

Shelly Laurenzo ([00:01](#)):

Hello, and welcome to the Decipher podcast. This podcast is hosted by William and Mary staff members who are committed to student success. We all know that this year has been unlike any other, and our hope is that this podcast provides a fresh perspective on the challenges our students are facing.

Shelly Laurenzo ([00:18](#)):

Navigating college life is no walk in the park, and being a William and Mary student in 2020 is no different. Join experts from around campus as they discuss ways to decipher common college experiences.

Jack Armstrong ([00:39](#)):

All right. Here we go. Okay. All right, everyone. Welcome back to the Decipher podcast. My name is Jack Armstrong. I'm going to be hosting it today. And I have on with me Kelly O'Shaughnessy, who is the assistant director for early career engagement over in the career center. I've worked with her a good bit through athletics. She's helped us out a lot in recruiting and getting to know all of our recruits and kind of giving them an idea of the resources we have at our school in terms of putting our students out into the world and making sure they're better equipped to be ready to be professionals and go out and find the right job for them and the right career path. So, Kelly, do you want to just do a quick introduction of yourself and what you do here?

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([01:22](#)):

Sure. So as Jack mentioned, I am the assistant director of early career engagement and liaison [inaudible 00:01:30] career development. What that means is it's not my job to necessarily meet with all of you individually, but it is my job to make sure you know how to use us as soon as you're ready to use us. So in the career center, we have the ability to help you explore what you might want to do as a potential career path and that could be from a variety of angles of taking inventory of what we call your VIPs. So your values, your interests, your personality, and your skills. It might be exploring based on what kind of majors you might be thinking about. But knowing that 93% of employers are not actually looking at your major when they go to hire you, so your major is certainly going to provide you with a perspective you take into any career and it can align with your career path, but it does not have to dictate your career path.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([02:21](#)):

So we have resources that are both individual and small and large group that allow you to figure that out along the way. You can also use some of those resources to confirm or explore deeper, some of the areas you might already have as an interest area for your career path. If you already know what you want to do, we want you to get some experience and exposure into that field. So we have ways for you to either network with alumni or parents through job shadowing externships or through informational interviews or panels and events where we bring alumni to you right now, virtually through Zoom sessions or networking sessions. We will also have the opportunity in the hopeful near future to bring you face to face with alumni on campus. That could also be for recruiting events for employers who are hiring across a variety of industries.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([03:18](#)):

We do have industry specific fairs and programs as well. In fact, coming up in a couple of weeks, we have both a publishing seminar with alumni across two days in a variety of areas of publishing and

editing as both digital and print. Then we also have a week long event for a science careers expo. So just to give you an idea of a couple of things that are coming up soon. We collaborate with faculty on that as well, to make sure that faculty within some academic departments that do align with those industry areas are aware of these events and make and share them with you too. So we work with you, whether you're exploring, gaining experience or pursuing those career paths.

Jack Armstrong ([04:06](#)):

Awesome. Really, really cool. Really great resource for us here at the college. Myself and Kelly and I, we're both William Mary alums and the career center hasn't been there all that long. Has it?

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([04:16](#)):

No. In fact, I believe this is our 10 year anniversary of the building. This year, it was dedicated in 2011. So it was opened in 2010 and dedicated 2011. So this year is, we've just realized, your anniversary year. When I was a student, that was literally a patch of grass and a bike rack between the Sadler Center and the football stadium, used to be in the basement of Blow Hall, which was the admissions building then. [crosstalk 00:04:45] Yeah, they definitely upgraded. I admittedly never set foot in the career center as a student, but I use that in my interview to say, "This is why I want to be in this role," to help more students use this resource that I could have used as a student, for sure.

Jack Armstrong ([05:00](#)):

Definitely. Awesome. Well, we'll break into the topic for today. We really want to talk about the importance of getting to know your professors and how it can help you early on, not only just in that class or during that semester, but how it can really propel you and teach you how to network, teach you how to build relationships with people who are going to be able to help you down the road. So the first, obviously the most important question is why is it so important to build those relationships? I know for me personally, I was really bad at it early on. I liked to go in and sit in the back of the class and not be noticed. Thankfully, William and Mary has small class sizes, so it's a bit harder to do that, but I did my best to hide. I realized really quickly that that was not a good strategy for doing well in that class.

Jack Armstrong ([05:44](#)):

I think the one thing that I've found is it's not only if you show an interest in these professors classes that are more willing to help you is that you find yourself more interested as well because these people, they spend their lives, they dedicate their selves to this topic, whatever their course material is and that's their passion just like we all have interests. So when they see someone that's really willing to reach out and try to immerse themselves in it, they're more likely to help and then we can kind of see that side of why do they love this so much? So for a young student trying to figure out what you want to do, what you want to major in, what you might want to do for a career path, all that kind of stuff, getting to know your professors, for me at least, was really like... That's when I found out maybe this is the path I want to go down. I don't know if you had the same experience being a student here, but that was kind of mine.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([06:34](#)):

Yeah, definitely. Once you start meeting with your faculty member one-on-one, or even within small groups, or even just speaking up more in class with a question, or providing your perspective or knowledge on something that can add to the content, a faculty member is then invested in your process of learning. That's really all networking is; talking to people who are interested in doing the same things

that you're interested in doing and learning from them, how they got there. As soon as you start telling people what you're interested in, they then become invested in your process. As Jack mentioned, these faculty already invested in the content that they're teaching because that is what they've spent their life learning about. Any student that wants to learn more about it is exciting to them. Oftentimes, if you want to do research with a faculty member, it just takes you asking them, "Do you need help with any of your research?"

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([07:38](#)):

Even if they've never had a student help them before, having a student ask that opens the door to them to say, "Well, maybe I could use your help, and that means you're interested in this." Even if that's not an area that you're going to pursue as a potential career, you're still going to gain skills that any employer is going to be interested in you having. It just takes you learning how, with our help, how to describe those experiences as they are relevant to the needs of that employer. So any research that you do at the undergraduate level or project that you do with a faculty member is relevant hireable work experience to put on your resume. Even if you think the context of that work is not relevant, the skills are going to be for sure.

Jack Armstrong ([08:27](#)):

Yeah, definitely. I think the great thing about William and Mary, and this is true at many schools around the country, but we have some really, really, really brilliant professors here really, really smart people. I took that for granted early on and I didn't realize how valuable they can be as I went on throughout my career here, in my academic career. I took a few government classes early on and ended up being a government major. A few of the professors I had had, I didn't really know I was going to go into that at the time, but they ended up being really helpful to me down the line when I got into my serious, really tough major courses/.

Jack Armstrong ([09:04](#)):

I could always go back to their office and say, "Hey, can you help me with this?" outlining papers, all that kinds of stuff. You just don't know how valuable those relationships can be down the line, even just a couple of years later. That was something that was huge for me because it was getting tutored by somebody who'd already been there and done that, and they were more than willing to help me, which I was really surprised as well.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([09:26](#)):

Right. And even further down the line, each of our faculty members have taught these classes before, which means they know alumni who are now gone from our institution, but still a part of the tribe. So they have the ability to connect you with their past students. If you tell them... We'll use government as an example. If you're really particularly interested in a topic that has to do with federal policy on a particular issue, and they can say, "A past student of mine interned with a lobbying firm and that's actually what they did their project on." You're not going to know that unless you tell them that you're interested in something. Unless you say, "This is what I think I might want to do a little bit more around or get some more experience with," is what allows them to say, "Oh, I know someone who does that." A lot of people think networking is all based on having to already know someone.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([10:27](#)):

Really, it's not about the people you already know. It's about the people they know, that they're then able to introduce you to, but they can only introduce you to them if you tell them what you're interested in. You don't have to have one thing that you're interested in in order to ask. You don't have to have already narrowed it down to that one thing you're going to do. It could be five different things. "These are all the different areas that I think I might want to explore a little bit more. Do you know anyone who's done that before that I could learn more from them?"

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([10:57](#)):

You're never asking them to get you an internship or to get you a job. You're asking them to give you advice and information on other people. The reason for that is that a lot of people can say, "No," because they don't have information about open opportunities. You want to ask them a question that they can definitely say, "Yes," to. Everyone can say, "Yes," to advice and information. Not everyone can say, "Yes," to a position that they currently know is open. If it's someone that you've just met, they're not going to be as invested in helping you with that part of the process yet.

Jack Armstrong ([11:36](#)):

Right. That's a great point. To build off that even more, especially I think freshmen, sophomores, the younger students don't necessarily think that they're in prime time to be networking. I know I for sure felt that way, and a lot of times when we think of networking, we're thinking of going to some big convention hall with your suit on and shaking a bunch of hands and handing out your business cards and all that, but really at least I've found the best type of networking is utilizing the people that are already in your lives already around you that get to know you and see work on a daily basis. You never know, you reach out to them who they might know, like you said, and that's something that I definitely took for granted and didn't even know I was doing at the time when I was in school here, but really, really helped me out and eventually taught me. I use those same skills in my professional life now when I have to go do those handshaking events.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([12:33](#)):

You hit the nail on the head right there because that is exactly all in networking is, is what you described as talking to the people who are already in your life who get to see you work on a daily basis, or are familiar with your abilities or your interests in some way. Those people are your network. The best example I have is also when a one student is telling another student that, "I think I'm interested in art therapy," and then that other students saying, "Oh, did you know that there's actually a class through the wellness center where they are teaching art therapy right now?" And that student is saying, "Oh, I didn't see that listed. Maybe I can talk to the instructor who's with that course for the semester." That is networking, just sharing information and advice around areas of interest is all it starts out as, and that's the easiest part of networking.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([13:29](#)):

The hard part is in staying in touch; like you said, having faculty members who you had taken a class with several semesters prior, but going back to them and sharing another question or updating them on an advice they gave you, or maybe sharing an article they might find interesting. It's on you to keep that conversation open. We suggest, especially as an underclassmen, it's something you could do once a month, once every two months just reaching back out to that person and not tapping them saying, "Hey. Know of any jobs yet?" Instead... Because that would not keep the conversation happy. Instead, it's like I said, updating them on advice I gave you. It's asking them another question, asking them to introduce

you to someone else who could give you another perspective. We actually have a whole page on our website if you go to [wm.edu/career](http://wm.edu/career) and you choose the student section networking, and then within that page, there's two different things that can be really helpful with us.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([14:38](#)):

One is under informational interviewing. There's a whole page of sample questions that you can ask someone about what they're researching or what their job is, how they got into their field. Then there's another page under professional correspondence that has strategies and samples for reaching out to people that you don't yet know. So that's definitely a way to get some practice around that messaging if you feel like you need it. Otherwise, it's just a natural conversation with someone that you're already seeing on a regular basis. But as you were mentioning with keeping in touch with people along the line, they are then more likely to think of you when they do hear of an opportunity. Say an alum comes to them and says, "I'm still needing to find some interns for this project. Do you know of anyone?" Then they can reach out to you and say, "Hey, you might want to contact this alum or this other faculty member who I know needs help on their research project." If you've kept in touch, then they're more likely to share resources with you as they find them.

Jack Armstrong ([15:53](#)):

Yeah. Great point. You just got to stay on their mind. You just got to stay on their mind, and then when the time comes, hopefully you make the short list. But we've talked a good bit about all the benefits to building those relationships, why it's important, all that stuff. The tough part now, that I kind of want to get into is how the heck do you do it in the age of everything's virtual? Even the in-person classes that we do have, I've not been to one. I've long graduated in whatever, it was long time ago, but I'm sure that extra curriculars hanging out around in the classroom probably isn't encouraged. I don't know. I would guess that. So how do these students now, and this is going to be more of like a brainstorming thing that I don't know either, how do these students go about building that relationship now with professors through virtual means?

Jack Armstrong ([16:44](#)):

The first thing that pops into my head is over communication because a lot of times on Zoom, we have a tendency, especially in the bigger Zoom rooms, to kind of just sit there maybe with our screen off, not say a whole lot, that kind of thing. So for me, I would think emailing, emailing, emailing, trying to just build a little conversation with the professor just so they can kind of get to know a little bit about you because that's harder now that we're not in person. See if you can maybe kind of set up a one-on-one Zoom with them during office hours or something like that. Pretty much the same ways that you would do it in person, but you have to take an extra step and really go above and beyond to figure that out.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([17:25](#)):

Right. I think you got two good examples there. Another one that came to mind to me is a lot of faculty are trying a variety of messaging formats or platforms that keep the conversation going outside the classroom or outside the class meetings. They're either using Slack, or they're using Teams, or they're using Google classroom or Blackboard. Many people are still using Blackboard as well. Even if the discussion outside of the class meetings is not required for your participation grade, participate in those things because that's where you're going to get recognized as well. That's where your interests can show and you might learn something that you didn't expect. I know it can take some more time to participate in those things and if they're not required, I know we'd all be less likely to do them, but that is another

way to engage with the TAs, with the faculty members and show interest in something that allows you to demonstrate your ability to take initiative, your work ethic, your professionalism. Those are things that you can demonstrate by doing that.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([18:42](#)):

It helps you stand out more when it comes to the grading process. It helps you stand out more when it comes to the referral process. When it comes to a faculty member trying to decide if I can give a referral to you for graduate school or for a research opportunity that you want to apply to, or for an internship because you're going to need references for those things. If you do the bare minimum of just showing up to class and getting the grade versus having these one-on-one sessions, participating in the extra things that are offered because they're not offering those as busy work, they're offering those as ways to engage you more deeply in the learning, and they're offering them as ways to try to create a community within the class that they we're hoping to have in person.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([19:39](#)):

But now, we're just trying to figure out how can I make sure that students know I'm accessible? How can I make sure students are getting as much out of the class as they would have if it were in person? So I can say that as someone who does instruct a program called MACE, which is a six week cumulative workshop series. It's a mini class, none of that stuff has added as busy work. It's all added to try to engage in another level. So the faculty members who are doing that are giving you that opportunity. Take advantage of it. Don't just say, "Oh yeah, that's something else I might do," or I'm not going to do that because I don't have to. That might be another way to build the relationship.

Jack Armstrong ([20:25](#)):

Definitely, and it's really like anything else. It's just going to take some extra effort. Whatever effort you're willing to put into it, you will see the rewards. I think the main takeaway is any communication, extra communication, rather with a professor is going to have its benefits, whether it's just sending them an email saying, "Hey, really enjoyed your class today. Looking forward to the next one," something like that. That's going to make you stand out a little bit. [crosstalk 00:20:51]

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([20:51](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I laugh because I have a sign in my office that is one of my favorite quotes. It's actually from Thomas Jefferson. It says, "I'm a great believer in luck. The harder I work, the more I seem to have of it." So the idea is that, yeah, I put in a little bit more effort here and there and things just start to seem to fall into my lap because I've shown the effort along the way. So that's a really good point of it's going to take a little bit more work, but you'll reap the benefits of it later, for sure.

Jack Armstrong ([21:21](#)):

Yeah. I wish I would have had that sign my freshman and sophomore year because it's crazy. I got a little older and I started trying in my classes and stuff. Then all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, my grades are getting better. It's a miracle." I guess that's just what we go through when we're younger. But yeah, there's something to be said for that and I think especially here at William and Mary, the professors, they reward your hard work because it's a tough school and it's- [crosstalk 00:21:48].

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([21:48](#)):

Absolutely.

Jack Armstrong ([21:49](#)):

... sometimes. I think that they know that because a lot of them, we have a lot of alums as professors, as well, and people have been for a long time. When they see students that are really trying and trying to reach out and trying to get better and find ways to improve, they're definitely going to help you out and you never know what those could eventually turn into those relationships.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([22:11](#)):

Keep in mind too, that many of you that are considering graduate school in your future, you will have to have recommendations from faculty members in order to do that. So this isn't just for people who are trying to connect to alumni who are in a variety of career paths. Graduate school is part of your career path as well. These faculty members, they might be alumni from William and Mary. They might be alumni from other institutions, which means they know people who work at other colleges, which means their network then expands beyond William and Mary alumni and into their own personal connections of who they know through their academic departments, through their own graduate programs and can help you learn more about the different departments and colleges that you might be considering by having you connect to other people as well.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([23:05](#)):

That's a process that helps... It helps with the admissions process if you've already talked to faculty members, they can help you through that process and give you more information as well that might give you insight tips. It might give you another look on your application because again, you've taken the initiative to learn more about their department and their program and those connections can also be through your faculty members.

Jack Armstrong ([23:35](#)):

Yeah, if we haven't convinced you guys to- [crosstalk 00:23:38] Well, I think I just didn't do a good enough job, but lots of great reasons and a lot of good information. It's like we said, put in the effort, do the things that you need to do and the professors will reward you and you'll see the benefits down the line. That's really all there is to say about it I wish there was some magic skeleton key, but it's just going to be practicing and building relationships and it'll pay off in networking and all that kind of stuff. You got to be able to do it. [crosstalk 00:24:14]

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([24:13](#)):

I just want to reiterate the resources that we have in our website that people may not think to use for this purpose because it is under networking. You may not think to use it for thinking about how to have a conversation with your faculty member one-on-one if it's not just about a class project, instead, if it's about learning about their field and who they might know else in the field. That is definitely a strategy that you can get from our website again, under the professional correspondence and informational interview, both you'd find under networking within the student section of our website.

Jack Armstrong ([24:53](#)):

Awesome. Yeah, a great resource to have. Definitely go check them out over the career center. It's something else that I really wish I would've done more of when I was a student here, but I urge everybody to do that now because I've seen how helpful it can be. So we are closing in on, I think, the 25 minute mark here-

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([25:11](#)):

Okay.

Jack Armstrong ([25:11](#)):

... and we like to keep these short and sweet because people, my age and younger's attention spans, they can't cut it anymore. So thank you guys for listening. Kelly, really, really can't thank you enough for being on here and helping me out today. A lot of great information. [crosstalk 00:25:28]

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([25:27](#)):

Absolutely.

Jack Armstrong ([25:28](#)):

All right.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy ([25:30](#)):

Thank you.

Shelly Laurenzo ([25:37](#)):

That's a wrap on our second episode. Thank you so much for tuning in. Next week, we'll be discussing the upcoming election. To check out our show notes, please visit our website: [decipher.blogs.wm.edu](http://decipher.blogs.wm.edu). Take care.