

THE BOEHLY CENTER

FOR EXCELLENCE IN FINANCE

CAREERS IN FINANCE PODCAST

EPISODE 19: ONLINE FINANCE

Jeffrey Rich

Welcome to Careers in Finance, presented by the Boehly Center for Excellence and Finance at William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. This podcast will explore various areas of the financial services industry, career paths in finance, and other practical insights that will help students better understand and prepare for professional success in the field of finance. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast and catch future episodes as we explore the field of finance. And now your host, Morgan Hutter.

Morgan Hutter

Welcome back. Today's Prepared for Success podcast is about William & Mary's brand new online Masters of Science in Finance. We are excited to welcome Associate Dean for Online Programs and the Executive Director for the Center for Online Learning, Pam Suzadail. Welcome, Pam.

Pam Suzadail

Hi. Thanks, Morgan.

Morgan Hutter

Yeah glad you're here. Pam, so I know you had served as the director of online programs since 2014 when he joined the Raymond A. Mason School of Business after being the online MBA and MS programs at Syracuse. But why don't you share a little bit more about yourself? So our listeners get to know you a little bit?

Pam Suzadail

Sure. I've been in this part of higher education since the beginning of my career. I started and continuing it at Syracuse, and my focus has always been on serving distance students, adult learners, working professional students and worked my way through Syracuse, worked over at the business school, as you mentioned, for a few years. And I saw this great opportunity here at William & Mary to really do something special here. Take the history and the legacy of William & Mary and be able to do something really innovative. And so I took the opportunity, and I packed up my family and my bags and moved down to Williamsburg to help us fully launch the first online MBA program.

Morgan Hutter

We're lucky to have you. So thank you so much for taking that risk and coming down. I mean, I know we've had a chance to overlap here at Mason, and it's incredible how often your name comes up as somebody that has just been so innovative and somebody that has been such a rockstar here on campus. So thank you for all that you're doing for our students and for our

adult learners, which is a great segue into this brand new online Masters of Science in Finance that's going on. So at what point did William & Mary say, hey, we need an advanced program for finance.

Pam Suzadail

It's an interesting question. So as I mentioned, we launched the online MBA in 2015. It was the first online program at the institution and huge success. We doubled our enrollment projections for the first year. And so we started to think about what would online look like in the future for the Mason School of Business? What other programs could we do? What would make sense for our students and for our faculty? And so we really took a really hard look at some of the market data on what students were looking for, labor trends, and the Masters of Finance really showed at the very top came to the very top. Students really want this degree. If you look at GMAC Research, it's the number one specialty master's degree that business students want to take? Yeah, I know it's great. It's growth in the labor market. Companies are looking for more people with this finance background. And so we really started early about 2018, 2019, talking to our faculty about what were the potentials of doing a finance degree here. So we put it in our plans. But it really didn't start to take a real focus of our work until about two years ago, when we started working with Professor Scott Gibson, the area ahead of the Finance Department, the finance area here and really starting to work with him about what would this look like if we wanted to do finance. And it went from there.

Morgan Hutter

So in this 2018, 2019 kind of started two years ago now. So I mean, this has been evolution. It sounds like of how this has taken place. So what will the primary focus of the program be, or how long will it take to complete? Can you kind of go into some details about the setup of it?

Pam Suzadail

The program is four semesters, so you can complete it in just a little bit over the year. The focus, the degree is an MS Finance, a general MS Finance, but we do offer a track in real estate for the program. We saw that there was a real niche need to offer an online real estate opportunity. So we do have those courses built into the program that students can elect to take. The other part of what we're doing with this program, which is unique to all of our online programs, is we're building in stackable certificates that we are right in the process now of getting approved through SCHEV. And so there is three areas of focus in those certificates. There is a real estate finance certificate, there's an investment manage certificate, and a corporate finance certificate. The certificates are a little smaller. They're built on the same classes that we have in the degree, but students can complete them in two semesters, and then once they complete them, they can use those courses to go on and earn the full degree.

Morgan Hutter

Wow. That sounds like a lot of flexibility, too, for people's personalized schedules, whatever it might be, that they can still come out with some sort of education level on something. And then if they want to expand and get the full master's, they can sounds flexible.

Pam Suzadail

Yeah. So it's very much the focus of what we try to do here is the flexibility. And it's really what adult learners look for, just in terms of the credentials that they're earning. But also the way that the courses are delivered. All of our courses are asynchronous, so students can take them. Students from all over the world can take our courses. We've seen students enrolled all over the world in our online MBA, and we expect similar enrollment patterns for our finance degree. And the asynchronous component really does allow students to fit it into their busy work life. They don't have to be online at any certain time.

Morgan Hutter

Right, so talking about students or potential students that might be listening to this podcast, so who should explore this option?

Pam Suzadail

Sure. And we thought really hard about this when we create the curriculum. We really do think about who our students are going to be to make sure that we're creating content that is really what they need. And so we're really looking for students to have a few years of experience under their belt. A few years out of undergrad could be in finance, but could not be. We also have the courses are set up so that if a student really is thinking about transitioning into finance, they can get the foundational skills in this program that they need. But we also have some more of the advanced courses for those that have been in finance for a couple of years and are really looking to be promoted into the next level of their companies or their organizations. In terms of geography. As I mentioned online, asynchronous anybody across the country, we're right now in 22 States in our other programs. And so, we really do create an opportunity for students from everywhere to be able to take the program.

Morgan Hutter

So, Pam, a follow-up question to that. So I know that you said the hope is to have a few years of experience. Right. We see that a lot with our master's programs, but there are sometimes that option for even a current student if they want to do the three in one or the four in one, right, add on to their year. Is that possible? Or because it's an online program, it's a little bit different? Or what does that look like for a student that might be listening now?

Pam Suzadail

Sure, it's a little bit different. And we typically don't see that in the online space. We have very few people asking for that in the online space. It's typically students that have been out a few years, three in one. This program, again, is four semesters. The three-in-one programs typically like you're adding on that one more year of being in the classroom face to face in the classroom, not saying that they couldn't take the program, but it's typically not an area that we see a lot of interest in.

Morgan Hutter

Got it. Thanks so much for going over that. So when we're talking about these courses, I know you mentioned there'll be different tracks or these certificate programs. You mentioned investment management, corporate finance, real estate. So when you look at the overall online

program, who will be teaching these courses, is it mostly tenured faculty at Mason, or is it across adjunct or kind of what's this look like?

Pam Suzadail

It's all of our tenured and a few clinicals of our faculty. All of our full-time faculty and we have a great group of finance faculty that have been really excited to get started. Like I said, Scott Gibson is in it. Mike Seiler is teaching some of the real estate classes. Katherine Guthrie is teaching one of our classes. We also are bringing the finance area is working collaboratively with our accounting area to do some of the financial statements of financial modeling, of course. So really good collaborative work is working across our faculty areas. So, yeah, it's a great group of faculty.

Morgan Hutter

Yeah. I would say the names you just listed. I mean, I know our undergrads work a lot with all those faculty, and we at the Boehly Center work closely with a lot of those faculty, and that's an impressive lineup. So Congratulations.

Pam Suzadail

It was a pleasure to work with them over the last couple of years.

Morgan Hutter

Yeah. I think that's something that William & Mary and you have some background at some other universities. So maybe you'll say it's similar, but I find that hard to believe. I think that what the faculty are willing to do here to help the programs, help our students is instrumental and unprecedented. So it's great to hear that that's consistent with what you're finding, too.

Pam Suzadail

I would agree William & Mary has a special group of faculty, and they're very committed to student success here and making sure that the classroom experience is at the highest caliber, and that's really translated into the online space. We have the same feedback in our online classes as we do in our residential classes in regards to that.

Morgan Hutter

Yeah, I love hearing that. So if we do have listeners that are interested in learning more or ready to sign up, I mean, this is starting this fall, right. So this is happening right now.

Pam Suzadail

Yeah, 23 new students are starting on Monday, so we're very excited.

Morgan Hutter

Okay. So I assume this semester is full, but if students do want to, can they come in half-year, or do they have to start in the fall? What does that look like if students are interested?

Pam Suzadail

Sure. So we have three starts a year, fall, spring, and summer. So the next class will be starting in early January. Rolling admissions so you can apply any time for any semester within the next year. So you can kind of plan your time and plan when you want to start and work with our admissions team on what makes sense for you and all of the materials. The applications are online. Or you can go through our website on the Mason School website. You'll see links to our online programs and our finance program, and you'll be able to get more information about the degree, but also the links of where to inquire and how to start your application.

Morgan Hutter

Well, I'm thrilled, because this will be exciting, too. Once you get this first cohort done, we'll have some testimonials, and we'll be able to maybe bring back one of those students to talk on the podcast and hear how it went.

Pam Suzadail

Yeah. Absolutely. Online students are always excited to be engaged, we found. They want to be able to contribute and be considered at the same engagement as you see a residential student. Sometimes even more because they are looking for opportunities to be able to contribute.

Morgan Hutter

Well, thank you so much, Pam. That's fantastic. Before we close out today, I just want to give the opportunity for you to share. Is there anything else you want to add or anything else that our listeners might know is coming down the pike or anything with regard to future opportunities with online programs?

Pam Suzadail

Sure. Yeah. Right now, we focus now on our accounting degree. And so our Accounting Department has also caught the online bug. And have been working on a new online math degree, which actually go to a faculty vote this September. And so we're getting excited to launch that in September of August of 22, we'll be launching the accounting.

Morgan Hutter

This is great. I can see the expansions happening here for all these different departments. So Congratulations.

Pam Suzadail

Yes. It's been like a little wildfire. We start a little bit in one corner, and it's just kind of a spreading on the faculty floor.

Morgan Hutter

As you said, it's clear to see that the market data is there and the labor trends are there, and there's an interest. So Congratulations. With that, I want to thank Pam again for joining and thank you our listeners for joining us today. For the Careers in Finance podcast at the Raymond A. Mason School of Business at William & Mary with the Boehly Center. And we'll look forward to having you tune in next time. Thanks, Pam, and thank everybody for joining.

Pam Suzadail
Thanks, Morgan.

Jeffrey Rich

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