Seniors Share Advice for New Business Students
with Jordan Wang, Sarah Fede, and Angela Wang

[00:00:00] Emma Bjorngard: [00:00:00] Welcome to The LAUNCH Podcast. I'm Emma Bjorngard-Basayne, Academic Advisor in the School of Business at the Stamford campus.

[00:00:16] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:00:16] And this is Kayla Hogrefe, Academic Advisor for the UConn School of Business on the Hartford campus. In this episode, we're talking to three of our school of business, peer advisors.

[00:00:26] Angela and Jordan who are both finance majors and Sarah who is an accounting major. And all three of them are graduating in May, 2021. We wanted to catch them before they graduated and have them share some of their wisdom and experiences.

[00:00:42] Emma Bjorngard: [00:00:42] So in this episode, you will hear them touch on a couple of different themes.

[00:00:47] So they talk about the importance of finding community, stepping out of your comfort zone, self-advocacy and developing confidence in general, throughout your college experience, and then about being strategic with your engagement. So this is a very interesting and exciting and inspiring episode.

[00:01:05] So let's get right into it.

[00:01:16] What is your name and what is your major at UConn? Hi,

[00:01:20] Angela Wang: [00:01:20] my name is Angela and my major is MIS

[00:01:25] Sarah Fede: [00:01:25] I’m Sarah and I am an accounting major.

[00:01:27] Jordan Wang: [00:01:27] Hi, my name is Jordan and I’m a finance major.

[00:01:31] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:01:31] Sarah, can you share one thing you did to step out of your comfort zone as a first-year student at UConn?

[00:01:37] Sarah Fede: [00:01:37] As a first year student, I was involved in the BCLC.

[00:01:40] And with that, we had a lot of networking opportunities that were optional to us. And as a first year student, I definitely took advantage of all of those opportunities just to like grow myself professionally. And I think kind of putting myself outside of my comfort zone in those initial years really helped prepare me for when I started going through recruitment of internships.

[00:02:01] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:02:01] And when you were invited to those networking sessions, did you kind of have to like psych yourself up? Did you have to like kind of convince yourself to go or where you like right from the get go,” yes. I definitely want to do this”?

[00:02:15] Sarah Fede: [00:02:15] It definitely took myself some convincing because this is all completely new to me.
And then I found the more and more, and I got involved with these sort of events, the more comfortable I was and the less pushing it took me each time because it was now something that was normal to me. But I would have to say the first time was very nerve wracking and I would think that would be completely normal.

Kayla Hogrefe: Angela, what about you? Is there one thing that you did to step out of your comfort zone as a first year student?

Angela Wang: Yeah. I actually had a really great opportunity from the honors program where I get to take a class. And then teach a class for unit like for freshman year classes to teach about how to go through college, life and whatnot.

And in that class, we had an intensive practice of public speaking. So that's one of the things I wasn't good at in high school. And with, in that class, I definitely learned how to do so. And then it made me very confident. And the other thing was also definitely actively reach out to make friends for sure freshman year that I put a lot of effort into it, which resulted in me having a big network of peers.

Kayla Hogrefe: And, you know, stepping out of comfort zone, public speaking is like building a muscle, right. It's like so painful at first. And there are very few people who like really enjoy it, you know, initially, but then the more you do it, the better. You get at it, right.

Angela Wang: exactly.

It, it definitely the me to be able to participate in a lot of the case competition later on. So I definitely see that progression. So,

Emma Bjorngard: Jordan, what was your biggest learning curve as a new college student?

Jordan Wang: I know that's a great question. I think, you know, coming out of high school, I had never been like the star student in high school, but you know, I kind of started to kind of really focus more on academics later on in my high school career.

So when I was starting college, You know, I really still wanted to perform at the same high level. And that was one of the big motivations for me. But, you know, as a new college student, you're really finding that, being able to kind of balance a college workload and perform at the same level early on in the college career, as well as do all the other different things that you want to do, like getting involved, balancing all of that is really difficult.

And you have a lot more. Kind of ownership over your own schedule. And so, you know, it's really a difficult learning curve and kind of really finding out what type of college experience you want to have in the first few years, and also adapting to kind of take on those additional responsibilities, perform at the college level in your classes.
And you know, really also figure out how to just live your life as a college student in those first few years.

Emma Bjorngard: Definitely cause you don't want to burn out either just trying to do everything, you know? What about you, Sarah?

Sarah Fede: I would say it would be self-advocacy. I remember like going through, like with some conversations with career professionals, they’d like, Oh, like your grades like really good. And I’m like, Oh no, it’s nothing, nothing special. Like, even though like I put hours and hours of tireless effort into like making sure the grades are what I wanted them to be. I like, cause I do have like the tendency to doubt myself from time to time. And I think I learned as I progressed in my career, like to like take ownership of like your accomplishments and not to see them as like something that can just be brushed off the shoulder, but say like something that you, I worked hard for and that I earned during my undergrad period,

Emma Bjorngard: you want to take some time to celebrate like the effort you’ve put in and then the outcome of it.

Right. That’s important. What about you, Angela?

Angela Wang: Yeah, something similar to Sarah too. For me, it was a being confident for me, I had those learning curves in high school already because of high school. For me, it was challenging. So I learned how to study. I learned how to be organized and all that, but for me, I still had a dis doubt that I was not good enough. You know, I still needed to try harder, but you know, at the end, looking back, there were a lot of situations that I. Probably benefited myself more. If I projected myself confident in that, you know, other people believe me in that sense. And you know, I'll be more willing to step out to do things as well.

There's some opportunities that I missed because I wasn't confident in myself, but that was the biggest learning curve. And it took a while for me to learn that, you know, I am good and, you know, I can try on new things as well.

Sarah. What is one common misconception or maybe a misconception that you had about starting college?

Sarah Fede: I had this sort of idea that professors were cold people that don't help the students. I'm not sure if this is from like the movies or from like my parents telling me, like also like in high school, my teachers would be like, your professors won't hold your hands. They're just going to teach you the lecture and go from there.

But I'm kind of going through my college. I remember so, Oh goodness. I was trying to remember this one professor that really changed my mentality completely. It was a microeconomics professor. I think his name was Derek Johnson and he was very much
for his students and he really showed his compassion, his care that he wanted to see you learn the material.

[00:07:15] And he also wanted to see you improve. And that was a class I took my freshman year and ever since then, like my entire like conceptions coming into college were completely shifted because I realized like, A lot of professors here, like love their job. They want to help students and they want to make you learn and like advance yourself further.

[00:07:30] So from there I was able more able to go into office hours and more apt to just communicate with my professor more rather than shy away completely because I thought they were these. Very cool beatings.

[00:07:41] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:07:41] That's great. Jordan, what about you? What was the misconception that you had when you were starting?

[00:07:45] Jordan Wang: [00:07:45] I, I would say I agree with Sarah you know, just about the professor thing, cause I also had a similar experience, but with a professor. But my, I think biggest misconception was, you know, now that I'm a senior and we've had this pandemic, it's just that you have all the time in the world in college and.

[00:08:05] I think that, you know, I look back and think, you know, when I was starting college, I felt like four years was an eternity. Like you had all the time in the world, you could do whatever you wanted and post-grad grad work when it come fast enough or something like that. And. You know, now looking back on it, it's just been such, it's kind of just flown by and it just made me value or, you know, looking back, I wish I almost valued each semester a little bit that much more and had that much of a better experience each semester.

[00:08:38] Emma Bjorngard: [00:08:38] What has been your most impactful college experience? And I'll start with Angela.

[00:08:45] Angela Wang: [00:08:45] Yeah. I think looking back on my four years of college, I think, or most impactful things I did as a collective is actually helping out freshmen. I've been freshmen RA for one and a half year. You know, I've been international peer advisor, you know, help out with international freshmen for, you know, about two years now.

[00:09:04] And with the teaching unit in the honors class I've done that for a semester. So, you know, for the junior and senior year of my college year, I even tried to help a freshmen in one way or the other. Right. In that I feel like I've made the most impacted. Yeah. Maybe some people don't remember me at, at the end of the day, but, you know, I was there in their life at some point in their lives.

[00:09:25] And you know, one of the most vivid time of their life, you know, freshman year, everything's new, you're just observing this new environment, you know, learning about new things. You know, very exciting time. And you know, of course there's a difficulty that comes with it too. And being able to help when that difficulty comes for the first time in their life, is something really meaningful to me in, you know, I so glad that I was able to pass
on like different knowledges that I learned in my way to tell them, you know, Oh, you could
do this way.

And also I was just able to, I was able to learn a lot of the resources on campus
that I was able to pass on that I necessarily didn't know freshman year. So Even
though I personally don't see the effect that the things I did, but I'm hopeful in. I'm very sure
that I was able to help someone’s life.

So that's one of the most impactful thing I did. Yeah.

Emma Bjorngard: So true. That's so nice. Jordan, what about you?

Jordan Wang: Yeah, I might take a different route than Angela. And I'll
focus on, I think the most impactful college experience that I had on me. I mean, I'm kind of
debating between which one to talk about at a high level, there were multiple opportunities
for me to kind of go outside of UConn and participate in these kinds of really big events.

One of them was run through residential life this big kind of residential national
organization conference that I had the opportunity to go to. And the other one was run
through JP Morgan, the big bank, and. It was kind of like a really big early career event that
happened for three days. And. You know, both of them were real unique in that
they allowed me to really step up, you know, take my experience at UConn and step outside
and look at, you know, meet other college students at other universities, Stanford, Harvard,
Northeastern all of these different universities.

And I just realized. You know how valuable our experience was
and how unique and positive, I guess, you know, I can kind of look back on my experience
and find value in the work I was doing and how my unique experience was equal and able to
be mashed at no matter who else, which other student across the U S that I was comparing
myself to.

And that kind of helped me gain a lot more self confidence in myself.

Emma Bjorngard: Yeah, that’s a great answer. I want to hear Sarah’s
answer to this question.

Sarah Fede: Biggest impact would have to be my involvement in Husky
bond. My first year, I wasn't really sure what has he found was, and like a lot of people were
advocating for it and I really wasn't sure what the big deal was, but I know it's for
a great cause like for children's medical center, but I never actually partook in it.

And so my freshman year I chose to do the full 18 hours. And just like seeing the,
the a million dollars that we raised actually the first year when we didn't get to the million
dollars. That was my sophomore year. But just seeing the amount of money we raised after
those full 18 hours, when you're completely sleep deprived and seeing like the miracle
children’s faces and the parents crying.

Like that was probably like the most impactful thing that's happened to me at
UConn, maybe even my, my whole life. But it really kind of set the path for my future that I
know like service is something that I want to continue with because it’s so rewarding and it’s just great to see like the impact that it makes.

[00:12:40] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:12:40] Angela, what do you know now that you wish you knew four years ago? And do you have any advice for incoming first-year business students?

[00:12:47] Angela Wang: [00:12:47] Yeah, I have, if I break it down, it will be three. Right. One is prepare yourself before you come to you can definitely, you know, read different books about college.

[00:12:56] You know, even watch some YouTube videos. That’s what I did personally, that [00:13:00] helped me a lot before coming to college. And the other thing, you know, you want to know is that in college, on like high school, especially UConn, it’s a big. College or there'll be a lot of people that you can meet. And on the other side, there is no structure of classroom anymore.

[00:13:12] There's no like same class, like, Oh, you're going to have same people together for the whole entire year for the whole same period. You know? Do you mean like our cohort experience, cohort experience? Yes, exactly. Yeah. So if you have any trouble with some people or you you're growing too, you know, your personality is changing too.

[00:13:29] So if you feel like you don't fit with those group of people, if you don't feel comfortable with those people, you can always leave. And it won't be like high school. You can always find a new people. For sure. That's something I didn't know. And I wish people knew that too. The last thing I want to say is definitely even if you miss an opportunity at some point, there will always be one more.

[00:13:48] It might not be exactly the same one, but there will be always more. For example, I first applied. To the one of the business e-board, but I was too afraid, as I said earlier about the confidence problem. Right. I was too afraid to [00:14:00] actually go there and speak it. So actually forfeit it before even I went there and I regretted that for a very long time.

[00:14:06] But then I was like, Okay, I'm going to try it again. And I actually liked other crock club, more astronomy, and then I find people in there. I found my community there and I actually ran for e-board. So when you even, you know, UConn is a big university, so there's always opportunity for, you know, more things in the things that you might have missed before.

[00:14:25] So, you know, you don't have to rush, you just have to, you know, look for the opportunity and keep going with it.

[00:14:30] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:14:30] I love that example. It's like when one door closes another one opens and you're exactly where you were meant to be. Right. Kind of, kind of corny, but true. Sarah, what about you? What do you, what advice do you have for incoming students that you wish you knew four years ago?

[00:14:44] Sarah Fede: [00:14:44] My advice for incoming students is to pursue, pursue your interests. UConn is huge. There are so many clubs and organizations that there are to get
involved in. And the fact that we have like a beekeeping club just shows that if you have an interest, we likely have a club for that. So kind of pursuing, getting involved in those organizations like that have like the same interests as you is how you build your UConn community more and more.

And that's coming. I wish I did. I didn't go to the involvement fair my freshman year, because I thought I had to be very static in what I was like. Business maybe going to the gym, things like that, but there's other things that I wish I pursued. Like I always think back my biggest regret was not trying out for like the club softball team and things like that.

But definitely utilizing the resources that you found has for you is definitely my biggest piece of it.

Emma Bjorngard: So I had the last question. What will you miss the most about UConn? And I will start with Jordan.

Jordan Wang: I think, you know, I was recently back on campus and I was telling Emma about this, but, you know, I was walking around and, you know, I missed the whole experience and you know, really that for me just told me that, you know, I really miss, you know, the college experience and that's kind of a very broad kind of definition.

But what I kind of mean is that. You know, college throws a lot at you and freshman year, you know, you're getting, trying to get involved, trying to figure out what college is trying to figure out, how to get through college and sophomore year. You're kind of just building on that. And each semester, each year, you really have the opportunity to embrace what college throws at you and use that to kind of grow and develop and.

Try something new and challenge yourself. And so, you know, there were so many opportunities early on that, you know, helps me grow and develop as a person that, you know, we're, we're in a safe space. It's UConn, right? It's not the real world where, you know, you, if you make a mistake, you might get fired.

And I had the opportunity to get involved in, to take risks. And for example, like my freshman year, I got involved in. My dorms hall association, which basically means you're helping to organize events for the community that you just met freshman year. Another risk I took was participating in a stock pitch competition for finance and society.

My first semester, freshman year when I didn't know any accounting, they didn't know what a stock pitch was. And that was so foreign, but I got to have that experience. I got to meet upperclassmen and he's really influential people that ultimately helped me grow and develop into who I am today. And, you know, I think looking back those experiences are what I'm so grateful for and what I'll miss the most.

Sarah Fede: I would say the UConn community mentality. Our center on campus, there's likely a good portion of everyone's wearing UConn gear. If you're in a shout, like UConn into the street, someone would definitely know what you're talking about. Maybe think you're crazy.
But if you were to do that outside of UConn, someone would probably not even know what chant you’re saying. Just like the basketball games, like how, like, Whenever like the campus just lights up when we win. I remember there’s one day, I think the woman’s just one going into the big four and I just heard screaming and shouting outside of the window. Like, that’s something I probably will never get again, outside of UConn. And then that’s something that I’m going to truly miss going forward.

Emma Bjorngard: I just have to mention this. This is so funny. Like when I came to UConn in 2013, it must have been, yeah. For grad school. That’s when the men won and the women and I just like 14, 14.

Yeah. And I just remember being like, Blown away. Like that was like all I wanted as an undergrad, but at my school we didn’t have the same kind of school spirit. So then getting it in grad school, I was like, Oh my God. And you do feel such a connection to, to the place. So it’s just so amazing that you, you all had that, you know, that’s okay.

Angela Wang: Technically when we’re in school for the past four years, we never won.

Kayla Hogrefe: What’s awesome is like, as an alum, I'm going to have the same passion. And like, no matter what city you’re in, like in the United States, there’s always like a UConn alum community that you can get plugged into, which is, which is nice. Totally. Anyway, what about you, Angela?

Angela Wang: It’s weird to say I miss being busy as a UConn student, you know, I cherish every moment that I was in a moment that I love doing case competitions. You know sometimes I, one time I bumped into this basketball women’s basketball player at the bathroom for no reason. You know, and knowing that there’s a community, you look around, you look at the campus through your dorm and know that where you are and you feel safe that, Oh, these people that are around me are also the same people who are, you know, trying to achieve the same life milestones, you know, graduated to learn more. Right. You know, even studying with, you know, friends at the library, Like past 2:00 AM is also some fun memories that I had that, you know, it'll be hard to, you know, get outside of college experience and miss those small pieces now, not an easy, big, not anything, you know, dramatic, but small pieces of college life that defined me for, I am who I am surrounded with.

You know, those things I’m going to miss for sure. You know, people in the environment as a whole.

Jordan Wang: Can I add something to that? No, I completely agree with that because you know, a lot of the time you’re not doing something like super out of this world, you’re just, you're studying for classes. You're doing homework, but I just
remember like some of the best memories I had where, you know, me and my study group, we would always.

[00:20:41] Go to like the library specific part of the library, the basement, which had like these really big tables, which we could kind of group around and we'd all just like sit there and collective misery and doing homework and, you know, studying. But you know, it was, you know, especially as it kind of came to like finals week, [00:21:00] although everyone was under a lot of pressure, everyone was like working really hard to make sure they like were studying and making sure they were like ready for exams.

[00:21:09] You would see that there would be like the library would be full and you would have this almost like community, all like participating this one huge challenge working individually, but you would all feel like you were part of something bigger, even, even though it was just finals preparation, but you know, those small parts of college life are really the ones that I have really fun stuff.

[00:21:34] Emma Bjorngard: [00:21:34] Perfect. Those are great answers. Awesome. Okay. Thank you so much. Those were all our questions, Kayla, right?

[00:21:41] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:21:41] Yeah. We were all taking me on a trip down memory lane too. That's what I miss the most about college is like, you used to be able to walk out your door, walk down the hall and like go see your friends. Well thank you all

[00:21:57] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:21:57] so much. That was really excellent. [00:22:00]

[00:22:08] One of the things that stood out to me hearing Angela and Sarah and Jordan speak was the idea of finding your community at UConn and how important that is. And Sarah really gave some great advice in telling students to pursue their interests, including those outside of business. And she shared that she was so focused on getting experience within business and business student organizations that it wasn't until she was a part of Husky and a little bit later on in her undergraduate career that she realized just how connected and how much of a part of a community she felt once you started pursuing those student organizations that maybe weren't necessarily aligned with business.

[00:22:48] Emma Bjorngard: [00:22:48] Yeah, I think she was really touching on something important there where sometimes, you know, you, you kind of have to step outside, you're in a business community and into a different community just to find people, you know, that [00:23:00] share your experience. Maybe whether that's related to an interest, you have, you know, your identity, whatever it is.

[00:23:07] So you can really kind of enrich your overall experience and it can help you, you know? Yeah. Build confidence. And it's nice to have a group of friends maybe that I'm not in your major or your, or your college, because they are meeting other people they know of other events and, you know, social opportunities that you can kind of take part of and branch out into.

[00:23:28] So that was something that stood out to me too. And I feel sometimes speaking to students who, who graduated and, you know, even my own experience, I also can look
back. At my college time and kind of not regret, but wish that I had branched out a little bit more. So it was very refreshing to hear Sarah’s perspective there.

[00:23:48] Kayla Hogrefe: And along those lines of stepping out of your comfort zone, that was another common theme that I heard specifically when Angela was talking about that she was an FYE mentor and really had to grow into being a skilled public school. Speaker, you know, that level of discomfort maybe that she felt at first is really how she grew and developed.

[00:24:07] And it led to her being able to participate in case competitions and get some experience and maybe make herself more competitive for internships and jobs. So that was another, another big thing that I took away was you’re going to feel uncomfortable and if you do, then you’re doing it right. And that’s really how you develop and grow as a student and get more experiences.

[00:24:28] You’re a faculty member. So what did you think about when Sarah and Jordan were talking about their relationships with faculty and developing their relationships with faculty?

[00:24:36] Emma Bjorngard: I feel often students kind of have this perception or understanding or feeling that, you know, professors are kind of scary and approachable, you know? Intimidating maybe a little bit, like I know I felt that way. And I’ve had students share that with me too. You know, I think it’s just worth to just try and push yourself, meet them in their office, you know, and see that they’re just human beings. The faculty want you to succeed so often they’re open to, even if you don’t have it. A specific question about the content of a class to just go and say, hi, introduce yourself. What does that say in person or online and just, you know, build that, you know, humans in connection to another person. And then you’re going to feel more comfortable both obviously to their office hours, like in person or online and ask questions about it, like the course itself, or even in class for me, for example, like I am an introvert and.

[00:25:30] It was always so helpful to kind of build a relationship with my professors outside of the classroom, you know, during office hours, because then I, when I was in class, I felt like I knew them somehow that made it easier for me to, you know, speak up in class and feel more comfortable. And they would then, you know, I felt encouraged me even more because they know me, so it’s going to be more comfortable for them too.

[00:25:52] So I definitely think it’s it goes both ways in terms of, you know, the importance of building those relationships. And that is fairly strategic to build those relationships too, because if you think about it, if you have a connection, you know, with your faculty member, you’re going to feel more comfortable to ask them maybe for a letter of recommendation in the future, or just insight into different career paths.

[00:26:16] Sometimes it’s just nice to have someone, you know, who maybe is familiar with a graduate program you might be interested in, or just the experience of going to graduate
school eventually, or pursuing a job. You know, these individuals, your faculty members, they are people who have gone through all those steps.

[00:26:34] You know, they're successful in their, in their careers then in what they do so they can of course be mentors and give you really good feedback and advice.

[00:26:41] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:26:41] Thanks, Emma, it's really helpful to hear your perspective as someone who is both a faculty member and an advisor. Another thing that I heard repeated a lot with a sense of nostalgia, almost from students who haven't even graduated yet is how those four years or your time in college really flies by.

[00:26:59] And you [00:27:00] even said you don't have time to do everything. So what do you think about that? What, what else do you want to add?

[00:27:05] Emma Bjorngard: [00:27:05] Yeah, I feel like, kind of in relation to that, they talked about how, when you look back at your time in college, what you will miss and what stands out to you are the small things, you know, like walking with your friends from the library back to the dorm, and it's really cold outside and you like ran across campus or you know when you stayed up super late and you're in the library and what was a collective misery or something like that, I think they said S studying for an exam.

[00:27:36] Right? You will remember those things on li so I think it's important to keep that in mind and, you know, in terms of being strategic you know, really thinking intentionally about maybe what clubs and organizations you want to get involved in and kind of. Maybe set goals for yourself. If there are things that those clubs organize that you want to do, like how can you build your skillset to be able to participate in those activities, whether that's, you know, a case competition or pitches and things like that.

[00:28:06] Kayla Hogrefe: [00:28:06] So that is our episode with the peer advisors sharing their wisdom to our new students. And we hope you found it helpful and fun to listen to.