

# **Stony Brook University**

## **University Counseling Center**

### **The Transition to University Life: A Resource for Parents**

Your son/daughter is at an extraordinary crossroad in life. He/she is embarking on an exhilarating voyage that encompasses a vast array of opportunities and experiences. While the voyage is wonderful and exciting, if your son or daughter is a new student, this may be a stressful time for him/her as well. Whether Stony Brook is close to home or far away, your son or daughter is probably anxious about adapting to University life. Perhaps he/she is concerned about leaving a comfortable circle of friends and meeting new people. If your student will be commuting to the University, he/she may be worried about where to park and/or eat lunch, or how to make friends outside the classroom. Maybe this is the first time your son or daughter will be living away from home for an extended period. Perhaps your student is transferring from another college or university and is apprehensive about how Stony Brook will compare with his/her former school. Your son or daughter may also be worried about finding an academic major where he/she will be happy and successful.

Every student is at an individualized point along a developmental or maturational continuum. One thing to keep in mind is that each student's developmental level and timing is unique. Everyone does not mature simultaneously. Some students have little difficulty adjusting to University life while others need additional time to adapt. Students who encounter problems often worry that no one else feels the same as they do. These individuals are usually pleasantly surprised to discover that, although others may not show it outwardly, they also share similar doubts and concerns.

There is no easy formula that we can give you to determine how your son or daughter will react to the challenges he/she will encounter at the University. New students are usually anxious because they don't like feeling inexperienced or uncomfortable. In addition, while your son or daughter may tell you about all of the advantages of independence, he/she may actually be wary of the increased personal freedom that is inherent in college life. The new environment, with different procedures and people, can create a sense of being on an emotional roller coaster. New students sometimes lose perspective on problems that can be resolved with help.

Some students verbalize their changing emotions and insecurities to their parents, while others do not. As a parent, it is extremely important to maintain open lines of communication with your son or daughter and for him/her to understand that you will be supportive, regardless of the situation. If your student will be away from home, let him/her know that it is okay to call you. If you have access to e-mail, it is an excellent supplement to the telephone. If your child will be a commuter student, encourage him/her to share his/her feelings and experiences with you. Whether your student will be an on-campus resident or a commuter, don't be surprised if he/she doesn't give you many details. From time to time, most students simply feel a need to touch base with mom or dad and you may sometimes find yourself in a position of having to "read between the lines."

Parents also have mixed emotions as students enter the University. It isn't easy to "let go" of a young adult who has been (and will continue to be, but in a somewhat different fashion) your child for the past 18, 19 or 20 years. This is often a time of reflection as well. It probably seems as if it was just yesterday that your son or daughter graduated from kindergarten to first grade. It is undoubtedly difficult to believe that this person is now poised to enter adulthood. Our advice to you is to be there for your student, but to also let go, thereby creating an environment conducive to his/her continuing development. Offer guidance, but let your student make his/her own decisions. They may not always be the same options you would choose and your son/daughter may make some mistakes along the way, but decision making is vital to the critical process of growth and development.

We hope these ideas will be helpful in understanding and dealing with this complex transition. The first year at Stony Brook is a tremendously exciting time, both for students and their families, and we hope and trust that you and your son or daughter will have a rewarding year!

Sincerely,

The Staff of the University Counseling Center  
Student Health Service Building  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY 11794-3100  
Telephone: (631) 632-6720

Fall and Spring Semester Hours: Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Summer and Intercession Hours: Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

## PARENTS AND FAMILIES RESOURCES

University Counseling Center - (631) 632-6720  
Dean of Students Office - (631) 632-7320  
Parent Office - (631) 632-1736  
Academic Advising Center - (631) 632-7082

### Websites providing relevant information:

- Stony Brook University Counseling Center <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/counsel/>
- College Parents of America <http://www.collegeparents.org/>  
“College Parents of America (CPA) is the only national membership association dedicated to helping parents prepare for and put their children through college more easily, economically and safely. CPA is a resource, advisor and advocate for more than 32 million households with parents of current and future college students throughout the United States.”
- PFLAG (parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians and Gays): <http://www.pflag.org>  
An excellent site offering good general information about issues facing GLBT individuals and how their loved ones may assist and advocate for them.
- The Parent Connection: <http://www.edc.org/hec/parents/>  
Information for parents about alcohol and other drug prevention.
- National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition: <http://www.sc.edu/fye/>  
Lots of other first year experience resource information.
- College Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/college/index.html>  
A section of the NY Times on-line. If you haven't accessed the NY Times before, you will have to register and establish a password. It's free and full of great information for both students and parents.

Adapted with permission from Westfield State College Counseling Center:  
[http://www.wsc.ma.edu/Current\\_Students/Counseling\\_Center/index.html](http://www.wsc.ma.edu/Current_Students/Counseling_Center/index.html)