

Kris Bursik (00:01):

Hello, everyone. I'm Kris Bursik, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Suffolk University. I am joined today by several members of the college community.

Kris Bursik (00:13):

And we're here today to talk about what it's like in the College of Arts and Sciences, to give you a flavor of our student's experiences.

Kris Bursik (00:21):

And to have also a colleague of mine, our interim associate dean, Lauren Nolfo-Clements to talk a little bit about how we really frame our academic experience around developing our students for the world ahead.

Kris Bursik (00:40):

So we're going to talk about themes today around experiential learning, around professional development, around career readiness.

Kris Bursik (00:48):

Because those really help explain who we are at Suffolk, what we do, why we do it, what we care about. So that's going to cut across this little chat.

Kris Bursik (01:00):

We're really here to give you a flavor of those things that matter to us and those things that we think really stand out in the college.

Kris Bursik (01:10):

Three students are here as well with me today, three students who certainly stand out in the college.

Kris Bursik (01:17):

We've selected them because they represent really the three divisions that constitute the College of Arts and Sciences. With us today representing the natural sciences division, Hunter Toyoda, representing the social science division, Syeeda Rahman, and representing the humanities all by herself is Samantha Chase.

Kris Bursik (01:43):

They're going to have much more to say as we have this conversation over the next 20 minutes or so.

Kris Bursik (01:49):

We tried to pick one from each division not because they can fully represent a division, but that they can give you a flavor of different experiences and different perspectives based on their personal desires and the majors they've selected.

Kris Bursik (02:08):

So as I said, these are the three things that make up the College of Arts and Sciences, just to get you a little oriented to the structure of our organization, or as we call it CAS or just the college.

Kris Bursik (02:23):

The college is the largest of the three schools that make up Suffolk University. We have about 160 full-time faculty, give or take, across these three divisions.

Kris Bursik (02:35):

They are the ones who are teaching our courses, the lion's share of them, but also working with our students one-on-one in a number of important ways.

Kris Bursik (02:45):

And we'll hear more about that as well from our students, their work with faculty in independent studies, directed research projects, internship supervision, honors thesis supervision, all kinds of wonderful things.

Kris Bursik (03:03):

We are very proud of our faculty. They are committed teacher-scholars, they really are the lifeblood of the college, and, of course, they constitute the community of educated people that are here to guide our students. So we'll hear a lot more about that.

Kris Bursik (03:25):

I want to tell you what we've always valued at Suffolk in our approach to education.

Kris Bursik (03:32):

We care about theory and we care about practice, but we care more about the practice.

Kris Bursik (03:40):

What do I mean by that? It's college, we know that there are a lot of information sharing, a lot of knowledge gathering.

Kris Bursik (03:50):

But Suffolk, our history and our tradition has always put a premium on practice and application and what we do with that knowledge, and how we provide our students with the ability to go out and make a difference in the world with that knowledge.

Kris Bursik (04:08):

So the practice and the experience has been in our DNA for many, many years. We're going to talk more about that as we look at our curriculum briefly.

Kris Bursik (04:20):

A quick overview, I always think of our curriculum as being a three tiered cake.

Kris Bursik (04:28):

The large part at the bottom is our gen-ed core, it's roughly 40 credits. Every student does it in one way or another through different courses, but courses that teach a broad range of skills.

Kris Bursik (04:43):

It's the breadth of education, that's what the core is all about, it's the readiness for more advanced courses.

Kris Bursik (04:51):

And so the core is what most first year students attend to and sophomores.

Kris Bursik (04:59):

In a minute, Lauren's going to say a little bit about how we really start this professional development journey right in that first year.

Kris Bursik (05:09):

The second tier of the curriculum, another 40 credits or so, another third of the cake is the major.

Kris Bursik (05:16):

And we shift there from the breadth of the core to the depth in the major.

Kris Bursik (05:24):

Most students have a clear sense of which division they're probably going to choose for a major.

Kris Bursik (05:32):

But honestly, many students come in and haven't quite decided whether it's going to be biochemistry or chemistry. Hunter, I don't know what you can tell us about your journey there to decide which was the right one for you.

Kris Bursik (05:48):

But we have a range of all the traditional majors, everything from sociology to biology to psychology and history.

Kris Bursik (05:59):

But we also have a number of interesting interdisciplinary majors, global cultural studies, radiation therapy, interior design.

Kris Bursik (06:11):

It's a very eclectic college and it really lends itself to people with very diverse interests. So the major is the depth regardless of the area, it's that deep dive that will extend across the four years.

Kris Bursik (06:30):

The students are going to be saying a little bit about that top tier of the cake, it's really the best tier, it's why they save it for a year when it's a wedding cake.

Kris Bursik (06:41):

It's like that, it's special and it's individual and it's exciting. So what am I talking about there?

Kris Bursik (06:47):

I'm talking about the 40 credits that are left to do wonderful, fun things and career readiness things.

Kris Bursik (06:57):

So that credit can be used for internships and practica.

Kris Bursik (07:02):

And if you've done one, we encourage students to do another one, maybe even another one after that, to think about a study abroad semester, to think about study tours and study trips, to do some service learning courses, to do all kinds of things that are very individualized and unique trajectories to career outcomes. We think about career readiness in all three layers of this cake.

Kris Bursik (07:35):

And I'm going to ask Lauren, if you could say a little bit more and help the people watching this understand our focus.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (07:44):

Thank you, Kris, Dean Bursik.

Kris Bursik (07:46):

Hi, I'm Lauren Nolfo-Clements, I'm the interim associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the students call me Dr. No.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (07:54):

So I'll be speaking to you a little bit today about career readiness, professional, and experiential learning in the CAS curriculum.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:02):

So as Dean Bursik said, we have these multiple layers of the cake.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:06):

And infused throughout those layers, I don't know what would be the cake analogy here, I guess chocolate filling throughout the cake are these career competencies, which we emphasize starting with the first classes that students begin to take.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:21):

So we have two main classes in our first year experience.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:23):

We have a seminar for freshmen, which is a course that students can choose which topic is the focal point, the theme for that seminar.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:32):

But within those classes, we begin to teach students about, these are the types of skills that you're going to need, not only to succeed in your career, but also to succeed in your personal life.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:43):

Skills like teamwork, critical thinking, communication, leadership.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:48):

Things that will help you not only in your college career, but also your career, but then also as you move on into your professional and personal life after the college experience.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (08:58):

Some people refer to these as power skills, I tend to agree.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:02):

They allow you to communicate more openly with other people and succeed in a variety of different venues.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:08):

Not only do we do this in the curriculum, the first year experience, we also have a new center for career equity, development, and success.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:16):

This center has nine different career communities that are focused around different types of themes.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:22):

So for example, they have a theme of arts and humanities, they have a theme of STEM and sustainability, health and wellness.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:28):

End each of these themed career communities helps to support students not only their college journey, but finding internships, having experiences outside the classroom that help to bolster these power skills that they are experiencing in the classroom.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:41):

So these two different facets, the academic experience and the career center act to support each other and help to reinforce these skills that we're imbuing into the students across their career.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (09:55):

So I know that we have the three students here and I think Hunter is the first that's going to be talking about his personal experience with the top tier of the cake.

Hunter Toyoda (10:10):

So my name's Hunter Toyoda. I'm a senior here at Suffolk University and I'm a biochemistry major.

Hunter Toyoda (10:17):

I started off as a chemistry major my freshman year, but as I took my bio introductory courses, I realized that I wanted to take a different route, maybe incorporate some bio in there, so I switched to biochemistry.

Hunter Toyoda (10:31):

And as far as my experiential learning goes here at Suffolk, I had a great opportunity this past summer, I worked in Dr. Berkman's research lab under a National Science Foundation grant.

Hunter Toyoda (10:43):

I was conducting research on protein-protein interactions within congregation machinery of certain bacteria, and I was given my own research project.

Hunter Toyoda (10:52):

So I was given a lot of freedom and it was something that I became super passionate about.

Hunter Toyoda (10:59):

So this year now I'm writing my thesis on it.

Hunter Toyoda (11:03):

And it just was a really great opportunity to learn lab skills, team skills, working with at whole research group. And Dr. Berkman was just a really good mentor for me, helping me with my thesis, helping me work through problems, helping me learn these new skills.

Hunter Toyoda (11:19):

I'm just glad that I was able to spend that time with her, it was such incredible experience for me. A really cool thing about this is that it gave me a good perspective change in my life.

Hunter Toyoda (11:33):

Before that, I wanted to take more of a medical school route but now made me realize I want to take a more research based route, maybe pursue a PhD after my time here at Suffolk.

Hunter Toyoda (11:43):

And hopefully by the end of this year, I will have my name in a research paper.

Kris Bursik (11:49):

That's great. Hunter, tell us a little bit about other Suffolk experiences that have been pivotal.

Kris Bursik (11:56):

I know this work with this very close mentored research with a faculty member is such a wonderful part of the experience of many students in the sciences.

Kris Bursik (12:07):

Other things that you've experienced here that stand out as formative or even transformative.

Hunter Toyoda (12:16):

So I'm also captain of Suffolk's cross country and track teams.

Hunter Toyoda (12:21):

I've really enjoyed continuing playing a sport here at Suffolk. It's a division three school, so it doesn't put too much pressure on me that I can't focus on my academics.

Hunter Toyoda (12:33):

But at a division three level, I feel like I'm still getting division one resources as far as my coaches, trainers, resources such as our lifting rooms, gyms, stuff like that.

Hunter Toyoda (12:46):

I'm just really glad that I was able to continue playing a sport throughout college.

Hunter Toyoda (12:52):

My coach has become a very close mentor to me and my teammates have become definitely lifelong friends that I've met.

Kris Bursik (13:01):

That's great. Well, let's turn to the social sciences and hear from, Syeeda. Not a senior, right, Syeeda, you're a sophomore, is that correct?

Syeeda Rahman (13:14):  
I'm a Sophomore, yes. Hi, everyone. I'm-

Kris Bursik (13:16):  
How's your journey been so far?

Syeeda Rahman (13:19):  
It's been great. I'm a political science major, I'm considering declaring a minor in psychology, I just have to push that through.

Syeeda Rahman (13:27):  
But my experience has been really great at Suffolk. I think before I even started my semester, I was already part of an e-board of a club because we have amazing Instagram accounts for all of the clubs at Suffolk.

Syeeda Rahman (13:40):  
And I would suggest you all, if you're interested in anything to look that up because they showcase their talent so well and the events so well that it was like, wow, I can be involved right away.

Syeeda Rahman (13:53):  
I'm a freshman but I involved right away. And as a sophomore, I did a Suffolk Votes scholar.

Syeeda Rahman (14:00):  
There's also a lot of great scholar positions within the Center for Community Service and there's CSDI and there's a lot of other centers where you can be a scholar, where you will get money as scholarship grant for your tuition, but you'll also get paid for your work there.

Syeeda Rahman (14:19):  
So as a Suffolk Votes scholar, we register students to vote.

Syeeda Rahman (14:23):  
I also run this program that was five people and now it's 19 people.

Syeeda Rahman (14:29):  
And I supervise all of these students or I'm able to really guide them through the leadership process.

Syeeda Rahman (14:35):  
Which is really awesome, we've built out departments, we've built out all these different leadership sets.

Syeeda Rahman (14:41):  
And it's so helpful to what I want to do, which is policy making, working in government, running campaigns. And those are the same skills that [inaudible 00:14:52] now as a sophomore, which is insane to me.

Syeeda Rahman (14:56):  
I don't think I would've had that opportunity without people taking a chance on me and really letting students lead, which is what I appreciate the most about Suffolk.

Kris Bursik (15:06):

That's great. Were you working on any campaigns or voter registration this last semester?

Syeeda Rahman (15:14):

Yes. We actually had, I want to say around six events where we ran voter registration.

Syeeda Rahman (15:20):

We also went into 36 classes, maybe a little bit more, to register students to vote there.

Syeeda Rahman (15:27):

We had over 100 professors that were interested, we just didn't have enough staff to go into all of them. So we're trying to cover them, make videos so professors can show them.

Syeeda Rahman (15:36):

That's another really great thing, is Suffolk as a community is very civically engaged. I think that's a really large part of our identity as students.

Syeeda Rahman (15:45):

So when we say register to vote, we say this is what we do at Suffolk, that's why you should register to vote.

Syeeda Rahman (15:50):

Because like over or 80% of students already are registered and want to get civically engaged, which is really awesome to develop that bone.

Syeeda Rahman (15:59):

If you don't have that experience or you've never had an opportunity to get involved in civic engagement, especially because we're in downtown Boston, all the protests, all the activism happens right here.

Syeeda Rahman (16:09):

I live in One Court Street, the city hall is right behind me in my backyard. So it is-

Kris Bursik (16:15):

The mayor is neighbor truly.

Syeeda Rahman (16:15):

Literally. So you're really able to get that experience that you want because you're in the center of it all.

Kris Bursik (16:26):

Great. Well, and we can come around again, but let's turn, Samantha, to your experiences as a major in one of our humanities areas.

Kris Bursik (16:38):

Why don't you tell a little bit about it?



Samantha Chase (16:41):

I'm Samantha Chase. I am also a senior at Suffolk.

Samantha Chase (16:44):

I'm actually graduating this fall, so this is it.

Samantha Chase (16:48):

I am a double major in the English Department and History Department with a concentration in literature and global history.

Samantha Chase (16:55):

I actually came into college undecided, which was super scary for me. I honestly just had no idea what I wanted to do.

Samantha Chase (17:02):

But as Dean No mentioned earlier, the CAS 101 classes, we had to do a project where you had to look at different majors around the university, whether it was a major that you were interested in, if you weren't undecided like me or one that you actually came into the college with, and explore the faculty, the things you'd be learning.

Samantha Chase (17:23):

And that really just got me onto the English track and now I really can't imagine being anywhere else, but in English and history.

Samantha Chase (17:30):

So that's some really cool experiences that you have as a freshman.

Samantha Chase (17:33):

Some of my favorite things as an English and history major, I think has been the experiential learning.

Samantha Chase (17:37):

Which sounds really weird for humanities, people don't think of that.

Samantha Chase (17:41):

But some really cool things we've done is, especially being in Boston, going to museums, going on walking tours, and getting those experiences of places that you would be working if you end up going into those fields, whether it's an archive like the Boston Athenaeum or a museum like the MFA, and really getting those experiences in class.

Samantha Chase (18:00):

Public history concentration is a concentration in history where you literally learn about what it means to build a monument, what people look at when they see monuments, how it means to lead a walking tour.

Samantha Chase (18:12):

And these are real experiential things that you'd be doing as a professional in the history field. And those are some really cool experiences that I love being a humanities major.

Samantha Chase (18:23):

Personally, I am really interested in publishing and I want to get into that.

Samantha Chase (18:26):

And as an English major, one really cool opportunity that I was able to take advantage of was Suffolk's English Department actually holds the office of Salamander, which is a literary magazine, nationally known.

Samantha Chase (18:40):

I was able to do an internship with them and learn what it means to work as an editor and to work on a literary magazine.

Samantha Chase (18:48):

Which again is a really experience and a really important experience to learning about the publishing world. And that was all through the English Department, I didn't even know it existed.

Samantha Chase (18:56):

So there are definitely things in the humanities that I think can really help you get the experience that you need to move on after college.

Kris Bursik (19:05):

Were you able to do that, Samantha, for credit?

Samantha Chase (19:08):

Yes, I did. I got some credit.

Samantha Chase (19:09):

I'm also in the honors college and the honors department or the honors college is very good about encouraging students to do experiential things to earn credit through the honors and then graduate with honors in your major and in your department.

Kris Bursik (19:25):

That's great. I wanted to put in a plug for that because we're talking about all these wonderful experiences that our students have had here, and there are three among thousands.

Kris Bursik (19:35):

But we do find ways to offer many of these experiences for credit. And sometimes it can be for a smaller amount.

Kris Bursik (19:44):

When people are doing 101 things and captaining cross country teams, they might not be able to do it for four credits.

Kris Bursik (19:51):

But they can do one of these for one or two credits and then maybe ramp up the next semester and do something for three or four.

Kris Bursik (19:58):

So we have a number of ways and a number of programs where credit can be earned for these wonderful experiential learning opportunities that are such a key part of your pre-professional development.

Kris Bursik (20:10):

Lauren, did you want to say anything else about honors or...

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:19):

I did want to talk more about the mentorship component and the outside the classroom but still in the academic sphere, interaction between faculty and students.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:30):

I've done a lot of independent work with students, I'm a field ecologist by training.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:34):

And the amount of personalized instruction that students have the opportunity to get at Suffolk is really not seen in most other academic institutions.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:45):

Many of our classes are taught by full-time faculty members, they're not taught by teaching assistants.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:51):

So students get a lot of one-on-one time, both in the classroom.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (20:55):

And then if they choose to do an independent research project, then they get this extra expertise that they get to share one-on-one with a professor.

Lauren Nolfo-Clements (21:04):

That's really what the community at Suffolk, is this personalized community that we're all a part of that I think we're all very passionate about and really makes the community something that we all want to be a part of.

Kris Bursik (21:23):

We're hoping that we've given you a little glimpse into the college.

Kris Bursik (21:28):

There are so many resources on our website to give you a deeper dive into particular areas or to look at the curriculum for particular majors or minors.

Kris Bursik (21:38):

Of course, there are plenty of people, we're all on the website, in terms of our administrative staff and faculty if you have questions to reach out.

Kris Bursik (21:47):

I think that in this little microcosm that we have here, we have five people who care deeply about the college and are maximizing their experiences in the college, and we're very proud of that.

Kris Bursik (22:03):

As I said at the beginning of this, we align our education in any way possible to help students have a wonderful experience when they're here, but to really leave here with a seamless walk into that chosen career.

Kris Bursik (22:22):

Or as some of our seniors are thinking about a graduate program, to do that before the career, either way, we are hoping right from the first semester of the freshman year to start talking about what lies ahead,

Kris Bursik (22:40):

to start preparing in any way we can for careers and the world of work, and to not let that four year slip by, but to see these folks and all of our students walking across the stage at commencement knowing that they're ready to go, knowing that they've worked hard, and really feeling internally that they're good to go.

Kris Bursik (23:05):

So that's the College of Arts and Sciences. Thank you for taking a little bit of time to hear what we're all about. Bye-bye.