

Hello and welcome to our presentation on parallel planning.

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Parallel planning is a highly individualized process. A lot of it depends on what your goals are and how you would like to accomplish those goals. Thus, for this presentation, we will focus on your goals, what your parallel plan might look like depending on those goals and the tools and resources available to you to align your parallel plan with your goals.

As always, we encourage you to speak with your academic advisor and a career counselor to go over all of your options in more depth.

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Before we begin the presentation, please take a moment to pause the video and to download the corresponding worksheet. I will prompt you at various points in the presentation to pause the video and to fill out the appropriate portion of the worksheet.

Now, let's get started!

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First, ask yourself the following questions.

- What is my goal? Someone whose goal it is specifically to become a nurse will have a much different parallel plan than someone who has a broader goal of just healthcare in general. So take a moment to think about what your goal is. Is it specific to your current pre-health major? Or are you not sure about your pre-health major but know that you just want to be in healthcare? Pause the video to answer this question on your worksheet.
- Now, why do you want to pursue this goal? Is it really your goal or are you being influenced by someone or something else? If your goal is inspired by your family or peers, for example, that is okay. You just have to make sure that you want it just as much as they want it for you. If not, perhaps consider other options that align more with your passions and have a conversation with those closest to you about it to see what they think! Pause the video to answer this question on your worksheet.
- Lastly, when do you wish to achieve this goal? Due to the competitive nature of the programs, having to apply a second time is a possibility to consider. Is this something you are okay with, given that you would then be pushing your graduation timeline back? Pause the video to answer this question on your worksheet.

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Now that you have answered these questions, let's see what your parallel plan might look like given your responses.

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Let's begin with the first question regarding your goal.

- If your goal is specific to your pre-health major, then we encourage you to be open to applying to multiple institutions aside from VCU. This is to make sure that you aren't putting all of your eggs into one basket. Along those lines, there is no limit to how many times you can apply to these programs. So, depending on your preferred timeline, you may also want to open yourself up to the possibility of applying to the same program a second time.

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- If your goal encompasses healthcare as a whole, you should begin exploring your options. Explorehealthcareers.org is a great place to begin doing your individual research. Then, make an appointment with a career counselor and your academic advisor to talk about your chosen option in more depth. Your alternate healthcare career may involve a change or an addition of a major. Again, your academic advisor can assist you with this.

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- If your goal is broader and extends to any helping profession (beyond healthcare), you should begin by exploring all of your options. Taking the strong interest inventory with Career Services is a great place to begin. This inventory will provide you with suggested careers that you would enjoy based upon your responses. From there, you can continue your research and then speak with your academic advisor. As with the previous goal, this one may involve a change or addition of a major.

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- For all of these paths, getting experiences is vital. This can be done through internships, volunteering, study abroad, shadowing and more. The main point here is to expose yourself to your career field of choice to make sure that it is the right fit and to network and meet professionals in the field. Conducting informational interviews with individuals who currently work in your dream job is a great way to further expose yourself to the field. Visit careers.vcu.edu to find resources on how to conduct informational interviews, how to find shadowing and healthcare-related volunteering and more!

Now that you know some of your options, pause this video and fill out the next block with what you think your parallel plan might encompass. Keep in mind that your parallel plan might encompass several of the aforementioned avenues.

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One example of a parallel plan would be as follows:

- Apply to VCU's traditional nursing program during your freshman year

- If denied acceptance, reapply during your sophomore year along with applying to nursing programs at other institutions

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Another example might be:

- Apply to VCU's traditional nursing program during your freshman year
- If denied acceptance, you may choose to add a 2nd major and then work towards a post-baccalaureate Accelerated Nursing program.

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As you build your parallel plan, keep some important factors in mind:

- If your parallel plan includes an alternate career outside of the four baccalaureate health degrees, does that alternate career include a graduate degree? If so, depending on what it is, you may have some flexibility in your undergraduate major. For example, if your alternative career is to become a counselor, you'd have multiple options for your undergraduate degree but then you would have to get your graduate degree in counseling.
- How many natural sciences courses (such as biology, chemistry and physics) are you willing to take? If those types of courses are not your strength, then perhaps having medical school as your alternate career path is not the best plan.
- What kind of lifestyle do you want? It is perfectly okay to consider the average salary and employment rates of various career paths in your decision-making process. Payscale.com is a great resource for this.
- Lastly, how long are you willing to go to school? If you want to graduate within four years and are not open to a graduate degree, having physical therapy as your alternate plan would not align with that timeline.

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Overall, as you build your parallel plan, you will want to keep in mind that the process of finding your ideal career is just as important, if not more, than actually reaching that goal. College is the ideal place to get a variety of experiences and meet different people in order to grow as an individual and find what you're passionate about. Oftentimes, we focus so much on the end goal that we miss the journey along the way and with that, we miss out on vital opportunities to explore other disciplines.

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So, as you explore, continuously ask yourself

- What do I like to do?
- What am I good at?
- What am I passionate about?

Does your currently chosen career field align with your responses? If so, what will your next steps be? If not, what resources will you utilize to conduct your exploration?

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