in a house. You're more willing to be involved in experiences if you're on campus because it's not the thought of I have to travel back to campus to be able to experience things.

You absolutely can do it. Some of my best friends lived on the beach and it was nice to be able to have the beach to go to to visit my friends, but it was also nice to be able to know that if there was an athletic event or if there was a career planning event, it was a five-minute walk as opposed to let me get in my car. "Well, it's snowing or it's raining. I'm not going to go now." It encouraged me and enabled me to still be involved my senior year. I enjoyed being involved up until the day I graduated, so it helped encourage me to stay involved because of the convenience of being right on campus and being in close quarters to what's going on on campus.

But the beach, absolutely, my brother lived there. Great opportunity for a lot of students and I have no regrets living on campus, just like how Paola had no regrets living on the beach. But I also know I would've had just as good an experience living on the beach.

Cathleen Borgman:

Can anyone speak to how difficult it is to balance schoolwork and maybe an on-campus or a part-time job?

Stephanie Hill:

I can start. I had a work-study job on campus, I think, three out of my four years at Fairfield. And they understand since it's people on campus, they understand you are a student first. So the hours were never anything crazy. Sometimes again, if it was quiet at work, you can get some of your homework done in between handling the actual activities that you're working on, but I thought it was easy. And they respected that you're ultimately here as a student.

If you needed to take time off or you needed to change your schedule because of exams or anything like that or big deadlines, they were always very flexible and great about that because they understand you're here to learn. They want to enable you and they want to help you out so you can have some money in your pocket when the weekend comes. But I always had a good experience working on campus.

Cathleen Borgman:

Paola, you did it, right?

Paola Rivera:

I was a work-study as well three and a half years out of my four years. I worked in the Dolan School of Business. It was actually a great opportunity to meet all the professors that worked within the School of Business. And it also, like Stephanie mentioned, they know you're a student and this is a part-time job, so they do take into consideration whether it's exams or your finals and your personal schedule. I was also, as I mentioned before, a tour guide at Fairfield. And even though that was a club, it was also a job. That also came with its own responsibilities. When you take that role as an ambassador, you also have to manage your time and schedule your tours, your weekly tours and your weekend tours.

But I think that also, I'm personally the type of person that I like having my plate full because I find myself taking better use of my time. So just adding all those things and just being a tour guide, it always made me have a schedule rather than have more free time and not necessarily say not know what to do, but I'd rather have a handle of things. And being a tour guide was one of the best things that Fairfield had to offer, and I honestly, I would also say having the opportunity to work on campus is a great opportunity to learn more about campus. And everybody, not only faculty but the people that also work on campus, you make connections with them that'll last you throughout the four years.

Cathleen Borgman:

Super. Michael.

Michael Rubertone:

Yeah. Like Paola, I was a tour guide for a year and a half, and then my senior year I was a senior interviewer for prospective students who want to come in and do their interviews. I also interned with the admissions office, which like Paola mentioned, for me, the more I have going on, the more focused I become on all my things. I think it's very easy for all of us if we don't have deadlines to just not get it done and do it at the last possible minute. So I think while it seems like it's overwhelming, it actually allows you to structure your studies.

It allows you to structure your job because you know that from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. I have to be at work. Well, I may not have the opportunity to do my schoolwork, so you know what, I'm going to wake up a few hours early to be able to get some schoolwork done knowing I'm going to be somewhere else where that's not a possibility. So for me, everyone was very supportive because they understood, like Stephanie mentioned, we are students first, but they also... It allowed me to structure my day and it allowed me to structure my studies knowing that I was not going to be available for certain times of the day. Whether it was a club or a job, it allowed me to be able to say, "No, I got to go do these studies because I have this stuff coming up later in the day, later in the week." It definitely helped balance everything out.

Cathleen Borgman:

Olivia had a separate problem. She had all of her clinicals to balance early in the morning.

Olivia Foye:

Yeah. I also was a TA my senior year on campus in the nursing lab and I loved it. It was accommodating. I worked with other students, so if you needed switches, you had to study for an exam, they would very easily switch with you. I loved that.

Cathleen Borgman:

We have about two minutes left. Is there one thing that you took away from your Fairfield experience? If you could just say one thing that you learned about yourself or learned that's been valuable.

Olivia Foye:

I would say stay involved. Reach out to your professors. You can find great mentors and great advice. Be in clubs. It's a great way to make friends and to figure out who you are your first year. Just stay involved in campus.

Stephanie Hill:

Yeah. I think going off of that, in addition to staying involved, is the people are my favorite part of Fairfield. So whether it's my professors or the faculty who advised on these clubs and served as mentors over the years or just the friends you make, the network you grow to know once you're out of there. The people of Fairfield, always I look back and are my favorite part. Embracing that time, getting involved so you get to know a wider group of people.

It's not just your isolated group of friends but meet your professors during their office hours or go to them when you have questions. Connect with the faculty on campus through the different clubs and stuff because those people, you maintain those relationships long after Fairfield, and I think that's always, looking back, my favorite part of my whole experience.

Cathleen Borgman:

Mike.

Michael Rubertone:

I agree. I think the people absolutely are the most important thing. I mean if you look at this panel right here, we have diverged from when we graduated, but I met Cath 13 years ago and we still stay in touch 13 years later. I've been out of school for almost 10 of those years. I mean it truly does come... The people are what make Fairfield what it is. Being such a small school, being in a small city like Fairfield really has helped build and created us who we are. Yeah, the classes are great and the environment is great, but it's the people. It's the professors, the care they have toward seeing you successful and someone that you can reach out 10 years down the road and still have a relationship with is pretty special, especially when you look at some other schools where you may not have that opportunity.

Paola Rivera:

And I could just finish us off with saying, as we mentioned before, once a Stag, always a Stag. As you can see through this panel, we all loved our experience at Fairfield. And it just not only goes with the courses you take, but also, like everyone's mentioned, the people you interact with and all the opportunities Fairfield has to offer, whether it's the career center or all the different clubs and activities I found myself at. All these different experiences that I had at Fairfield these past four years made me who I am today, and I am still in contact with many of my professors. And additionally with Cath and everybody else at the career center, I am on top of everything.

It's not because you feel that you're forced to give back but if not, because you want to give back, because you loved your experience at Fairfield so much that you want others to have that same experience. So I think one of the most important things, it's Fairfield as a whole. There's so many different areas that you're going to keep with you for the rest of your life. That it's the people, the campus. Once a Stag, always a Stag.

Cathleen Borgman:

Yep. Well, I want to thank you for participating, you wonderful people. It was good seeing you all, and I hope everyone enjoyed today's presentation. I look forward to seeing you on campus.