

# THE BOEHLY CENTER

FOR EXCELLENCE IN FINANCE

CAREERS IN FINANCE PODCAST

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## EPISODE 27: THE FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE

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### Male Voice

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

Hello again to the Careers in Finance podcast. Excited you're here. We are going to dive into a little bit of a different topic today. We're not necessarily going to talk about a specific industry, but this is a topic and opportunity for graduating seniors. So for those seniors that are graduating in December and sticking around until their friends graduate in May, or maybe if you graduated in May, but, you know, you're kind of sticking around Williamsburg for an extra semester, we have this great program at the Boehly Center called Post Baccalaureate Fellowship. So I have two fantastic past fellows on the call, Abbey Doski, and Alhassan. Also welcome. Alhassan and Abbey.

### Abbey Doski

Thank you.

### Alhassan Ouf

Hey, Morgan. Great to be here.

### Morgan Hutter

Glad you're here. Thank you so much. So why don't we start with just some quick introductions? So, Abbey, do you want to just give a high fly on who you are and your fellow experience?

### Alhassan Ouf

Yeah, absolutely. So I graduated from William & Mary in 2016 but technically graduated in December of 2015. I was a finance major and psychology minor at William & Mary. And knew that I wanted to go into business and had lined up a job in consulting and was ready to graduate early. But knew that I wanted to stick around in Williamsburg and just kind of enjoy my senior year and had wrapped up what I wanted to do from an academic perspective and wanted to actually do some work that felt like it was going to be really tangible and make an impact on William & Mary before I left, I was fortunate enough to have worked in the Boehly Center throughout my willing to marry career, and so I was kind of made aware of the post

bachelorette fellow position through the then director of the Boehly Center and was really excited about it. And my fellowship was mostly focused on the Women's Stock Pitch and Leadership Summit when I was there. That was just an idea, and my fellowship was basically focused on launching the first annual of that event, which was a really rewarding opportunity and something that I'm so glad to see has continued on for all these years afterwards.

### Morgan Hutter

It definitely has, in fact, for me, even planning now for this coming up. So thank you so much. Welcome, all the fun.

### Alhassan Ouf

Hey, great to be here. So similar to Abbey, I was a William & Mary student, so I studied finance, and I had an accounting concentration, and I graduated in January of 2021. And so, between January 2021 and when my Harris Williams job was slated to start in July of 2021. I had some time to fill. And I had heard about the fellowship program from a number of past fellows and also from Rita and from Morgan. And I thought it would have been a great opportunity for me and something that would be an opportunity to apply some real-world experience. And so, I decided to apply and was fortunate enough to get the position. And while I was a fellow, I worked on a program called the Financial Literacy Program, which was something that I'd been passionate about my entire time at William & Mary, just understanding financial literacy and helping people with their finances and helping them understand their finances. And so that was my primary focus throughout the fellowship. It was an amazing experience. I would totally do it again. And yeah, super excited to dig in.

### Morgan Hutter

Well, thank you. And that Financial Literacy program has been around since the Pastoral Tax started it, so thank you so much for all that you did to keep it up and running and kind of revamp it to what it is now. And we just finished our first semester since Alhassan's efforts, and it was incredibly successful. So I really appreciate everything that you've done and Abbey, kind of coming to you. Women's Soccer Leadership Summit, so what was that like to be a part of this brand new vision and idea to be on the front lines of getting this started?

### Abbey Doski

Yeah, it was crazy. It was like launching a startup, and now, being a position I'm in, I'm super passionate about entrepreneurship and looking to make a Pivot into that space. I'm so fortunate to have had this opportunity because it really just kind of broke me and gave me that initial experience of what it's like to really start something from the ground for. So we basically came in with a friend of William & Mary, had donated \$20,000 seed funding and said, hey, I want this money to go towards something big for women in leadership. That was pretty much the only direction we had. And so the first few weeks, even before I started officially as a fellow, in November, December of the year prior, we were kind of talking about, like, what could this be? What is the best use of this money? And we landed on a leadership summit. And at that time, back in 2015 2016, smart Women's securities was also just getting started at William & Mary at the business school. And so we thought it was a really great opportunity to kind of merge the two, merge women in Business and Smart Women's securities and do not just the Leadership Summit, but also a stock pitch competition. And not just that, but the nation's first female-only

stock pitch competition. And so it was really fun to be able to really quickly get this group of people with different perspectives and just levels of experience. We went overnight from being just me and the then director of the Boy Center, Julie Agnew, to a couple of the students who were on the Women in Business Leadership team, and a couple of students from Smart Women securities, some employees of William & Mary that sat on the Alumni Council, people who are more involved in the administrative side of Boehly. So very quickly, we had this band of ten or 15 people that became our, like, core kind of doing team. And then we also assembled a team of advisors, and these were more high-powered industry alumni professionals who we had monthly check-ins with to help kind of steer us and guide us and make sure that we were, you know, checking the right boxes and doing this the right way. And you could tell really early on that this was going to be big, and we wanted to do it right, but we wanted to really go big, and we were not holding back and saying, oh, it's the first year, we'll just see how it goes. There was just so much freedom and autonomy to really make it what we wanted to make it. And I had a lot of fun having these ideas and hearing these ideas in the brainstorming sessions and then figuring out how to make them come to fruition. It was such a blast.

### Morgan Hutter

It's one of our signature events. Here we are now, seven years later, and we're still doing this event. So congratulations and thank you. We're now international teams that come, and it's just really taken off, really, thanks to your creativity and vision that you and Professor Agnew had, and thank you so much for your efforts. And you know to Professor Agnew as well. So it sounds like the fellow experience kind of provides this opportunity, especially kind of to both of you, to maybe have ownership, have autonomy. What do you kind of say to that? Did you enjoy that process?

### Alhassan Ouf

Yeah, I mean, just speaking for myself, obviously, being an undergraduate student requires a certain level of autonomy and independence because you make your own study schedule, you decide what to prioritize, and it's structured in a manner such that there are deadlines. The fellowship, on the other hand, is slightly more open-ended, which I think for students who are transitioning into the workforce full-time, presents a perfect opportunity to get an early glimpse into what your life is going to be like going forward in a positive sense because you get to prioritize what you need to prioritize and you get to shape the work that you're doing. And I just feel like for me. Personally, the level of independence that I was able to have when it came to the project I was working on really helped me out when I started my job full-time. And so I will just say overall that that transition was very positive for my end.

### Abbey Doski

Yes. Just to build on that, I completely agree. And I think when you think about life as a student and compare it to life as a working professional; there are some things that you really don't learn until you're on the job. And I think this Fellow program does a fantastic job of giving you those opportunities. So even something as simple as like when you're a Fellow, there's no transcript or rubric or grading metric to judge. Like, OK, how am I doing here? Right? Like, there is no directive. Like check these boxes, do these things, and you'll get an A. And so it's much more up to you to figure out, OK, how am I going to do this? How am I going to make an impact? How am I going to do a good job? And that is can be a little bit disorienting if you're used to just taking a lot of tests and getting grades and kind of knowing exactly what to put in

and knowing what you'll get out of it; that can feel a little different. And it's also, you know, a different thing to have a job and have a workload that you balance and have to figure out how to communicate to your supervisor.

### Abbey Doski

Right. As a student, you are an independent contributor, right? You are putting in energy and time, and effort, and you are learning as a person. And maybe you have group work where you're learning in a team environment, but at the end of the day, your impact is pretty limited. Whereas in a job, especially in a solo role, what you're doing has implications throughout the whole business school and the whole community. So if you don't do something, it doesn't just affect you; it doesn't just, you know, you don't just get a bad grade on one test, right? It has lasting implications for the whole school. So having a little bit more of that responsibility for me was a really big motivator. And so spending 30 hours a week studying versus spending 30 hours a week working as a Fellow, I found it much more rewarding to do that work as a Fellow where I was having a bigger impact beyond just myself.

### Alhassan Ouf

Yeah. And to add on to that, I think obviously I made some great points. One additional item that I would consider is that, as a Fellow, you are encouraged to leverage prior materials that the Boehly Center has put together, right? And so when you think about being an undergraduate student, you're essentially just taking a class and doing what you need to do to do well in that class and learning the material, right? But you're not going to necessarily leverage materials from different classes because those might not be as relevant. As a Fellow and when you're working on a civic project, you get to see what's worked well as far as other projects go and what hasn't worked as well. And that skill of being able to look at outside items and being able to apply that to your specific project is super valuable, regardless of what organization or role you're in. And so I'll just add that that has been something that's really helping you out going forward.

### Morgan Hutter

Love it. And Abbey, I like that you added the 30 hours compared to being a student, the 30 hours being a Fellow. I'll also add, if you didn't mention it yet, that the Fellow position was paid. So you are getting paid to work for the Boehly center. So it's really a six-month period of 1400 hours, whichever, sorry, 14 hours comes first. So usually, it's like a January to June or January to May time frame. So when you get a parking pass, a staff parking pass, which I know is a big deal for students. So, Alison, I'm going to start with you. You mentioned the word skills, and you were just kind of talking a little bit about that. But starting with you going to Abbey, what are some of those key skills that you think the fellowship helps you develop your home?

### Alhassan Ouf

So, I mean, the biggest thing that was most relevant to me was communication. And obviously, I was a Fellow in the midst of COVID, and so I did it remotely from my childhood bedroom, and that was obviously a much different experience than prior fellows had had. Right. But just like everyone adjusted to COVID and work remotely, the fellowship position adjusted in that manner, too, for that period of time. And so for me, communication and just like making sure that my team members and my supervisors were aware of what I was doing and whether I

needed help on certain things, and what questions I had. So that skill of communication for me was the number one biggest item. I would say the other two things are independence and resourcefulness. And so they kind of go hand in hand, but being able to be independent and to think about what you need to do while at the same time balancing that with being able to ask questions and seek help when you need it, I think those two items go hand in hand pretty well. And so when I kind of think about this holistically, right? The three biggest things I learned from being a Fellow were number one, communicating effectively.

### Alhassan Ouf

Number two being independent. And number three, supplementing being independent while being resourceful.

### Abbey Doski

Yeah, I think for me, one of the bigger things that I learned that I think I was pretty naive to before getting experience as a Fellow was the value in engaging stakeholders and how to engage different stakeholders. So as a student, it's a very transactional relationship with your professor, and there's not really the approach that you take doesn't usually change the outcome. As long as you write the papers and take the test, at the end of the day, you're going to get the grade you're going to get, but in the real world and professional world. It's really fascinating, and this is true to this day in my job; how the approach you take and the way in which you communicate and ask for different things from different people will really dictate whether or not you're successful. And so there was a ton of time spent when we were talking to different potential sponsors or trying to get an event for 200 people pulled off in a matter of 90 days at the Mason School business and trying to manage all that. From a facilities perspective, we have to ask a lot of favors of people and pull a lot of strings and just rely on relationships. And I think it was really interesting to see, like, we would get a no from one place, and then we would back channel in seven different ways and eventually find the yes, we're looking for to make things happen. And I just didn't really appreciate how much work goes into kind of understanding who your support system is and kind of being aware of the environment that you're in and knowing how to communicate and how to make trade-offs to get what you want. I think there's a lot of, like, very quick decision-making that happens in the real world, and there's a lot of negotiations that's just a part of daily life and certainly has been the case on every project I've ever been in consulting, but feel that even more in an entrepreneurial environment. And so, to me, that just lessons in communication and just relationship management were so valuable. I think one of the bigger lessons I wanted as a professional is, like, just to really maintain professional relationships because you never know when they're going to come in handy. And that was even true as a fellow winner.

### Morgan Hutter

I hear fellows often tell us another thing they really like about it is they kind of get a look behind the curtain, right? They get a chance for an opportunity to use the word engagement. Abbey and I think it's really valid fellows get an opportunity to be in the room, right and get a chance to meet people maybe that, otherwise, they wouldn't have had the chance to network with or get in front of because they're kind of on the Boehly center staff are getting that chance to interact. So I'm glad you shared that. We talked a little bit about how the fellowship experience helped with the transition, right? You got something in front of your job. You've got this experience you can add. You have a specific project that is your baby that you're mastering,

and everything that comes around that you're kind of getting a look maybe behind the curtain and to office culture awesome. You mentioned that adjustment, but is there anything else that you want to share that you felt the experience really helps you prepare for your prospective careers or futures and finance?

### Alhassan Ouf

Yes, I can accept it, and so for me, when I was a fellow, I was a fellow alongside Lonnie Davidoff, and Alden Wagner were both rock stars, and being able to bounce ideas off of them and just work with a team that was very good at communicating and very creative was super helpful for me. So being in an environment now where you're going to meet different kinds of people, and you're going to have to adjust to working on different projects, having the ability to talk to people and figure out what they're thinking was something that I was able to develop as a fellow. And it's been super helpful for me, my position now.

### Abbey Doski

Yeah, and building off of that, too, I think as a fellow, I got to work with people from all different backgrounds. So as a student at William & Mary, you're typically working with other students, with other people that are your age and that come from relatively similar backgrounds. And as a fellow, I was able to work with men and women who were, you know, in their thirties and their forties and their seventies. I got to work with kids who were teenagers. And so it was a really interesting opportunity to learn how to communicate and interact with and brainstorm and strategize and plan with all these people that came from really different backgrounds. It's interesting how challenging that actually can be to adjust to when you're used to talking in a certain way and dealing with the same type of people over and over again for so many years, and then all of a sudden; you get thrown into a room with 20 people who have vastly different perspectives and backgrounds and experiences. It's a really different conversation. And so getting experience in managing those conversations and just learning how to communicate in a more diverse environment from an experience perspective, I think, was super valuable. And then, on a fun note, too, I mean, for me personally, I'm just to live by the beat of the drum person. And so I really valued in college being able to not have classes after 02:00, or if I wanted to sleep in on Wednesdays, I wouldn't have a Wednesday morning class. And so I think even just getting into the rhythm of having to be somewhere from nine to five every day and having to think about what I was going to do for breakfast and have lunch and just building all of those very basic, normal life skills and getting into that rhythm before going to my real job made that transition a lot easier.

### Alhassan Ouf

Yeah. From my perspective, that was one thing that I think everyone, obviously, who worked in a virtual environment, probably missed out on, the structure and the ability to adjust. Being in the office from nine to five, being virtual, and having the fridge at arm's length was kind of a different situation. But with that said, it did require a level of initiative to make the virtual environment one that's structured and one that would enable you to perform well. So there's kind of a side note on top of Abbey's notes, and we.

## Morgan Hutter

Just did a podcast, so if our listeners want to learn more about kind of that transition, we do a three-part series on transitioning from student to employee, and we talk about just that kind of that lifestyle shift. We talk about managing the email flow and how to prioritize emails and then just understanding office culture in general. It is different than being a student. So I'm kind of glad to hear that you nicely teed up that other podcast. So thank you for doing that. All right, so let's just talk through and also on; I know you worked with me, so you can hate on me if you need, but what was your favorite and least favorite aspect of being a Fellow?

## Alhassan Ouf

Yeah, I don't know if my answers will be surprising at all, but my absolute favorite thing about being a Fellow was being able to work with amazing people. Yes. Obviously, the Boehly fellows and the staff, the students, the community stakeholders, professors, essentially everyone that I was able to interact with helped me learn something new. Everyone was invested in my development, and everyone had the same goal in mind, which was to just be the best version of themselves. Right. And so, for me, the people were the best part of my fellowship experience by far. And on top of that, just being able to hone my skills and kind of transition from that student life to more of a working adult life was a big component of what I perceive to be positive about the fellowship. Now, on the other hand, I did have kind of two specific things that, as a result of COVID, were less than ideal for me. So being in a remote environment, I interned or not. Internet; I was a fellow up in the DC area, while the center is obviously in Williamsburg. And so kind of having that distance was probably not the most ideal situation from a team-building perspective. Although we did adapt to that pretty well, it's still not the same. And even when you're working remote in whatever position, it's just not the same as being in person. And in addition to that, one thing that I think is easily fixed, but for me, just required communication to stay on top of things was just seeing the long-term impact of the project I was working on. So being a Fellow, you're there for a number of months, you know, four, five, six months. It's a great amount of time to be a Fellow, in my opinion. But at the same time, you don't get to see the long-term impact of your project right. From a day-to-day perspective, two, three years down the line. But with that said, you could always stay in touch with the Boehly center and kind of figure out what the status is of that specific project. But all in all, being able to work with amazing people was by far my most favorite thing.

## Morgan Hutter

You hit the ground running, and you came into the center in the midst of this global pandemic. And I know Janita, myself, Melanie, which is your job, would say that you just absolutely rushed it. Thank you so much for your dedication to the mission and helping our students and the Mason School business. Thank you. And Abbey, I know we didn't get a chance to overlap, but your name continues to come up year over year over year, and I know you are unbelievable with helping students interested in consulting and debating things of that nature. What would you say in your tenure was your favorite and least favorite aspect?

## Abbey Doski

Yeah, I mean, gosh, there's so many favorites. I think that the thing that I value most. Being six. Seven years removed now is just how strong relationships that I made and kind of just the fact that my name is still known seven years down the road, thinking about, for lack of a better

word. Like political capital that being a fellow has bought me. And just the professional and personal relationships that I was able to build along the way. Kristen Aldred, Rita Murphy, Julie Agnew, Katherine Guthrie, these are mentors of mine who maybe I would have stayed in touch with after school if I had just been a student. But now we're people who get the quarterly update on life, and I'm excited to email for personal and professional accomplishments along the way, and they've been in lockstep with me throughout my whole career. Just to really solidify those mentors and build those relationships has been so valuable. And even as a fellow just going through the process, being so outwardly facing, putting on an event for students and alumni and industry professionals, I had so many people email me and say, hey, if you ever want a job at my company, you just let me know. The value of being in a position where people can see you in a professional environment while you're still effectively a student. You're still at college was just so valuable and really just built some very strong connections, which was really great. Gosh, it's hard to have a least favorite because I had such an awesome time, I guess. Yeah. Similarly, I think it's a shame that it's only a semester and you kind of go in, and you get dumped into this whirlwind, and you do this crazy big thing, and then you leave, and it's over. I think it also would have been cool to have had that experience earlier in my career. I think it would have maybe shaped some of what I was looking to do next if I had maybe been able to take a semester off and do the Fellows program as a sophomore or junior or done it over the summer instead of an earlier summer internship. So I don't know if those flexibilities exist today, and very thankful with where I ended up, but it was something that really shaped my trajectory post-Bane and was a big motivator for wanting to go back to business school.

### Abbey Doski

So glad that I had the experience when I did, but curious to see what would happen if I had done it sooner.

### Morgan Hutter

It's a great point. Thanks for sharing this ideas back, and see what we can do. All right, so as we're wrapping up this podcast, either or question here, what would you tell listeners that maybe there are some students that now are aware that this is an opportunity? What would you say to them, and then in three words or less, would you do it again?

### Abbey Doski

Without a doubt.

### Morgan Hutter

All right. Without a doubt. Okay.

### Abbey Doski

Without a doubt, I would do it again in a heartbeat. I mean, the experience was unparalleled. The community and the relationships and mentorship was just unbelievable. I also was getting paid, as Morgan said, and was not paying for school. So, you know, netted out 30, 40 grand richer than I would have been if I was paying for another semester of college. That was a huge benefit. And yeah, just the opportunity to do something cool like that and have it still stick around to William & Mary. Just what a special thing to have been a part of. So just eternally thankful for that. If you're interested in applying or you're just kind of thinking like, oh, maybe



is this a thing I would think through as a student? Like, what do you want to still get out of your college experience? What do you, as an undergrad, still feel like you have left to accomplish? There are a lot of things that you can still do as a fellow, you know, in Williamsburg, with your friends, in your communities, but it's also different. You're not a student anymore. You are an employee of the college. And so don't shortchange yourself on your undergrad experience if you still feel like you've got a lot of learning and growing up left to do and you're not quite ready for the professional world if, on the flip side of that, you're like me and you're just dying to get out there and get started, and you're like, I've had enough classes, I get it. I'm done with the test-taking am done with the essay writing. I want to go do something. This is totally for you.

### Morgan Hutter

How about you, Alhassan?

### Alhassan Ouf

Yeah. So my three-word response as to whether I would do it again is, I definitely would. So if you're interested in becoming a fellow, my biggest piece of advice would be to just ask questions. I know prior to applying, I had a ton of questions, and I was able to hop on the phone with a couple of past fellows and just ask them, and they gave me candid responses, which really helped shape my decision to apply and ultimately accept the offer. And so, yeah, if you are interested, I know that you're going to have a lot of questions, which is completely normal for someone who is thinking about graduating early or thinking about applying to become a fellow, but just popping into Morgan's office or scheduling a meeting with someone. And past fellows, people in the, I guess, field that you're interested in, and seeing what they would think about kind of a six-month position like the fellowship on your resume is very valuable, in my opinion. And so when in doubt, just ask questions because it can't hurt.

### Morgan Hutter

Thank you so much. So without a doubt, and I definitely would, those are six very powerful words right there. So thank you, both of you. It's just so clear. You're so impressive; you're so successful. I just cannot wait to see where your careers continue to take you. And they're at the bowling center. And I think you gave some great comments today and tips all around, not just about the fellowship, but just special development, things to be aware of, tips, and tricks that you've learned in your time. So thank you for your honesty, and really appreciate it. Awesome. You mentioned past fellows on our website. Under our past staff, you can see all past fellow student workers. So that's a great resource. So I'm really glad you mentioned that. So with that, I want to thank you both. We hope to see you back on campus in the near future. And Abbey, we'll have to get you back to women's stock pitch. And also, maybe you could be a guest speaker with financial literacy or something and beyond. We actually did a personal finance and financial literacy podcast as well, so you'll have to check that out, also.

### Morgan Hutter

And Alex did it, our new student that took over from you program. So thank you, and I hope the listeners, they found this experience. About the fellowship insightful and impactful.

## Male Voice

Careers in Finance, presented by the Boehly Center for Excellence in Finance, is a production of the Raymond Amassing School of Business at William & Mary. Executive producer is Jeffrey Rich, in association with Magenta Text Productions. Find out more about the Boehly Center by visiting [Boehlycenter.Mason.wm.edu](http://Boehlycenter.Mason.wm.edu). If you enjoyed this podcast, be, share it with a friend, and leave us a review.