

## **Victor Central School (VCS) Alumni Insights: Career Paths & Advice, Daniel Barrow, Certified Financial Planner®, Equitable Advisors (VCS '16) - The Power of a Financial Savings Strategy**

By Keith Partington, Alumni Connections, Victor Central School Educational Foundation

Every platform I touch—social, TV, or radio—flags risk factors such as frequent layoffs, AI disruption, high debt, inflation, and personal finance uncertainty. A savings strategy is an essential part of any career plan because it provides financial security and flexibility, serving as a form of career insurance, as important as building new skills and a wide personal network. I scanned our VCS alumni network for advice. I read a LinkedIn post from Daniel Barrow, highlighting a presentation he delivered on personal finance and investments 101 to a group of Jason Shelton's VCS high school students, sharing important advice as they approach their post-secondary careers. As a financial professional at Equitable Advisors, Daniel Barrow offers advice and strategies to help individuals make smart choices as their lives change. He provides comprehensive life planning for finances, retirement, and all aspects of a well-lived life. We met to review ideas to share with our students and alumni community.



Daniel graduated from VCS in 2016. As a student-athlete, he appreciated the wide range of academic opportunities and played football and lacrosse, with standout team experiences culminating in an undefeated season and a New York State championship during his final 2015-2016 season. That success led him to commit to Mercyhurst University, where he continued to play lacrosse and focused on intelligence studies, with a career interest in working at the FBI or CIA. His strong aptitude for math and finance led him to transfer to the University of Tampa, where he continued to play lacrosse and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Finance. He credits an internship with Equitable Advisors in Rochester during his senior-year winter break with cementing his career interest in financial planning. He joined Equitable Advisors on December 2, 2020, and recently passed the Certified Financial Planner Exam on March 17th.

I asked Daniel about the importance of establishing a savings plan right out of high school as part of career planning. Daniel shared that the earlier you start, the better habits you develop, so it's important to build those basic habits early. It's also helpful to gain a basic understanding of how taxes work and leverage possible retirement programs offered by your employer, or seek out alternative programs if not. Similar to career planning, it helps to systematize it into an overall lifestyle plan with an emergency account, so it doesn't become day-to-day stress. The emergency savings account ensures you have enough

money on hand for unforeseen life events. Economic downturns, layoffs, or unexpected health events can disrupt your income, making it harder to pay your bills during a transition period. Daniel shared, “Everyone has a different threshold of what they're comfortable with seeing in their bank account. The rule of thumb is to keep 3-6 months of expenses in an emergency savings account. So monthly expenses are, on average, what you're spending a month, whether it's for rent, a mortgage, car payment, insurance, making sure that those expenses are covered. If you're in a high-turnover job, you want a higher limit, closer to six times. Some people want 12 months of expenses because they have gone through a period of unemployment and don't want to deal with that struggle again. So, I would say it's really a matter of personal opinion, but on average, three to six months is the rule.”

Early and consistent savings can also harness the power of compounding, which significantly affects retirement readiness. Daniel agreed and shared the Rule of 72, using a dollar-rate-of-return example based on the S&P 500's historical average of 10%. If you take that 10% and divide it by 72, you get 7.2, which the model suggests means the \$1 you invested today will double every 7.2 years. Daniel said, “Let's assume someone has a 40-year work life. If you're working from 20 to 60, roughly, that's a lot of doubling. The more money you put to work earlier, the more time it has in the market to continue compounding. So that's a huge advantage of starting to put your money to work, because time is on your side, which is the most important variable when it comes to compounding your investments.”

While our discussion focused on early investing, Daniel shared that it's never too late to get started, whether to make your money work for you, save for your future, or plan for the next generation. Using a financial planning resource can help set a personal finance and savings plan by improving clarity, discipline, and long-term results while reducing the risk of costly oversights. Daniel uses tools with his clients based on modern portfolio theory, which provides a framework for efficiently building a portfolio of stocks, bonds, and even cash investments, tailored to an individual's age and risk tolerance. Daniel advises new client prospects to consider getting a second opinion when selecting a resource. Everyone in the personal finance business, even within the same company, operates differently, including in communication, investment style, review schedules, and meeting frequency with clients. It's important to take time to weigh your options and find someone you can trust who will work in your best interests for a long, productive relationship.

I'd like to thank Daniel for his time and insights on the power of a financial savings strategy for this VCS Alumni Story Series. You can follow Daniel on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/daniel-barrow>, where he regularly shares helpful life and financial topics.

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