

**Ep# 300: How to Be a Standout Student in a CFP
Program with Alex Healy**



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Caleb Brown

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Welcome to the *New Planner Podcast*, where it's all about helping you successfully enter the financial planning profession and accelerate your financial planning career.

This podcast will help you understand the profession, become familiar with the various career paths available to you, and avoid the mistakes that limit your success.

Join your host, Caleb Brown, to explore the human side of creating a successful planning career through interviews, personal experience, and insights from the trenches.

Let's get started.

Caleb Brown: Welcome to the *New Planner Podcast*. This is Caleb Brown, your host. Today, we are celebrating 300 episodes, and I couldn't be more excited. I'm joined today by Alex Healy, a financial planning student at the University of South Florida and chair of the board for Mu Nu Upsilon (MNY) Fraternity. He joins the show to talk about why he pursued a financial planning major from the beginning of his college career, his role at MNY, what he seeks in potential employers, and how his work with MNY has set him apart.

I hope you enjoy this episode with Alex Healy. And I also wanted to thank all of our listeners for tuning in each week. Our listenership has grown every year and keeps getting stronger.

As a thank you to all of you, we are giving away a \$25 Amazon gift card to one lucky listener. To enter the giveaway, just email us why you decided to enter the financial planning profession and what you enjoy most about it. Send your response to podcast@newplannerrecruiting.com. Again, that's a podcast@newplannerrecruiting.com.

Enjoy the rest of the episode.

Hi, Alex. Welcome to the *New Planner Podcast*.

Alex Healy: Hey, Caleb. How are you doing?

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Caleb Brown: I'm doing great. I'm doing great, excited to talk with you. I mean, I've gotta tell you, you've got a lot going on for a college student. So you reached out to me and wanted to come on the podcast, so here we are.

Alex Healy: Yeah, I know, right?

Caleb Brown: So I think this will be a lot of—I mean, I appreciate that. You know I'm an effort-initiative guy. So maybe just start with why you are majoring in financial planning versus four or five hundred other majors that you could've selected?

Alex Healy: Yeah, of course. So starting back in my senior year of high school, for a long time I thought I was going to go into sports medicine. I wanted a career where I could help someone, and I was passionate about sports, so I thought that was going to be a great opportunity for me. Then I realized I really didn't love science that much, and I probably needed to switch career paths or my aspirations for my career.

Around the same time, I started getting into personal finance through different YouTube videos and really got interested in just the different strategies and how you can manage your money. So then I started to look at where I could have a career that blends my passion for personal finance with a career that helps people. The more I asked people and the more I talked with people, the answer was a career within financial planning. So that's kind of how I got interested in it, and that's why I decided to have that major at the University of South Florida.

Caleb Brown: Okay, so you went to the University of South Florida for the financial planning major, or you found it later on?

Alex Healy: When I first applied, I was initially an economics major. One of my mentors was an advisor, and he started out as an economics major. But when I got to orientation, I realized that wasn't actually in the school of business, and I knew I wanted to be in the school of business. It was that second time around looking back through the majors that I found personal financial planning, and it was a perfect fit. So I came in as a freshman as a personal financial planning major.

Caleb Brown: Nice. Okay, great. And where are you now, or how far along are you right now?

Alex Healy: Yeah. So I'm going into my senior year at the University of South Florida studying personal financial planning. Got one more year. I'll graduate in the spring of

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2027. It's been a great journey so far. I've learned a lot, met a lot of great people, and yeah, I'm excited to get going.

Caleb Brown: What has been the highlight thus far of your college career?

Alex Healy: Yeah, one of the things I'd say would be the highlight is joining Mu Nu Upsilon, which is a no-dues professional fraternity focused on financial planning. The founding chapter was actually started at the University of South Florida. I got to join that my freshman year as treasurer.

Really just by luck, I was going through the student center one day, and they were having a student org fair. I went and talked to the table because they had "Personal Financial Planning" written on it. They said, "Hey, we're a professional fraternity. We'd love to have you aboard." I hopped on a call with them a couple of weeks later, and they offered me a treasurer position.

As a freshman, I was shocked. I had no experience ever doing anything like that with student government, and they were offering me this position. Well, it's because it was their first year on campus—their first semester actually running this organization. From that, there have been so many opportunities to network, connect with people, and attend conferences, so that's probably been the most integral part of my college experience to this point.

Caleb Brown: So MNU business fraternity—what's the goal? What are you guys trying to do with that?

Alex Healy: Yeah, of course. So we're a no-dues business fraternity. We're the only no-dues business fraternity on campus. It's a huge win, and we believe there really shouldn't be a financial barrier to professional development. A lot of our members will come in, and we just want to educate them and equip them to have careers within the financial planning industry.

That takes shape in a lot of different ways. We'll have speakers and advisors come in to lead conversations on the core aspects of the CFP when it comes to tax planning, insurance planning, estate planning, investments, and managing your cash flow. We also offer opportunities to work with software. We have a financial services division where you get to run through mock client case studies and use eMoney software to build out plans and present them as if you were presenting to a client. They present those to actual practicing advisors, so the advisors get to give feedback to the students.

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We have a mentorship program. One of the big things that we stress is being ready and accredited on time. So we have the SIE scholarship that we offer, which will pay for your SIE exam. There are a lot of different opportunities and benefits, but all of it is to hopefully equip you and just give you clarity and direction for your career. We hope that's within financial planning.

Caleb Brown: That's amazing that you're doing all that, and very articulate, very well said.

Alex Healy: I appreciate that.

Caleb Brown: Really cool. So are you still the treasurer, or what do you do now?

Alex Healy: No. I was the treasurer my freshman year of college, and then I was president for my sophomore and junior years. Going into senior year, I am the chair of the board, which is really just more of an advisory role as we begin to transition leadership.

I've also taken on a role with the national organization as the national director of growth and chapter development. We have one other chapter at the University of North Texas, and both chapters have seen tremendous success. Just in the last semester alone, we brought in 26 new members, and of those 26, 15 of them switched their majors to financial planning.

I think there's a lot to be said about it coming from a student side—that students are encouraging other students to explore this career path. I think that holds so much more value than when a professor or an academic advisor says it. So we're able to bring many more students into the financial planning concentration.

As the national director of growth and chapter development, my role is going out, marketing ourselves, and bringing it to more campuses, making sure that the two chapters we have are well-supported, and building infrastructure for the future. We really believe that this is something that could go nationwide. We're at two universities right now, but we'd love to see it at 10 universities by the end of the school year, and at 20 or 30 into the following year. We have a model that works; it's seen success, it's bringing more people into the industry, and it's combating the problem many advisors are asking about regarding whether there are enough planners out there and where we get them. That's really what MNU is trying to help accomplish.

Caleb Brown: Did you say there were 26 new members for your chapter or for UNT?

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Alex Healy: For our chapter, just in the fall semester. We had 80 people come through Rush, and we took 26 of them. How we cut down is not based on merit; it's based on effort and initiative. Are they going up and talking to us? Are they making an effort? We've had people from other majors, like health majors, come in simply because we have a strong focus on financial literacy, and they wanted to have a better understanding of these personal finance topics. They came in looking for that, got really on fire, and some of them switched their majors.

We've also had some students in their 30s who are coming back to college to finish their degree—mid-career changers who also provide a lot of value. So yeah, we've had a lot of interest. Twenty-six came in this past semester, and 39 in total for the year.

Caleb Brown: I love this. You're getting people from other majors, and they're changing their major. It's a grassroots initiative. That's what I've always said: grassroots, boots on the ground, student-to-student, peer-to-peer, versus someone else towering over them saying, "You need to do financial planning." Why aren't more schools doing this? When did this start at USF?

Alex Healy: Yeah, so this started at USF. They tried to launch it in 2021, but there were still some tough restrictions around COVID and campus groups meeting, so it relaunched in the fall of 2023. But this idea was long in the works.

If you ask our founder, Mac Gardner, he was going to students and asking them what they wanted. It was really about having a community for financial planning students. The benefit of it being a fraternity versus a club is that you really create lifelong bonds that are beneficial both socially and professionally. That's the strong benefit of being a fraternity rather than just a club. There are a lot of social events we do that try to connect our members well with each other. Eventually, these are going to be the people that you're working with, so keeping these bonds tight can prove beneficial in a variety of ways.

Caleb Brown: All right, that makes sense, because as I've visited pretty much all the schools out there, they all have a financial planning club. What I'm hearing is you're doing similar stuff, except this is a little bit more formal on the fraternity side, and a lot of clubs have to pay dues as well, so it sounds like a different setup.

Alex Healy: Yeah, exactly. No dues is a huge part of it. The fact that it's 100% student-led is key. We have Mac as our executive director, but he lets us run with it as students, and that's how it's going to continue to be. There's a lot of value in that. Like you said,

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when it's coming from students and students are leading it, more students will follow. That's really been our key differentiator.

Caleb Brown: What do you guys need to expand into more schools?

Alex Healy: Awareness, number one. When many students come to universities and hear about financial planning, there's still a misconception about what it is. A lot of people still think back to the early days of either selling investment products or selling insurance products. While that's still relevant within the industry, it's really moving away from that and is so much more relationally driven.

That's something we try to emphasize to our members: the relationships you have with your clients are actual relationships, not just moving money around. I once heard an advisor ask, "If you were to go to your best friend, would you actually talk to them about your money?" Nine times out of ten, you've never talked to your best friend about money because it's a very intimate subject for many people.

The role we get to play as aspiring financial planners is working with clients in those situations and getting to be that voice of reason. That's an incredible opportunity. So for us to grow as MNU, first it's about creating more awareness about the career path. I know there are many different organizations doing that—New Planner Recruiting is one of them doing a great job expressing the value of what this industry is and what the career path looks like—but it's just more of that. For us, it's showing the model, seeing what's worked at USF and UNT, and bringing it to other campuses.

Caleb Brown: Yeah, that's awesome. I know there are some schools that would certainly be interested in this, and some that are smaller or newer that don't even have a club. There are probably specific rules and regulations with each university. Could that be a potential hurdle?

Alex Healy: Yeah, of course. The nice thing about us is that we are a professional fraternity first, so we pride ourselves on holding up that professionalism. There are different rules at any university, but as part of my role, I've already started to identify schools that could be good fits for us—ones that either have a financial planning program or a financial planning club. There are some schools that have a program but don't really have the social side.

Students at other universities have reached out to me saying, "Hey, this is really cool. Can we talk about what it looks like to implement this on our campus?" Getting our name out there is really important because there are students who want these types of

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organizations. There will be hurdles at any university we go to, but there's so much value that comes from this, and it's an aid to the school. What we've seen is that we've been able to transition a lot of students into the financial planning degree program simply because students are advocating for it. When you have an organization that can run itself and doesn't need any monetary commitment, it's a win-win for both the school and the organization.

Caleb Brown: Alex, listening to you—here you are going into your senior final year. Why are you doing all this stuff? Why don't you just hang out, enjoy your last year, and start your career?

Alex Healy: I'm just really passionate about this, and it's done a lot for me to open my eyes to what the industry is. I've seen the benefits for students, and in their testimonies, they say MNU played a huge part in shifting their mindset toward a career in financial planning. When I hear that and see something that works with so much opportunity out there, it makes too much sense not to go after it.

When I'm passionate about something, I'm going to see it through. For myself, it's been really fun to build this, and I've learned a lot through the process of building this fraternity and seeing our next generation. We have a new president at the University of South Florida for our chapter named Kevlin Gupta. Seeing what he's doing, he's going to take it to incredible heights as well, so I'm excited to see it continue to grow.

Caleb Brown: Really fabulous work. Kudos on all that. Let's talk a little bit more about this. When your college career comes to an end, what kind of role or firm are you trying to find? What excites you?

Alex Healy: Yeah, of course. I've had three internships so far, and all of them have been great, very different experiences.

Caleb Brown: Wait a minute. Did you say you've had three internships?

Alex Healy: I have had three internships so far. I did one during my sophomore year, one during the summer between my sophomore and junior year, and I just wrapped one up this past summer between my junior and senior year.

Through those experiences, I've gotten to see the back-office operational side as well as the front-facing client side. I've also gotten to see what it looks like on different spectrums of wealth—from working with clients around \$250,000 to \$500,000 versus a private wealth office, and I've even had experience within a family office.

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Seeing those different levels, I really desire a firm that does comprehensive financial planning—not just investment management. I want the full suite of financial planning in the firm I look for, and one that is principled and fee-only. Fee-only is where I'm looking and heading, but there are still many firms to explore. Going into senior year, I'm figuring out what I truly want in a firm. The biggest thing I look for is the opportunity for development and training, seeing how much they are willing to pour into my development.

Caleb Brown: What kind of role do you see yourself starting in?

Alex Healy: Ideally, I would love a role as a Financial Planning Associate, working under an advisor team to gain experience. The client experience side is really important to see what it looks like to serve clients. In an FPA role, that's really valuable, so that's where I hope to start in the industry.

Caleb Brown: When you say learning and growth, what does that mean? Can you give us specifics or tangible items?

Alex Healy: Number one is having a development plan clearly laid out—here are the things that will allow you to move up within the company. Clarity around that is really important.

Number two is the resources they provide. Are they willing to pay for exams and licenses? What are their thoughts on attending conferences and continual learning? I've learned so much going to different conferences, so are they willing to allow me to spend a couple of days in a different city learning and continuing to grow? It's only going to make me a better planner in the long term.

Also, the opportunity for mentorship—seeing how much the advisors will help lead me through their day-to-day operations so I can learn and eventually start taking on those tasks and projects myself.

Caleb Brown: Is there anything you're projecting that might be really challenging or difficult that you're a little nervous or anxious about?

Alex Healy: The common fear for a lot of students entering the industry is credibility. Obviously, we're going to spend time developing and learning, and from a technical standpoint, by the time we get to an advisor role, we'll be ready for the most part. But when you're an advisor in your late 20s, credibility is still something you have to combat.

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That's the thing that makes me a little nervous. It doesn't necessarily keep me up at night, but it runs in the back of my mind: even if I'm a technically savvy advisor at 28 or 29, will the clients I'm working with still see me as a credible option?

Caleb Brown: The answer is always, "It depends," but I think they would. You speak confidently and articulately, answer their questions, and provide good service. They're going to look at you and know you look young, but if other people have hired you and trust you, you're riding on that implied trust. We see it every day in our work at New Planner Recruiting, and I even experienced a little bit of it in my own career a long time ago.

Alex, I've gotta tell you, this is awesome. You're knocking it out of the park and taking on more and more. Talk about the leadership and volunteerism—how has that helped build your confidence, helped you stand out to get these internships, and prepared you to go into the field?

Alex Healy: Taking it back to high school, I had no real leadership experience other than being a captain on a sports team. But when I got into college—if you had met me my freshman year, I was the most introverted person you ever would have met. I still test that way on personality tests.

I knew I had to push myself. I was looking at the people around me thinking, "These guys are going places, and I don't want to be left behind." I purposefully put myself in positions where I was held accountable. Taking the president position, I knew I had to become a vocal leader and work hard, or else I wasn't going to do right by the organization and the people who put their trust in me.

It forced me to grow. I do a lot of public speaking now as president, chair, and in my new role with the national organization. Public speaking was something I was terrible at my freshman year, but it forced me to grow and just do it. That has been very beneficial for my development.

Caleb Brown: The sooner you face your fears, the sooner you can overcome them. It's not rocket science, right?

Alex Healy: Exactly. My mom has said since I was young: "Get comfortable being uncomfortable." For a long time, I disliked that, but I definitely see the value in it now.

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Caleb Brown: Well, Alex, this has been a joy and a pleasure—jam-packed full of stuff. Any final thoughts, comments, or words of wisdom you want to share with the audience?

Alex Healy: Just go out there and do it. Pressure is a privilege, and it means people put their trust in you, so it's your job to respond to that. Put yourself in rooms and places you don't necessarily deserve to be in yet. That has proved really beneficial for myself in getting different opportunities.

This is just the start. This is a relational business, so being able to talk to people, put yourself out there, and practice it in college prepares you for what you're going to be doing in your career. That's what I would leave it with.

Caleb Brown: A lot of fun, Alex. We'll have to have you back in a few years when you get out there to catch up on your success. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

Alex Healy: Thank you so much, Caleb.

Thanks for joining us for this episode of the New Planner Podcast. If you are ready to discover the top career paths for financial planners and see which track is best for you, we created a free guide to help you.

Grab your copy of the Financial Planner Career Roadmap at
newplannerrecruiting.com/roadmap.

There, you'll also find more tools and resources all created to help you build a successful financial planning career.

Tune back in next week for another episode, and until then, we are here to help you succeed.