

Dave Merry (00:00):

My name is Dave Merry. I'm the associate provost and executive director for career services at Suffolk University. I'm pleased to oversee the Center for Career Equity, Development & Success.

Dave Merry (00:09):

Today, I'm going to be talking to you more about how we prepare students to be successful in their careers after graduation and throughout their careers, through retirement.

Dave Merry (00:18):

Suffolk University has placed a huge emphasis on career preparation and career readiness throughout their curriculum. One of the statements in our 2025 strategic plan is that career readiness is at the core of the university's academic mission.

Dave Merry (00:30):

That's something that is true, both in our own office, but throughout the curricular and co-curricular experience of students in the classroom, in the residence halls and throughout the entire Suffolk community.

Dave Merry (00:41):

A few stats about our career center and careers at Suffolk. We have 22 full-time staff members in our office, which is a very large ratio of staff focused on career preparation to students.

Dave Merry (00:51):

We also have four grad assistants and 20 peer advisors that help students with entry level questions or help share their experiences about their own career preparation and paths.

Dave Merry (01:01):

98.8% of our students are in continuing education, grad school or in full-time employment within the first three months after graduation, which is exciting for us.

Dave Merry (01:09):

That's a big goal of ours, is to not only have students find careers quickly after graduation, but to ensure that those are meaningful careers that are in their intended career path. So students aren't underemployed, but they're employed in a job that serve as a great foundation for the rest of their career.

Dave Merry (01:26):

Some of our top employers really bring home the fact that we are University of Boston. We have connections all over the world, all over the country, but we really do service Boston well. A lot of our big Boston partners look to us as a key hiring partner, as a pipeline for their talent.

Dave Merry (01:41):

Mass General Brigham, Ernst & Young, State Street, the state of Massachusetts itself, these are huge employer partners for us, and they look to us as a pipeline for their future talent.

Dave Merry (01:53):

One of the things that makes our team special is that we support students throughout their entire experience, from day one at Suffolk, all the way through their first career and their final career.

Dave Merry (02:01):

So, we support students in the first year experience, specifically, helping them make some plans and think about how their major relates to their career path.

Dave Merry (02:08):

We also have strong alumni support for new alumni and also experienced alumni, who are transitioning, potentially in their fields.

Dave Merry (02:15):

We also have a team of individuals focused on nine specific career industry paths. We'll talk more about that later on, but our people in the team really make a difference.

Dave Merry (02:22):

We think about ourselves as creating personal connections with students, employers, faculty, and alumni, and bringing those people together to form really meaningful professional relationships.

Dave Merry (02:36):

There are many things that we expect all Suffolk students to go through as part of their experience at Suffolk, in part of their career readiness journey.

Dave Merry (02:43):

The first one is making a plan. We know that making a plan is important to have some intentions, some goals. We also know that editing that plan over time, when you learn more about yourself and your career path, is critical as well. So, this is an ongoing career planning process.

Dave Merry (02:56):

It starts in your first year, in some one-credit career development classes. Whether you're in Sawyer Business School or in the college of arts and sciences, you'll have a one-credit career preparation class, where you think more about yourself, your career goals and the steps you can take throughout your time at Suffolk to get you where you want to be.

Dave Merry (03:12):

We'll do some major career exploration workshops to help you see some of the connections between your major or potential majors and the careers that you might find interesting, and also talk about how different majors may be unlikely paths to potential careers.

Dave Merry (03:24):

Majors are not destiny. Many people have careers that look very different from their majors, but are utilizing skills from their undergraduate degree. So, we'll talk more about how you can be creative in thinking about your academics, in relation to your career preparation.

Dave Merry (03:37):

There's a lot of self-assessment, thinking about what skills, your personality, your interest and your values and how that might relate to your career path.

Dave Merry (03:44):

We do some goal setting experiences, so that you have some next concrete steps, to feel really guided in how you're exploring your career throughout your time at Suffolk.

Dave Merry (03:51):

Over here, pictured are our career ambassadors. Those are our peer Suffolk students, who are trained to help have these career conversations with students.

Dave Merry (03:58):

We feel like they're incredibly important, especially in that first year, for students who are navigating not only what are their career paths, but how can Suffolk help them achieve them. So, our peer ambassadors have those informal conversations with students and can help guide them toward the resources they need.

Dave Merry (04:13):

We also want to make sure that we help all students build their brand. The thing about having a personal brand is that everybody has one, it's just whether or not you're in control of it or not.

Dave Merry (04:20):

We want you to be in control of what the reputation and values that you present to the world are, what people think of when they see your resume, your LinkedIn profile, when they hear about you in a professional context.

Dave Merry (04:32):

We have one-on-one support to help you build that unique, professional online presence. That's really a spot where we know that employers are going to look for more information about our students.

Dave Merry (04:41):

They'll go to LinkedIn, and they see, what are the professional certifications, skills, experiences that people are talking about? How are you differentiating yourself? How are you adding value to your field, even before you graduate?

Dave Merry (04:51):

We'll help you create a unique and effective resume and give you opportunities to develop an elevator pitch and interview content.

Dave Merry (04:56):

So, what are the things that you're bringing to an interview process to help you seem prepared, to help you be prepared, to help you stand out from the rest?

Dave Merry (05:03):

We also have human and AI-based support for resume review and interview prep. So many companies are hiring through applicant tracking systems. That's really a black box where you put your resume in, and you're not sure why you were either rejected or accepted.

Dave Merry (05:17):

We have our own version of that, that we use internally. That gives that feedback directly to you to say, here are the things you can improve over time, to get past those applicant tracking systems.

Dave Merry (05:26):

So, that AI paired with that human-based feedback, is a really unique and powerful tool to help you get past those first hurdles in the job search process.

Dave Merry (05:35):

It's critical that you build your network out, so that you find those opportunities, that you hear about those leads and that you have advocates for you on the inside, helping you guide that journey.

Dave Merry (05:44):

Suffolk is phenomenally well placed, both physically in the city to be very closely networked to a number of alumni and organizations, but we also have an incredibly active alumni network, that gives back to students specifically around this area of career development and success.

Dave Merry (05:59):

This is where I mentioned we have nine industry-specific career communities. These are nine communities that are headed up by a full-time member of my team, where we bring in students, alumni, faculty and employers, to talk about a community of practice, to think about what jobs are available. What are the skills and changing interests and needs of those fields? And where employers come to learn more about our students and vice versa.

Dave Merry (06:19):

So, we facilitate networking experiences for alumni in the field, with students, panel discussions and mentorship opportunities, so that students can explore not only how to advance in a particular field, but can join one or more career communities, to see how they overlap and how they might provide a unique career experience for you.

Dave Merry (06:37):

Each of these career communities puts on events, like employer spotlights, networking lunches and job shadowing experiences, again, so that you have more informal and low risk exposure to employers before it's time to apply for a job or have an interview.

Dave Merry (06:50):

You're learning about the fields, you're learning about these employers, putting faces to names and companies. That'll prepare you for that experience, when it comes time to apply for a job.

Dave Merry (06:59):

It's really critical that we build authentic networks. So, we talk about how to network. Not just to share names and connect on LinkedIn, but how to add value-built relationships, give back to your network as much as you're taking from it.

Dave Merry (07:10):

So that, when you reach out for a support, that you are a known and respected member of that network.

Dave Merry (07:16):

One of our key programs here, that I encourage you to look more into, is our Ram Alumni Mentoring Program, where we have a structured six month mentoring program between our alumni and current students.

Dave Merry (07:25):

This year, we have 153 pairs of alumni and students, where that's direct structured six-month mentoring, thinking about career preparation. That six months always continues on informally, afterwards.

Dave Merry (07:36):

But that six month structured period ensures that you have a good relationship, that you're asking those really important questions, and you have some structure to build your networking and mentoring relationship.

Dave Merry (07:47):

Again, critical that you're gaining experience. Of course, you're coming to Suffolk with lots of experience from your high school experiences. You have leadership, thinking about your academic experiences. We want to build on that during your time at Suffolk.

Dave Merry (07:59):

There are lots of different ways that you can gain professional experience, but the most sort of seminal way, in a university setting, is through an internship.

Dave Merry (08:08):

We provide support during, before and after one or more internships. So, support in finding and securing internships, setting goals for how you're going to be successful there, and what you want to get out of the internship.

Dave Merry (08:20):

During that process, we help you think about, how do you take advantage of your internship?

Dave Merry (08:23):

Some students will go on internship and just do the work they need to do and leave. We want you to wring every last bit of experience out of that.

Dave Merry (08:30):

So, building networks, having your own projects that you can take away, gaining new experiences, certification and learning, et cetera.

Dave Merry (08:37):

And then afterwards, how do you continue to maintain those relationships and market that internship experience?

Dave Merry (08:43):

Really excited to offer, for students who are starting their freshman year at Suffolk University, a \$3,500 Summer Career Development Stipend for unpaid internships.

Dave Merry (08:52):

We know that a lot of great experience comes in fields and opportunities that are unfortunately unpaid, and that many students can't work in an internship full-time or part-time, unpaid.

Dave Merry (09:02):

So, Suffolk is providing for all of those students, any student who has an unpaid internship, a \$3,500 Summer Career Development stipend.

Dave Merry (09:10):

That really shows, not just that Suffolk values it, but that they're putting resources behind that value.

Dave Merry (09:16):

We also offer on and off-campus employment, service, community service, research and leadership opportunities. These are other great ways, outside of internships, to build your career experience.

Dave Merry (09:26):

We help you not only gain those experiences, but in the career center, we want to help you articulate your experiences to others.

Dave Merry (09:31):

So, as a leader in your campus community, as a member of a community service organization, how do you translate that experience into work skills and then into ways that you can be a successful, uniquely qualified candidate in a job role?

Dave Merry (09:45):

And then again, guidance when leveraging those skills into your first full-time job, making sure that you see all the connections and how you can grow your particular skill set when you enter that first job after graduation.

Dave Merry (09:57):

Lastly, of course, launching a career. We want to work with students. We find it important to work with students from day one. The more preparation you're doing, the easier and more in control you'll be of your career process at time of graduation.

Dave Merry (10:08):

Of course, that's also where we come to rally around students, when it is that time. We say we really want to support students, especially in that last year, when it comes time to launch your career.

Dave Merry (10:18):

So, we provide one-on-one support through the job search, application and interview process. Finding a job can be just as difficult as interviewing and securing a job.

Dave Merry (10:26):

So, finding the right job for you. Making sure that you're not being underemployed in finding any job, but really making sure it's a job that is an adequate step on your career journey to where you want to be. That fits your skills and matches your experience, and it leads to one or more of the career paths that you want to be pursuing after graduation.

Dave Merry (10:46):

We are in regular communication with our seniors, about employers who are actively hiring. We have a number of events where we bring those employers on campus, a large career fair, but a number of networking events, especially throughout the spring semester.

Dave Merry (10:58):

But then we also have a great pipeline of job opportunities that we put in front of students in a really selective way. So, we tag students based on the interests that they have, and market jobs to them that align with those interests.

Dave Merry (11:10):

You're not inundated. You're being fed really great leads for job opportunities, as you approach graduation.

Dave Merry (11:16):

Another important step that often gets overlooked when you're looking for your first job is salary negotiation, and whether to accept or decline a job offer.

Dave Merry (11:24):

So after you get the offer, there's a lot of decisions you still have to make. We provide support, guidance and tools, as you think about negotiating that offer and whether or not to accept or decline a job.

Dave Merry (11:35):

Really, ultimately, our goal is helping you maximize the return on your investment for your Suffolk degree. You are graduating from a phenomenal institution, and we want to make sure that you have a job experience in that first career that matches the worth and value and expertise that you have.

Dave Merry (11:51):

In your first year at Suffolk, we really are focusing on these first three things. Thinking very broadly about a plan or multiple plans that you might have and steps that you could take during your time at Suffolk, so that you're in control of that process. Your career's not happening to you. You're building it.

Dave Merry (12:04):

Building your brand actively, so you're thinking about, what are the unique skills and experiences you want to start showcasing?

Dave Merry (12:09):

And again, growing your network. Meeting the people on and off campus, who can help you with this journey and this process, as you undergo it throughout your four years and then throughout your career.

Dave Merry (12:20):

I want to encourage you to find out more about the career center at Suffolk University. The QR code on screen here will bring up all of the links that you see, whether it be our website, our LinkedIn page.

Dave Merry (12:30):

Some particular pieces that I'll call out, our Instagram is chock full every day, of what events that we have going on, on campus to help support students.

Dave Merry (12:38):

But also success stories of students who have gotten a great internship or are in a first job after graduation, and sharing their experiences in how Suffolk prepared them to be successful in that role.

Dave Merry (12:48):

I also want to encourage you to check out our podcast, Ramplify, where we bring on faculty, employers and students, to talk about the importance of career readiness to themselves and for the Suffolk community.

Dave Merry (12:58):

Thank you so much for joining me today. I really look forward to speaking with you more about career preparation at Suffolk.