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This is Eastern Michigan University's *Career Corner*. And welcome to season 2, "Finding Your Fit."

Welcome back to the *Career Corner* podcast. Brad Minton back here after being gone for a week. And how fitting is it for us to be now capping off this season with my partner in crime who helped me start this podcast. Welcome back, Logann.

Yes. And we are back with our last and final episode of the season, which is crazy. And today's episode is going to be all about networking as a freshman or sophomore, and how it can be a powerful tool if you do it early in your college career.

Now, Brad, we haven't been out of school for too long, but I can remember that back in my freshman or sophomore year of college, signing up for the student expo networking event and having absolutely no idea what to do, who to talk to, or even what to say. And I was also really nervous to put myself out there and join campus orgs or go to events on campus. So I'm sure you can probably recall this or relate to this, as well.

Absolutely. You are preaching to the choir. And one of the things that Logann and I have talked about in the past is that we're both introverts, full disclosure.

And putting yourself out there sometimes can be a little bit vulnerable. It can be challenging. And it takes a little bit more energy for us to do than our extroverted friends.

But they're not immune to feeling awkward either. It's just part of the process. It's really getting a feel for the environment.

And I remember being in college and seeing all these tables out, lined up, and just being overwhelmed by the magnitude of options. It's like a buffet of student activities and student organizations. It's like, you where do you go from here? How do you choose?

So knowing that it's easy to be overwhelmed with all those options, it's more important about why it could be the best decision that you make at EMU. And getting connected to these opportunities and really learning about them and understanding the resources that we have here available is such an important message that we want to pass along today.

So here today, we've got Shane Polich, who's a graduate assistant from Campus Life. And we're so

happy to have Shane here with us. And we'd love to have them introduce themselves and give us a little overview of Campus Life. So Shane, welcome. And can you tell us a little bit about your role and what the Campus Life office does here at Eastern Michigan?

Yeah. Yeah, I'd be happy to. And I just want to thank you, Brad and Logann, for having me on.

I'm happy to be here representing Campus Life. So in my role as a grad assistant, primarily, my objective is to plan and put on events for all of our students on campus. And that's looked a little bit different this year than in past years, and I'm sure we'll talk about that at some point. But as far as Campus Life and our objectives, we really want to give students opportunities to get involved and explore their interests outside of the classroom.

So I think the name "Campus Life" really says a lot about our office and what we do. We're responsible for all of the new student orientations that our incoming freshmen and transfer students go through. And we oversee all student organizations, fraternities, and sororities here on Eastern's campus. So when you're thinking of college life outside of the classroom, you're really thinking of Campus Life.

Absolutely, for sure. Thank you for giving us an overview. And it sounds like you are all very busy humans even during a pandemic, which is amazing. It really is. And with that being said, are you able to maybe go more in-depth or give our listeners some insight on any more out-of-the-classroom opportunities linked to your office or even how they might be able to get in contact with and access those?

Yeah, definitely. And I think there are a lot of ways that students can get involved with our office and with the campus in general. And for students that just went through orientation that are listening, this will probably be a little bit of a repeat for them. But the first thing I encourage every student to do is to download our EMU Engage app. The app is going to give them access to a lot of information aside from Campus Life, access to academic info, housing, dining, all those good things.

But when it comes to Campus Life and our events, students are going to be able to access that entire event calendar right there on the app. So it's super easy, accessible, right at their fingertips. Getting that app on the phone and in their hands is really a good way to know what's going on around the campus.

Another thing I always recommend is for students to create their profile on EagleSync. And that's another tool that Campus Life is trying to push and have students utilize. It's a platform, really, for all

of our student organizations. There are over 200 student orgs here at EMU, so plenty to choose from.

But students can go in with their profile, create it, and they can browse and look through all of the student orgs that we have to offer. They can sort them by interest area. So if you're looking for student orgs that relate to sports or to an academic area, you can search based on that criteria and find a group that really speaks to you.

I love that. I love the efficiency of it. Because again, it's a little bit better than, as my previous point, being overwhelmed by tables.

Now, you can go in and use these amazing search filters to be able to really navigate through utilizing your interest and seeing what we have available. And over 200-- I mean, that's awesome. That's really impressive.

Logann and I are career coaches. So from a career perspective, we really know and understand, both in our hindsight and just in general, how important it is to get involved, especially when it comes to building your resume and building relationships. And getting involved in these organizations and activities really within the first two years can lead to considerable career benefits. They can get you exposure to experiential learning opportunities, volunteer, community service. They're just amazing opportunities to really advance your network and bolster the resume, which are two important things as far as we're concerned.

So these individuals that you're connecting with and these organizations and these groups, they're eventually going to be the people that are going to provide maybe personal recommendations and referrals to jobs. And they're so important in that career development process. And so it is so important to take advantage of these. So Shane, from your experience, being in your position, maybe what are some other advantages that you see students being able to utilize?

Yeah. I think there are a lot of advantages to getting involved. And you certainly hit the nail on the head, Brad, in saying that the networking opportunities that come from getting involved are those that can lead to recommendations and references in the future. But I would say that getting involved really gives students an opportunity to build some of those soft skills that they're going to need in the future, those communication and relationship-building skills.

And so for anyone that's looking to build their resume through involvement, I would say that joining a student org is really a good way to go about it. Ultimately, there will be opportunities for leadership roles within those student organizations. And that's just going to further a student's development in

building those relationships and networking and planning events for their student org. Those are all skills that can go a long way in furthering their careers.

Another thing I'd love to add is also how powerful LinkedIn is when it comes to networking or building those relationships. So you're able to search for individuals who are currently involved on campus or maybe were once involved in those organizations Shane mentioned before, or even just faculty or alumni associated with them or the university itself. It's a really good way to even find a potential mentor. So Shane, are there any programs in your office that help students find or pair up with mentors or peer students, alumni, or faculty?

Sure, Logann. I think there are a couple different events that Campus Life puts on that are typically geared a little bit more towards professional development, aside from a student having to take that initiative themselves when they join up with a student organization. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, our Eagle Leaders Institute program is not going to be taking place this year. It's something that we're looking to put on when there's a return to some semblance of normal in the future.

But we're still looking to offer those professional development opportunities for students. And we're in the process now of putting on some events this semester where we're going to be bringing in some guest speakers to speak on various topics, including financial planning, mental health, and then of course some of that career growth and professional development. Those are some things that students can look out for in the future.

That's awesome, Shane. Thank you so much. The final question that we have for you today is going back to my previous point, which is that getting involved, particularly during these turbulent times, where everything is a little bit chaotic and there seems to be a little bit of a disconnect with campus, students can be a little bit apprehensive or even oblivious to a lot of the offerings that are available. And that's why we're doing this podcast today, to hopefully educate. But for students that are feeling reluctant to join groups and are a little more apprehensive to do that, what advice would you give them?

Yeah. I think you had mentioned earlier that it's like a buffet of student organizations, with all the tables that are typically out and around campus. And we don't have the opportunity to offer that right now, given the circumstances. So it can be overwhelming regardless, to think about the fact that there are over 200 student orgs here at EMU, and so many different ways to get involved.

So for a student that might be an introvert or who just doesn't really know where to start because

there are so many options and choices, the best advice I can offer is just to start with one. Find one student org that you're interested in and go to a meeting. Find one fraternity or sorority event that sounds interesting and go check it out.

Find one virtual program that Campus Life is putting on that sounds like fun and go check it out. Just start with one thing. It can be overwhelming to think about all the options that you have, but I think just taking one thing and doing it once makes it easier to put yourself out there every time after.

Yeah, absolutely. I appreciate that point, Shane, because it is. It's so easy to just start small. And it doesn't seem so overwhelming whenever you're just dipping your toes in the water. So I think that that's such an excellent point.

So we want to say a huge thank you to Shane for joining us. And to wrap things up today, we want to make sure that you understand that putting yourself out there and getting involved in some of these groups can be a little bit scary, but I hope Shane really hit the nail on the head for you, that this can be such an important part of your self-discovery, your career development, and just your overall satisfaction with your college experience. And so it's so important to get involved, and do so early because you can cultivate those relationships over time that will continue to reward you, and important to remember that Campus Life is here to keep you connected.

And as Shane mentioned, there's over 200 organizations. So I'm sure that you can find at least one that's of interest for you. And he gave you some very valuable tools to be able to navigate and find what's there.

Remember that Career Services, we're still here and available to meet with you through a virtual format in terms of now, how do you take the activities that you're doing in Campus Life, and now how do you leverage them, how to put them on a resume the right way, how to customize your elevator pitch, how to keep networking, how to interview effectively, and how to take all these things and put them together into a really great personal brand and package for yourself. So as we leave you today, thank you again for Shane. And remember--

We're here for you, and we support your goals.

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