

Speaker 1: Hello, and welcome to the Decipher Podcast. This podcast is hosted by William & 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.

Speaker 2: Navigating college life is no walk in the park and being a William & Mary student in 2020 is no different. Join experts from around campus as they discuss ways to decipher common college experiences.

Shelly Laurenzo: [00:00:30] Hello and welcome to the Decipher Podcast. I'm here today with Heather and we are going to talk about different ways and different approaches to thinking about what to do with your summer.

Heather Deere: Yeah, I'm really excited about this conversation. And some may be thinking, is it already time to think about what I'm going to do in the summer? But I find that now [00:01:00] is the perfect time to really start planning and strategizing for what those couple of months are going to look like.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes, I think so too. I think it's a little bit challenging this year because typically when I talk to students about this, we talk about it in terms of spring break is a really good opportunity to sit down and work through these things and we're not observing that traditional week off this year, instead we're having those spring break days. But I think this is something on a spring break day over the weekend, whenever, a Friday afternoon when you have some downtime, [00:01:30] that's a good opportunity to sit down and start sketching out, what it is that you want to do with your summer. Like you said, Heather, now's a good time to start looking ahead and planning ahead.

Heather Deere: Definitely and there a lot of options that students need to think through and plan for. So I'm excited for us to talk about some of those options and what to think about things that maybe they didn't have to think about in pre-COVID years that may right now we need to think about. So those are [00:02:00] some interesting restrictions and in considerations that students might need to make.

Shelly Laurenzo: So I think the first thing that I talk to students about when we're talking about what to do with summer plans is kind of what are the conditions, what does their environment look like? So for example, do they have geographic restrictions? Do they have an off-campus apartment here in Williamsburg that they're still paying rent for in the summer so it makes sense for them to stay in Williamsburg [00:02:30] for the summer. Versus are they living on campus right now and maybe they're just going home for the summer. So I think the first question to kind of think through is what are your geographic restrictions to the types of opportunities you can look for in the summer?

Heather Deere: And I think something that's really special about this summer and something we experienced last summer is a lot of remote opportunities. So there might even be more options this summer because companies and organizations are pivoting

[00:03:00] their internship experiences to be remote experiences. So thinking about whether or not it's an in-person or remote opportunity could open some doors that maybe weren't available before.

Shelly Laurenzo: Most definitely. I mean, even here at William & Mary, we are offering remote summer courses. So a student could totally go home or go wherever for the summer and still be able to take William & Mary courses still be able to make progress on their degree regardless of their geographic location. So that's [00:03:30] a good point Heather, that in some ways there could potentially be more remote opportunities this summer than previously. So kind of keeping that in mind when you think about where you'll be this summer as geography may or may not make a difference in terms of what your plans are.

Heather Deere: Definitely. And I think a good question too, to think about first, is what are the experiences that you're hoping to have? Are you hoping to have more of those research-based experiences? Are you looking to have a really specific experience [00:04:00] in the field or industry that you're interested in joining? Are you open to different opportunities or are you just like, I really don't care. I just need something to do this summer because I'm going to get bored. So I think it's an important question to ask yourself, at the end of the summer, what am I hoping to walk away with in terms of experiences? And what's important to me as I think about where I want to be and the steps to get there.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes. And I can also foresee instances where students maybe just want a break in their summer. [00:04:30] We've been working at a really fast clip. We had an accelerated fall semester. We have a spring semester where yes, we are observing spring break days but it's not that continuous break that we are used to and so maybe part of what you think about when you think about your summer is yes, I do need a week or whatever that is with nothing. With nothing going on, no internships, no classes, no research, no working. So I think that's important too, to kind [00:05:00] of take a step back and look and see what do you want to do but also what do you need? Do you need to take a break because that's definitely something to consider with the time off you have in the summer.

Heather Deere: And I think that goes into the question of geographic restrictions and remote versus not remote. We've been doing things remotely for a while now coming up on one year. And so maybe students are looking for more of that in-person opportunity [00:05:30] to learn and be with other people. And maybe that's really fulfilling as opposed to there might be more opportunities to do things remotely but maybe that's not the most fulfilling experience over the summer. So that's an interesting question to consider.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes and I think a lot of this... We've kind of been dancing around this Heather, is this kind of, how are you approaching COVID protocols and COVID safety protocols? What is important for you? Do you need to be more [00:06:00] kind of socially and physically isolated because of your own health conditions, health

conditions of loved ones versus maybe you go home for the summer and your parents have been vaccinated and so thinking about what your COVID safety protocols look like, what the COVID safety protocols look like for the people that you'll be living with this summer, if you're on campus versus off campus. We have a very clear conditions about what it means to be on campus, [00:06:30] but off campus obviously you have a little bit more freedom and autonomy to make those decisions. So thinking about COVID safety protocols and what they look like can very much feed into what your summer experience is going to look like.

Heather Deere: Definitely, because I think about the state of Virginia and other states are doing things very differently so some students might be going back to states with no COVID safety protocols in place from a state mandated [00:07:00] level. And so I think it's interesting to think about, am I comfortable with that? And so I'm comfortable going to work somewhere in person or would I prefer to do something remotely and I think those are great questions to consider as you're making some choices about how to spend your summer.

Shelly Laurenzo: Most definitely. And I think the other thing when I'm talking to students about plans for the summer is also just the financial reality of all of this. If [00:07:30] there are great opportunities that are unpaid opportunities, does that make sense? Can you do that versus no, I need to earn money this summer. I need a job or an internship that's paid so I can save money or take care of yourself or others, whatever your financial reality looks like. So I think that's another important piece to this puzzle is being really conscious and aware of what your financial reality [00:08:00] looks like.

Heather Deere: Definitely, and I learned of a new resource recently that I thought would be interesting for us to chat about, some unpaid student experiences because the Cohen Career Center has funding for unpaid summer experiences. It's \$4,000 per undergraduate student and applications are due on April 15th so I think that's an awesome opportunity to explore if you have this internship and you're really excited about it but concerned about [00:08:30] how you're going to manage the financial reality of being in an unpaid summer experience. I think that's an awesome resource that students can look into.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes, no, that's so important to know what your resources are when you're making these decisions. We're kind of just posing the questions or posing things to think about but obviously we're not the experts on all the specific details based off of how you answer those questions. So yes, the Cohen Career Center is an amazing resource and especially for students that are [00:09:00] exploring unpaid opportunities, applying for those scholarship funds can really make a big difference in terms of if that unpaid experience will work for you or not. So I think that's a great resource that's available to our students.

Heather Deere: Definitely. And I think too, how you answer that question determines what resources to reach out to. But something I think is always important and

wearing my hat as assistant director of parent and family programs, [00:09:30] I think it's always important to have an open conversation with your family about what you anticipate your summer plans are because a lot of frustration arises from unmet expectations. And I think it's important for both parties to understand what the expectation is for the summer. In terms of me as a student, I would prefer that my summer looks like this, and this is why these summer experiences might be important to me and communicating that with your family can go a long way because they have their own network that they can [00:10:00] tap into to help you and help support you as you find those experiences.

But it would be really unfortunate if you hope to plan your summer doing a lot of nothing to recover from this last semester and family expects that you're going to be busy all summer working or have an internship. And I think now is the time to have some of those conversations of, this is what I think my summer is going to look like. What do you think about that?

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes, yes. Or especially thinking about if there are family expectations around caretaking [00:10:30] responsibilities. I know a lot of our students have younger siblings or other younger family members and there could be some expectations from family members that when their student comes home, they'll be providing some caretaking. And so, again, like you said, Heather, just having those conversations early about what you, as the student want your summer to look like with your family members, with your loved ones can really help to start paving some of those things out.

Heather Deere: [00:11:00] For sure. And I think too, over the last year, we've seen a lot of students take on some of those caretaking roles when they're at home because we're all kind of in a all hands on deck situation. We have young ones at home and maybe they're still doing some of that, families doing remote work from home and everyone's at home and so I think it's a good idea to have a conversation about what those expectations are.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes, yes. I think so we've talked about students who might be considering internship opportunities [00:11:30] and obviously the Cohen Career Center is kind of our go-to resource on campus to help students search for opportunities and make decisions about those opportunities, I think that's a great resource. I think another thing that I would like students to consider, or that they might already be considering are things around kind of their academic plans and academic goals. So obviously students can summer classes and we are offering remote options so that might be more feasible for students, but other things to think about might be research [00:12:00] opportunities or looking at scholarship opportunities. So that's where the Charles Center would be kind of your go-to resource for that.

So if you're thinking about anything related to research or scholarship opportunities, taking advantage of our colleagues and the Charles Center and

their expertise can be really helpful to figure out what's going to make the most sense for you, what's available for students that are already in their major, or their minor, whatever that is for [00:12:30] them talking to your faculty advisor can be another great resource too, to see what's going on this summer. What are some things that maybe they could take part in? There are some departments that do have remote research opportunities. So again, if remote makes sense for you because of your own geographic restrictions or because how you're observing COVID safety protocols like Heather was saying at the beginning, there's, more remote options really than there's ever been before. So [00:13:00] don't think that you can't look at something or can't explore something because of geographic restrictions, because again, there might be an opportunity to do those things remotely.

Heather Deere: Definitely. And I also, while you were thinking, I was thinking of how students can study in DC and how there are options there and that might be an important geographic consideration for our students who live in Northern Virginia. I think there are a ton of opportunities there for students as well. When I think about summer [00:13:30] courses, is there anything new this summer that maybe we should touch on for students or opportunities? What are the kinds of courses that they can get out of the way this summer?

Shelly Laurenzo: Sure, that's a great question. So the summer schedule is already posted on open course list and registration for summer courses starts March 22nd. Some of the things that are new this summer that haven't previously been available are there will be a 100 course [00:14:00] and I believe two, 150. So typically we don't offer 100's or 150's in the summer but we are offering them this summer. So for students who maybe just joined us in the spring semester, so they're taking their 100 or their 150 right now, they could take the other one this summer. So that would be a really great opportunity. Or for students with the 100's and 150's, you have to earn a C minus are better to have fulfilled that course requirement. And maybe students that were just shy of that [00:14:30] mark again, still need to take the 100 or 150, summer might be a good time to do that.

So those are some things in particular to think about. Another requirement that's available for students to pursue in the summer are COLL 300's. So we know in normal, non-COVID times, a lot of our students meet their COLL 300 requirement through study abroad. With uncertainty around study abroad opportunities, or [00:15:00] again, with your own COVID safety protocols, maybe study abroad just doesn't make sense for you right now. Or maybe you're hopeful that you can do it at some point in the coming year or years, but want to meet that requirement now, those COLL 300 courses will be available this summer for students to take.

So I think specifically looking at the COLL curriculum, these are courses every student needs to take regardless of their major or minor or, whatever. [00:15:30] If you need a 100, a 150, or a 300, then looking at taking a course this

summer might be a great option for you. And again, a lot of these courses do have a remote section. So even if you're in Williamsburg, you can still take a course or if you're not in Williamsburg, no matter where you are, that's still an option available for you.

Heather Deere: That's awesome. It sounds like students have a lot of choices and a lot of flexibility this summer in terms [00:16:00] of what their options are. So I feel like given the amount of time between now and when that summer really begins is perfect time to think through all of those different options.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah, I think so, too. I think like you were saying, Heather, we want to start early. Now's a good time to start thinking about these things. So do some reflection, do some research, talk to your family, to your loved ones, talk to your faculty advisor, reach out to Cohen, reach out to the Charles Center, [00:16:30] take advantage of all these resources to help you make those decisions. So I think-

Heather Deere: For sure.

Shelly Laurenzo: What would be, Heather, kind of one piece of advice you would want to impart with students as they are working on their summer plans? What's one piece of advice you would want them to keep in mind?

Heather Deere: Well, I think it's a little bit about what we touched on earlier is that William & Mary students have the tendency to be pedal to the metal all the time and going full [00:17:00] speed ahead. And I think the summer is an opportunity to both do something interesting and new and exciting, while at the same time taking a few moments just for yourself to maybe recover from the last year because it's been a long, hard year for so many of us in many different ways. And so I would say while there might be an inclination to get all of these courses out of the way or to do this really high stress internship that is going to be [00:17:30] really great experience on a resume, I think it's also important to consider you need to take care of yourself as well on some level. So how are you planning to do that? So make sure that your plan includes time for yourself to kind of recover from the experience that has been 2020, 2021. f

Shelly Laurenzo: I completely agree. And that was my tip as well, is when you're thinking about your summer plans, make sure you build in time to [00:18:00] take care of yourself. Maybe there are some books you've been dying to read for fun and just haven't had a chance because of your coursework or because of everything else going on in your life so maybe go ahead and start working on that reading list for the summer of things that you want to read for fun. Same thing when it comes to other forms of entertainment too. Thinking about movies or TV, what's on the streaming services. Again, maybe there are things that have come out, podcasts, that's another good one. Maybe there's different forms [00:18:30] of entertainment that have come out over the past year and you just haven't had the time to digest these things.

So, kind of take a look and see what can you fit into your summer schedule. I think the other thing I would recommend too, kind of in the same vein of taking care of yourself and giving yourself a break is start thinking about too who are some folks that maybe you just haven't had an opportunity to catch up with this year. Again, the pace of our fall semester and our spring semester can [00:19:00] make it really hard to maintain some of those relationships. Or it might be harder to maintain some relationships than others based off of what you're involved with. So start thinking about what are some people I haven't been in touch with in a while, or are some people that I'm just dying to reconnect with and write it out, write that list of folks out and then start thinking about how can you do that this summer.

If those are friends from home and you're going to be home, okay, can you guys connect in the summer? If they're friends that are [00:19:30] not geographically near you, okay, maybe you guys can schedule a walk and talk on the phone during that time or a Zoom to catch up again, whatever works for you. But I think, think about those folks that you love dearly but just haven't had the time for. Carve some time out this summer. Those relationships are really important and be really intentional about the people that you spend time with this summer.

Heather Deere: I think that's fantastic advice. While you were talking I was thinking of [00:20:00] back in the day when I did my own summer internship experience, and I was making that list of where do I want to be? How much money should I make during the summer? All of those kind of non-negotiables for my internship list, I had this dream that it would be on the beach somewhere so that after work, I could go to the beach all the time. Did it play out like that? No, but it was a fun dream to have. So maybe that's one of your considerations is where are you [00:20:30] going to be not just because you're able to get there, but because the place you're going to is fun and offers things to do outside of work that would bring you a lot of joy.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yes. I like that idea. Yes, I think being intentional about creating joy this summer I think is really, really important. Well thank you so much Heather, for being willing to talk to me today about summer plans and I hope this was useful for students and as always on our website, we'll have links to a lot of these resources.

Heather Deere: [00:21:00] It was wonderful being here. Thank you.

Speaker 5: Thank you so much for tuning into this episode of the decipher podcast. For our show notes, please visit our website, [decipher.blogs.wm.edu](http://decipher.blogs.wm.edu). Take care.