Greetings Scholars!

As another fall semester comes to a close, we would like to thank you for all of your hard work this term in helping to elevate the University Scholars Program to even higher levels.

Our Peer Assistant Leader (PAL) Program had another wonderful semester, helping to ease the transition of new students to the Stony Brook and University Scholars communities. The Committees also did a terrific job in planning and implementing a record number of events this semester ranging in theme from our pajama night party to lectures on microaggressions and equity. In addition, the Scholars Council has been hard at work on new initiatives that will be implemented beginning Fall 2020.

A very big thank you to all of the SCH 101 Instructors who dedicated their time to teach sections of these seminars, as well as to the Scholars Fellows who excelled in their roles as Teaching Assistants and mentors this term.

We’re very excited about some of the new changes coming to the Program, so stay tuned for some exciting announcements next semester.

Best of luck on all of your final exams, and have a wonderful break,

-Jeremy and Brian-

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THE TORCH NEWSLETTER
SMASH! For Body Positivity  
WRITTEN BY ISABEL HERNANDEZ

There is immense power in words. We use words to define us, to give us purpose. At times, we let negative words be what defines us. When this happens, these words change. They no longer are just letters on a page, they become tangible tools that control us. But it’s important to understand your own power, and the power you have to overcome negative words and stereotypes. The event SMASH! For Body Positivity allowed Stony Brook students to realize this.

SMASH! For Body Positivity is an event University Scholars offered in collaboration with other organizations on campus focused on mental health, such as the Center for Prevention and Outreach and Chill. The event recognized body positivity and mental health through the smashing of glass plates. Students were encouraged to use dry erase markers to write negative words, thoughts, and stereotypes on their plates. They were then given goggles and a sledgehammer and proceeded to smash their plate as the crowd cheered around them. The event was a great demonstration of the extremely supportive community present at Stony Brook and was very inspiring to watch. The event allowed students to take control of the words that once controlled them, which is tremendously powerful.

The event was helpful in providing information for students regarding the resources students have access to at Stony Brook. While students learn about the variety of health organizations and programs available to us at orientation as well as in our SCH 101 class, events such as SMASH! for Body Positivity are extremely important. They allow students to be more informed of the large number of resources available to them, to ultimately be more proactive about their mental health. The volunteers provided information regarding the following organizations:

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Center for Prevention and Outreach (CPO)
- Peer Mental Health Alliance
- Swallow This! (Provided by both CPO and the Department of Arts)
- Long Island Association for AIDS Care (LIAAC)
- Student Health, Wellness and Prevention Services

If you or a loved one are affected by an eating disorder, please reach out for help. The organizations listed above are willing to help and provide any support needed for students on campus. There are also other resources available. You can call the NEDA National Helpline at 1-(800)-931-2237, chat with a professional at www.myNEDA.org, or text NEDA to 741741. For more information, go to www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.
Despite its proximity to the first wave of midterms, the annual Faculty Panel retains its status as a fan-favorite among students. Scholars seize the opportunity to speak to established members of the Stony Brook community. On October 7th, students gathered in Ballroom B of the Student Activities Center to participate in the question-and-answer style event. As students settled with their snacks and coffee in hand, Dr. Brian Colle introduced the invited panelists: Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Undergraduate Colleges, Dr. Charlie Robbins; Chair and Distinguished Professor of Applied Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Joseph Mitchell; Assistant Professor at the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Dr. Donna Selch; Lecturer at the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Dr. Tara Rider; Associate Professor and the Director of BFA in Creative Writing, Dr. Julie Sheehan; and Dr. Elizabeth Boon of the Chemistry Department. Offering an array of disciplines, there was surely enough wisdom to go around.

An underlying theme, throughout the event, was passion. All panelists urged the importance of identifying an interest and harvesting all resources presented. However, this approach is just the bare minimum. The most rewarding achievements are those that require initiative. It is natural to be reluctant in this pursuit. Dr. Robbins promises that one's dedication and curiosity will carry them far. While searching for these opportunities, students should not be set back by their lack of experience. Dr. Boon emphasized this point by referencing her research assistants. In her chemistry labs, she doesn't expect her students to have an extensive background in biology; therefore, she teaches them the fundamentals necessary to excel. This idea is mirrored in Dr. Mitchell's experience as an undergrad. He recalls participating in an internship that required programming—only he had no prior programming experience. Through self-reliance, he achieved what he set out to do. Upon completion, he shared a laugh with his boss after revealing his circumstances. Both instances circle back to Dr. Mitchell's opening piece of advice: you don't need all the answers, but it is crucial to demonstrate problem-solving skills.

The panelists were especially impressed when students demonstrated growth over time. This trajectory can only be acknowledged by recognizing one's initial state. Dr. Selch detailed the path taken by one of her students. A simple discussion board assignment led to the student attending each of her office hours out of pure fascination. The student went on to become the project manager of a multi-person operation and the recipient of two grants. This inspiring case underlines the importance of mentors and creating opportunities for oneself.

Not only do these experiences encourage academic growth, but they also offer a chance for personal growth. As a lover of animals, Dr. Rider looked back at her time interning at the Cincinnati Zoo. She remembers being terrified as she was given a microphone and told to speak about the walruses. Soon enough, she was excited by the tasks the job entailed. So much so that she returned each summer of her college career.

To achieve these roles, consistency is key. Once an initial meeting is scheduled, Dr. Sheehan suggested writing a draft letter, printing it out, and referring to it when necessary. One should include their understanding of the professor's work along with their intentions. In addition, follow-up emails reinforce interest and are strongly encouraged.

During undergraduate studies, there are a plethora of ways to get involved. In the process, one could ignite their passion, even in the most unexpected ways. We thank Dr. Robbins, Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Selch, Dr. Rider, Dr. Sheehan, and Dr. Boon for sharing their time, stories, and invaluable advice.
Beyond the Classroom
written by Ilona Kaydano

The University Scholars’ Beyond the Classroom panel was held on September 12th at 7:00 in the Student Activities Center. Beyond the Classroom is an annual panel event consisting of current University Scholars who are involved in a variety of leadership opportunities on campus. The point of the panel is to discuss leadership and involvement on campus and some of the positions that were represented and discussed included Scholars Fellows, Orientation Leader, Resident Assistant, Student Ambassador, Scholars’ Intern, Teaching Assistant, Study Abroad, and others.

The five panelists this year included Flynn DeLany, Casey Yap, Maya Brown, Ryan Tam, and Peony Tse. These five scholars represent a wide variety of leaders and organizations on campus. Some of the organizations on campus mentioned by the scholars that they are a part of include, Circle K International, Undergraduate Student Government, University Scholars Fellows, ASTC (Academic and Success Tutoring Center), LASO (Latin American Student Organization), and the Statesman.

Some of the advice the panelists gave for students included:
- Stick to things you only want to do 100%
- Get close to your advisors and try new things
- Do one thing academically, one things for your passion and one thing socially
- Things happen for a reason, don’t be shy and put yourself out there
- One thing can lead to another

Overall, the Beyond the Classroom panelists were very knowledgeable with an impressive array of interests and varied involvement on campus. Hearing about their experiences and listening to their advice is always a great way for freshman, and even upperclassmen, to know where to start, or have role models to look up to in the scholars community. The panelists demonstrated all the ways scholars can get involved on campus and find leadership opportunities and I would highly recommend all freshman scholars attend this panel their first semester at Stony Brook to see what they can become one day.

Questions from the audience of students answered by the panelists:
- How do you balance involvement and academics?
  Priorities are important: self care and getting enough sleep!
  Gain an academic footing first to build a foundation
- What is the time commitment for being an RA?
  It depends on how large your staff is
- What is the fellows process and what are fellows responsibilities?
  There’s a form to complete followed by group interviews
  You form a close relationship with your students
  You are able to share experiences and help your students out
- How do you find research positions?
  Southampton campus has some
  Find a professor and read their literature
  Check out areas that interest you and express an interest to professors even as a freshman
  There will be a scholars research panel in the spring!
- When should you plan to study abroad?
  Depending on when you want to study the applications are due several months in advance
  There are scholarships and access to any SUNY study abroad program or even national student exchange
- What would you have done differently?
  Be involved but know your limits; don’t spread yourself too thin
  Do social activities and make new friends
  Nurture your relationships
  Utilize the career center along with the job and internship fairs

Photos by: Faye Kho

Scholars listening to advice given by the panel

Panelists Flynn DeLany (left) and Peony Tse (right) share their answers to students’ questions
Scholars’ Ball and Charity Toy Drive
Written by Isabel Hernandez

On Monday, December 9, from 5:00 pm-7:00 pm, students gathered in SAC Ballroom A to the annual Scholars’ charity ball. The event allowed students to come together to relax before Final Exams, as well as donate to a charity. As Scholars gathered, the sense of community and support was evident within the group. To take time before finals to be with your peers and donate to a good cause was something special, making this event extremely inspiring.

The underlying theme in the event was unity. The event acted as an apparent demonstration of the community fostered in University Scholars. The atmosphere was festive with a dessert bar and performances from all three of Stony Brook’s a cappella groups; The Stony Brook Pipettes, the Stony Brook Vocalists, and the Stony Brook High C’s. Throughout the evening, they sang various popular hits.

It’s important to remember, especially during the arrival of the holiday season, that some people aren’t lucky enough to celebrate. It’s easy to live in a bubble, unaware of the others who are less fortunate. The toy drive was incredibly successful and showcased the thoughtfulness of Scholars at the event. The large donation the event garnered was very encouraging to see. Many students arrived with toys to donate to charity and within minutes of the beginning of the event, a table was stacked high with a variety of toys.

The Scholars’ Ball and Charity Toy Drive event is held every year, planned by the University Scholars Outreach and Social Committees under the guidance of Jeremy Marchese, University Scholars Program Director.
Scholars helped cheer on the Stony Brook Hockey Team and helped families in need by donating non-perishable food items.

Scholars had a night of snacks, games, and fun organized by the Social Committee’s. Scholars wore their PJs while playing some board games, JackBox, and Mafia with new friends.
ADVISING

All University Scholars are encouraged to make use of their Advisors. From academic planning to research to general advice, the University Scholars Advisors are an invaluable resource to students. Please feel free to contact any of your advisors by email.

Congratulations on a great semester and see you all in the new year!

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For the most up-to-date information please visit the Scholars Website at: www.stonybrook.edu/uscholars