As we come to the close of another academic year (perhaps one of the most-challenging the Stony Brook Community has faced), I would like to take this opportunity to focus on some of the extreme positives that have occurred in the University Scholars Program, and for our students. We were finally able to host a number of very successful events again this semester, and our students took full advantage of the chance to interact with other Scholars, and to gain helpful knowledge through our academically- and career-focused events. I would like to thank the faculty and staff who devoted their time to teach a SCH 101 or SCH 102 for us this year. The courses were extremely successful and the students enjoyed the topics that were covered, and getting to know their instructors.

This was also one of our most successful years for our students, academically. We had record-high numbers of GPAs that exceeded 3.5, and the highest number of graduating students, ever, to be graduating with honors (GPAs of 3.5 or higher) - 148 in total, and 111 of those with GPAs of 3.7 or higher - and an average GPA, for all of our students, of 3.73. This is made even more impressive given the circumstances they were under, and I am exceptionally proud of them all.

We had the privilege of naming six of our graduating students as “Senior Scholar of the Year Award” recipients. Their contributions to the Scholars Family, the Stony Brook community, and the community-at-large over the course of their undergraduate careers, are extraordinary, and detailed in this edition of The Torch. In addition, FIVE Scholars were honored with the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence. This is the highest award the SUNY system bestows upon students, and the five recipients are extraordinarily deserving of the recognition.

I have always been proud to be a member of the Scholars Family, and I can honestly say that the students are what continue to motivate me day in and day out with their dedication, compassion, and their unwavering desire to help others. I will miss our graduating Scholars tremendously, but I know that they are destined for amazing things and will be the leaders that help to change our world.

All the best,
Jeremy
Director’s Message
Jeremy Marchese

University Scholars Events

Accessing Healthcare Within Underserved Communities: A Community Dialogue
Writer: Jale Caneli
Editor: Vania Zubair
Photographer: Naomi Newen

Open Mic Night
Writer: Kelly Zeng
Editor: Jale Caneli
Photographer: Saba Gulzar

Pre-Med 101 Workshop
Writer: Vania Zubair
Editor: Ashley Indictor
Photographer: Vania Zubair

Grow A Cactus and Paint Up
Writer: Sara Giarnieri
Editor: Ashley Indictor
Photographers: Ashley Indictor & Sara Giarnieri

Crossword Puzzle
By Vania Zubair

SUNY Chancellor’s Award Winners
Writer: Isabel Hernandez

Senior Scholars of the Year
Writers: Annie Lin, Ashley Indictor, Jale Caneli, Maria Garcia, Pavithra Venkataraman, Vania Zubair
Editors: Annie Lin, Ashley Indictor, Isabel Hernandez

This Spring five University Scholars received the SUNY Chancellor’s award - Maya Brown, Ethan Ertel, Samuel Escobar, Joshua Goodman, and Abdullah Hassan.
Scholars events

SPRING 2022

Open Mic Night

Accessing Healthcare Within Underserved Communities: A Community Dialogue

Grow a Cactus and Paint Up
According to the National Mental Health Alliance around 21%, or every 1 out of 5, of adults deal with mental illness. Deteriorating mental health can result in various negative symptoms, as people with depression have a 40% higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population. The literature on the effects of mental illness on individuals is well studied, yet only 46.2% of U.S. adults with mental illness received treatment in 2020, illustrating a barrier between individuals who may benefit from mental health services and access to such treatment. Underrepresented populations, such as immigrant and disabled communities, are even more likely to lack access to healthcare overall.

On March 2, 2022, Stony Brook University’s Center for Civic Justice held an event in Ballroom A of the Student Activities Center entitled, “Accessing Healthcare Within Underserved Communities: A Community Dialogue.” This event is part of the series of community dialogue events that allow faculty and students to come together to learn and discuss pressing issues of today. The event commenced with the guests sitting at tables with students and a pair of student facilitators to help guide the discussion. First, the groups played a Candy Land-esque board game where each player gets a player profile card with a description of socioeconomic status, race, and location. The players roll dice to move spaces on the board to see who reaches the end of the game first, representing how efficient and pleasant a clinical experience was for each player. The quick game was an interactive exercise to see how chance and different communities play important factors in who is likely to have more or less access to better healthcare services in the U.S.

There were two guests at the event; the first guest was Danielle Merolla, the Associate Director of Stony Brook University’s Center for Prevention and Outreach, who spoke on the issue of mental health on college campuses. The second guest was Alex Cali, a Sociology graduate student who discussed the barriers to healthcare for immigrant (naturalized and undocumented) communities in the U.S. These barriers include, but are not limited to, language, racial bias, lack of insurance, among many others. Further, a video was played that showed interviews with patients, who had various disabilities, and illuminated the lack of accessible tools and accommodations at their disposal. After each speaker, the groups shared their opinions about the topic which led to fruitful conversations about potential solutions to every issue. Lastly, there was an open mic session for students to voice their opinions on other communities that face similar barriers and issues to healthcare, one which University Scholars can potentially host for the next community dialogue, such as the LGBTQI+ community and related topics such as HIV awareness, and treatment of transgender (and other non-cisgender) individuals, as well as treatment of female (particularly POC) patients in healthcare.

Ultimately, the event was educational and intellectually stimulating through the lectures presented by the guest speakers and civil discussions between students and faculty alike. Difficulty with accessing healthcare in the U.S. is a prevalent issue that is relevant to all members of society, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years; so it is crucial, and beneficial, to continue to have community dialogues on matters with experts on the subject to voice their concerns and hear opinions and potential solutions from Stony Brook Students.
On March 10, 2022, Scholars gathered at the Student Activities Center from 7:00PM - 8:30PM for the “Open Mic Night” hosted by the University Scholars Social Committee. All University Scholars were welcomed to attend and sign up for a variety of performances including, but not limited to, poetry, stand up comedy, live music, skits, and karaoke. Many students just finished taking stressful midterm exams and this event allowed for them to relax and enjoy themselves. It also allowed students to express themselves and share their talents. The organizers of this event, Saba Gulzar and Amelia Chicas, also came much earlier than the start time to set up the decorations and prepare cookies and drinks for everyone.

The first performance was by the acapella group, The Stony Brook Vocalists, who performed three songs. The music was beautiful and exquisitely expressed the perfect collaboration between the singers. The second performance was by Aman Rahman, who recited two spoken word pieces. Next, Xander Baron played a delightful song on guitar that showed his skill as a guitarist. Following was Chris Zhang who recited two poems, one of which expressed how everyone is living in their own time zone, including the line “you are not late, not early, but just on time.” The poem resonated with much of the audience as college students are prone to feeling anxious about their futures and falling behind others. Next, Isabella Berger performed a comedic skit that she wrote herself.

The next section of the show was reserved for karaoke. Some singers signed up to perform ahead of time, while some made the impromptu decision to perform, motivated by the cheerful atmosphere. The whole audience was captivated by the performers and everyone cheered and applauded the performers before and after the show. Not only did the audience enjoy the Open Mic Night, but so did the performers because they, and their talents, were greatly encouraged and appreciated.

Several intermissions throughout the event allowed students to chat with each other. The room was full of laughter and conversation. The Open Mic Night was a wonderful opportunity for Scholars to connect as a community. Even when there were some technological difficulties, everyone was eager to help while the performer would boost the ambience in the meantime by making jokes with the audience.

Ultimately, the success of this event went beyond the organizers’ expectations and all the Scholars gave very positive feedback for the event. Of course, this couldn’t have been achieved without the support of the University Scholars Director, Jeremy Marchese; the event organizers, Saba Gulzar and Amelia Chicas; and the Scholars Social Committee.
The Pre-Med 101 Workshop was hosted by the Pre-Health Advising office on March 22, 2022. As a pre-medical student, applying to medical school in such a competitive age can be overwhelming. Luckily, this workshop served as a general guide for students applying to medical school including which courses they should expect to take, and which co-curricular activities are recommended. The workshop started with Victoria Van Denmark, a pre-health advising graduate assistant, presenting an informational PowerPoint on the foundation of medical school applications. Towards the end, Denmark opened the workshop to the students in attendance to give them the opportunity to ask questions. Kelly Haller, a pre-health advisor, then addressed the queries of the students. The workshop mainly covered topics such as coursework requirements, maintaining a competitive GPA, the importance of the MCAT, helpful co-curricular activities, and general tips and advice.

Coursework for Medical School

As said in the workshop, these are courses that should be prioritized during one’s undergraduate studies, as they are required by most medical schools to apply:

- 1 year of English (WRT 102 will satisfy one half of this requirement; the second half can be fulfilled by EGL 191, EGL 192, EGL 193, WRT 301, WRT 302, or WRT 303);
- 1 year of Math (which can be comprised of either two semesters of calculus; or one semester of calculus and one semester of statistics);
- 1 year of General Chemistry with Labs;
- 1 year of Biology with Labs;
- 1 year of Organic Chemistry with Lab;
- 1 year of Physics with Labs;
- 1 semester of Biochemistry;
- Introduction to Sociology and Introduction to Psychology are also strongly recommended to be prepared for the MCAT.
Pre-Med 101 Workshop continued

GPA and MCAT:
To be a competitive medical student applicant, it is integral to focus on one's GPA and MCAT scores. For this category, Victoria advised pre-medical students to keep their grade point average as high as possible. The MCAT should preferably be taken after completion of Biochemistry (BIO 361), as the topics taught in this course cover the majority of MCAT test questions. Although GPA and MCAT are not the only factors for an applicant to be successful, they are still the first ones considered by most admissions committees.

Letters of Recommendation:
It is recommended that pre-med students ask for letters of recommendations from professors who can speak personally, knowledgeable, and specifically about the applicant's work ethic, academic prowess, and potential as a medical school student. Two recommendations must be from professors of science courses that the applicant took. One can also ask professors who taught other required coursework, but they can also ask professors working in other disciplines or that taught a class they enjoyed. Furthermore, one can ask their research mentor, a healthcare worker they shadowed, and/or a volunteer supervisor.

Co-curricular Activities:
Volunteering is a helpful way to both boost your resume and give you real-life experience. It doesn't necessarily have to be healthcare-related, and Victoria Van Denmark encourages students to participate in activities that they enjoy and can illustrate both consistency and commitment.

Shadowing:
Shadowing is the act of observing a medical professional in their daily responsibilities for their occupation. Medical school applicants are encouraged to shadow doctors of various specialties. This is a wonderful opportunity to build connections and learn about the field of one’s interest through the eyes of a healthcare professional.

Research:
Though not required, medical schools like to see their applicants have a background in research. This can be in the form of doing one’s own research, or working as a research assistant, but there are many ways to be involved. The two types of research students get involved in are Clinical and Bench research. The research one chooses to partake in does not necessarily have to be in a scientific discipline - it can be anything one is curious about.

For additional information, please refer to the Pre-Health Guide at:

Tips and Advice:
Students at the workshop were advised to carefully consider the G/P/NC grading option offered by Stony Brook University (availability of this option depends on the individual course) and to keep in mind that taking a gap year is becoming a more common action taken by pre-medical students. To improve one’s GPA, they could consider a post-baccalaureate program. Last, but certainly not least, students are advised to utilize all of the resources offered to them at Stony Brook, and to reach out for help when needed.
Scholars grouped in the Union Ballroom on Monday, April 18th, to plant cacti and paint the pots they were planted in. After a welcoming introduction from Ashley Indictor and Samama Moontaha, everyone eagerly lined up to grab some paint, the most popular colors being blue and white. From there, a plethora of designs were born (besides, who can resist the creative flow with music from Doja Cat and Glass Animals in the background?).

After the paint on our pots (or fingers, if messy) dried, we got to plant our cactus seeds in the soil inside the pot. Soon, lots of our Scholars are going to be cactus parents.

I spoke to our hosts Ashley and Samama, both freshmen, about the event.
Talk about your process in coming up with this idea.

“Because it’s the spring semester, we wanted to do something more spring-related, where students could just relax and maybe walk away with something that brings life to their rooms,” said Ashley.

“The number one attraction is food, but the second is being able to make something that students can take home that they can look at and feel proud of their accomplishment, even if it’s something as small as making a plant. I thought that was really cool and fit the season,” added Samama.

“Sometimes students need an icebreaker when they’re meeting each other. Because it’s been a little difficult due to COVID-19, we wanted to offer an activity that Scholars could work on as they introduce themselves to each other and make meaningful connections,” said Ashley.

Do you have any ideas for the future for other University Scholars events?

“I definitely want to continue these types of events, where Scholars make something, bring it home, look at it long after the event,” said Samama.

“Or something more competitive like our Gingerbread House Competition last semester, which many Scholars attended. However, future events will mainly depend on the Scholars’ Representatives for next year and how they want to collaborate with us for future events,” Ashley chimed in.

I think it should definitely be hands-on, regardless of whether it’s making something or an open mic because that is like an icebreaker without the awkwardness of an icebreaker,” said Samama.

Ashley and Samama’s ideas certainly worked, as different tables had different Scholars talking to each other. Socialization was a huge aspect of this event, and it was awesome to see people break the ice.

My table had a little group with Cass, a sophomore, and Farrukh, a freshman. During our plant pot paint session, I asked:

How did you find out about this event and what made you want to attend?

“I think I got an email about the event,” said Cass. “I saw ‘cactus’ and I really like plants.”

“Same. I just saw an email and I like free stuff, so I said, ‘Why not?’” added Farrukh.

There are definitely interesting event ideas in the works for future semesters. Be sure to check your emails like our Scholars Cass and Farrukh, so you don’t miss out. Use Corq and SBEngaged as well to keep up with University Scholars exclusive events. Maybe your empty windowsill will become filled with happy little plants!

Many thanks to Ashley, Samama, and the rest of the University Scholars for this fun and creative event!!
CROSSWORD

ACROSS
2. Building on the Academic Mall Named After a Famous Mathematician
4. Largest of the Three Honors Program on Stony Brook's Campus
6. University Scholars Faculty Director
8. Stony Brook Mascot

DOWN
1. Current SBU President
3. Event Where Students Design Boats and Race across a Pond
5. Name of Stony Brook Mascot
6. Annual Concert Hosted by USG
7. Stadium Where Athletic Events and the University's Graduation Ceremony are Held
The SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence is the highest award, and most significant honor, bestowed upon a student by the State University of New York system. It acknowledges students for their outstanding achievements - those who have excelled not only academically, but have demonstrated strength in areas such as leadership, campus involvement, community service or the arts. The students awarded are representative of what SUNY excellence truly means.

This Spring, not one, not two... but FIVE University Scholars received the award - Maya Brown, Ethan Ertel, Samuel Escobar, Joshua Goodman, and Abdullah Hassan.

We would like to congratulate them all on this incredible accolade, and highlight their accomplishments during their time at Stony Brook University, and with their Scholars Family. They are a testament to what makes the Scholars community so special. We know that their success will not end upon graduation, but will only propel them forward, and that our connection with them will continue as alumni, as many of them are excited about the notion of helping future University Scholars as mentors. We are so very proud of them, and look forward to the wonderful things their futures have in store for them!
Senior Scholars of the Year

SPRING 2022

Senior Scholar of the Year Award Recipients (not pictured is recipient Maya Brown)

Photo by: Ashley Indictor

Photo by: Vania Zubair
Maya Brown

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD RECIPIENT

Maya is a journalism and political science double major at Stony Brook University with a passion for race and equality reporting. She has interned for CNN, NBC News and the Council on Foreign Relations. While at school, she is the Managing Editor for The Statesman and the President of the Stony Brook Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SBU-SPJ). As Vice President of SBU-SPJ her junior year, she won the Norman L. Prusslin Educational Program Award for the programs she created for students. She is also Vice President of the Latin American Student Organization, a member of the School of Journalism Student Advisory Board and a University Scholar, in which she was a fellow during her sophomore year helping freshman students. Being a fellow for scholars gave her the opportunity to learn and practice her leadership skills and gain a strong sense of confidence. She also was crowned Stony Brook University Homecoming Royalty for 2021-2022.

Student Feature

BY: ASHLEY INDICTOR

Passionate about spreading awareness through clicking keys on her keyboard, Maya Brown is equipped with her developed skills in writing and networking to assist her in acquiring a masters in journalism at New York University. She truly made the most of her undergraduate career at Stony Brook University, engaging in activities meaningful to her and spreading awareness about social issues.

Double majoring in journalism and political science, Maya spent her time at Stony Brook University learning about the fundamentals of writing and understanding the tense political and social atmosphere in today's society. Since her youth, Maya was fervent in vocalizing and sharing her heartfelt interest in reducing racial disparities through storytelling and writing. She brought her enthusiasm on campus by joining the “Building a Better School of Communication and Journalism” committee.
As a part of the committee, she collaborated with her peers to improve Stony Brook University's esteemed School of Communication and Journalism by assisting in the program's work in staying modern and in touch with today's times. Peers and faculty remember her as the student always volunteering for events and to speak on behalf of the program to current and prospective students.

Maya is motivated to tell the stories most untold to break down the walls and stigma brought on society by racism and social inequality. During the school year, she takes the time to serve as the editor for Stony Brook University's newsletter, the Statesman. Starting off as a writer herself, Maya took the initiative in understanding the editorial and writing process in news telling before taking on one of the main positions in the organization. Applying her skills off-campus, Maya was an editorial intern for CNN NY News Bureau, and the Social News gathering Intern for NBC News. She used her positions to learn from those with decades of experience to become more aware of the field and how she could best contribute to her future career with the wisdom she gained.

Maya is definitely a force to be reckoned with, as she not only took her time to work for these news organizations, but she also made time to explore her passions separate from journalism. She was a part of Stony Brook University's marching band as a baton twirler, invigorating school spirit at the university's athletic events. Maya served as the Public Relations Officer for the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), a popular group on campus that works to create a supportive and inclusive environment for those of Latin descent. She spends her free time being involved with her church and exploring her interests and passions.

Her enthusiasm and dedication to journalism prepared her well for this next stage of her life. Receiving a masters in journalism will aid her in achieving her dream career of being a correspondent for broadcasting agencies and organizations that will allow her to continue spreading her message of awareness and inclusivity. If her time at Stony Brook University has taught us Scholars anything, it is that persistence and determination prevails in the face of conflict and opposition. We wish nothing but the best for Maya in her future after graduation this Spring!
Ethan Ertel is an aspiring physician-scientist in University Scholars majoring in biomedical engineering and applied mathematics and statistics. He conducts neural respiratory control research in Dr. Irene Solomon’s lab and studies COVID-19 predictive modeling with Dr. Hassan Arbab. Ethan served as a resident assistant in Roth Community for the past two years, where he promoted a welcoming living environment. Helping others in a classroom setting, Ethan was a teaching assistant for genetic engineering and the organic chemistry series. He is also a medical assistant, on both the tennis and bowling competitive teams, and involved in Jewish life on campus. Ethan also served as a University Scholars Fellow, PAL, Course Review Assistant, and a member of Scholars Council.

“Senior Scholar of the Year” recipient, Ethan Ertel, has spent his four years at Stony Brook University giving as much back to the community as he has gotten out of it. Whether it be within the University Scholars Program itself, academically-related in his fields of Biomedical Engineering and Applied Mathematics and Statistics, or clubs that fuel his passion, Ethan is always the first to step up and take on a difficult task and the first to lend a helpful hand of support to his peers.

As a University Scholar, Ethan has been a Fellow of the program and a valuable member of Scholars Council. He has also volunteered for the Course Assistance Review program for multiple semesters and has facilitated several AMS 210 and AMS 261 sessions. As a facilitator, Ethan focused on assuring each and every
student that they were doing their best, and that asking for help is never a bad thing. Similarly, Ethan also volunteered his time as a Peer Assistant Leader for incoming students, to give back to the Scholars community the same support that he received as a freshman.

In an academic sense, Ethan is equally as dedicated to his craft. With an early passion for research established, his career at Stony Brook Medicine began in high school with stem cell and cancer work. Throughout these four years, he has been able to assist in work with neural inflammation models in rats, and within the Biomedical Engineering Department as a Biodesign Intern. He has also done work as a Medical Assistant for an Endocrinologist. Ethan has always served as a resource to others searching for opportunities such as this, and looks forward to furthering his work in these fields.

Outside of his studies, Ethan spends his time investing himself into the Stony Brook community. Ethan has been a Resident Assistant in Roth Community for three years, serving and advising students as they acclimate to campus. He is also actively involved in the Jewish Student Association and enjoys planning events to help the organization. He is also the President of Seawolves for Israel, an Israel advocacy club that brings cultural awareness to campus. In his rare free time, Ethan enjoys competing with the SBU Tennis team and the SBU Bowling team.

A well-rounded, kind-hearted, and dedicated student like Ethan Ertel is hard to find, and it is no wonder that he was selected as a recipient of this honor. Ethan is a compassionate leader who is committed to helping the people around him. He hopes to take the skills he has honed at Stony Brook University and from the University Scholars Program and apply them to his future endeavors, and we wish him the best of luck in his journey!
Joshua Goodman

SUNY CHANCELLOR'S AWARD RECIPIENT

Josh majors in Biology and Applied Mathematics and Statistics, and is being recognized as the top graduating AMS student this year at graduation. He demonstrates his passion for medicine as the alumni chair of the Phi Delta Epsilon Medical Fraternity and serves as Treasurer of the Biomedical Engineering Society. Josh conducts research on crystal complex band structure, emphasizing transient electron conductance changes. Since he was 17, Josh volunteered at his hometown ambulance corps just off campus as an EMT and now serves as a field training officer guiding new members learning to care for their community. Josh will be attending medical school in August 2022.

Josh is a forever fellow in the University Scholars program, having served as a teaching assistant to a SCH 101 section in Fall 2019. One of the first steps he took toward medicine was attending the Scholars medical school panel, which gave him a good idea of how to achieve his goals and served as an inspiration to work as hard as possible to get there. He attributes much of his success to the connections and support he found within the Scholars program.
Senior Scholar of the Year Award recipient, Victoria Dotto, exemplifies the ideal of community in all endeavors she’s chosen to participate in during her time being a student at Stony Brook University. Victoria holds a special place in my heart, as she was my Peer Assistant Leader (PAL) during my first semester of college, and she is one of the main reasons I found my place in such a large university. With aspirations to work in public health, and help children in the future, Victoria is prepared for the road ahead of her by the fulfilling positions she’s had.

Victoria’s involved in many programs at Stony Brook University, but one of her most notable roles is serving as the external vice president in Project Sunshine. Project Sunshine is a volunteer program that works to give children in hospitals socialization and connection with its volunteers. One of Victoria’s favorite memories of being a volunteer is a heartwarming experience she had at Stony Brook University Hospital. During one of her visits where she’d spend time with the kids, she noticed there was a little girl that was quiet and shy. Victoria walked over to her and started talking to her about books. Within an hour, the little girl was laughing with joy and smiling with glee, sharing details about her favorite books and Broadway musicals. Victoria stayed past her shift to talk to the girl and, to her, it was a meaningful and memorable experience to know that she lifted that girl’s spirits while she was there.

Passionate about medicine, Victoria’s devotion to being involved in her community extends to her membership in Phi Delta Epsilon, a pre-medical
fraternity. As an active member, she's had the pleasure of picking up a “little”, a member recently inducted into the fraternity. She enjoys conversing with a like-minded peer with similar aspirations and interests. Victoria loves that not only was she a form of support and guidance for her “little”, but could also learn from her “little” at the same time. Moreover, as an advanced clinical associate for GoHealth, Victoria’s gained clinical experience in working with patients in a medical setting. Her job allows her to have a wide array of leadership roles, including administering COVID-19 tests, scribing for physicians, and training new scribes as a Leader Coach.

Aiming to have a well-rounded and full education, Victoria even volunteers as a research assistant for the Stony Brook Social Competence and Treatment Lab, which has a focus on kids with autism and neurodevelopmental disabilities. As a member of the outreach team, one of her main roles is interacting with the community and explaining current studies. To facilitate the studies, Victoria works with updating the participant information database, sending out newsletters to participants, creating lab fliers, and devising new ways of recruiting participants by working on the creation of a new and accessibility-friendly website.

After four years of being involved in her community and positively impacting those around her, Victoria is embarking on receiving a masters in public health. Once a wide-eyed freshman in a sea of undergraduate students herself, Victoria’s advice for future students is to be unafraid of what is to come. We all will eventually need to step outside of our comfort zones, whether that be asking for help with studying or getting involved in co-curriculars. Rather than dread these instances, Victoria encourages students to embrace each of these moments they have, and to move forward with them as they step aboard their undergraduate journey.
As one of the recipients of the Senior Scholar of the Year Award, Chris has shown outstanding leadership and involvement through his time at Stony Brook University. Chris attributes much of his success and growth to the encouraging community around him. This community was evident to him from his freshman year. He began his involvement in the Cardozo Hall Council, as he was greatly encouraged by his suitemates to do so. This motivating environment became a source of inspiration for Chris. Later in that semester, he was elected as an RHA senator and a year later, he went on to serve as a USG senator. As he looks back on his undergraduate accomplishments, he greatly emphasized that, as students, you should “do something you love”. Throughout his experience, he has found that there is much greater joy to be found in seeking opportunities you are genuinely passionate about.

For him, this came in joining the Men’s Soccer Club at Stony Brook. There, he served as the Treasurer as well as the Vice President. His involvement in the club initially stemmed from his excitement to simply be able to play and interact with the team. Chris acknowledges one of his greatest accomplishments to be the collective growth and improvement of himself and his soccer team over the years. Even throughout COVID, the team still did their best to maintain momentum and consistently practice. Their efforts significantly paid off, as the team was able to advance in their league this last fall!
Aside from being involved in numerous extracurricular activities, Chris has maintained great focus academically as well. He decided to come to Stony Brook (all the way from Arizona!) to pursue an undergraduate degree in Applied Mathematics and Statistics, and ultimately resulted in majoring in Computer Science and Mathematics. He highly recommends students to “get to know the people in your major” as this not only refined his social experiences at Stony Brook, but also allowed him to obtain academic support from his peers. He, again, was able to find yet another community which fostered support and academic success, through the sharing of valuable experiences and skills, which was very useful to him when exploring career options after graduation.

One of his favorite undergraduate experiences was a summer opportunity he had participating in an REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) program at University of Arizona. It was through this program that he was introduced to the research field of computer science. Since then, his interest in research has only grown, and he is excited to pursue a Ph.D. in Computer Science at Stony Brook starting this fall! With graduation coming up in only a few weeks, he is excited for the future and to continue his journey at Stony Brook. As he plans to spend the next few years at Stony Brook, be on the lookout, you might see him around!
Kaitlyn Tobias is extraordinary, driven and empathetic. She came from a small town in upstate New York. When she arrived at Stony Brook University, she was excited to be in a new environment and was eager to get involved. Freshman year was challenging for Kaitlyn, like it can be for many students. She didn’t have many friends and was roommates with a senior, with whom she didn’t have much in common and felt lonely. Kaitlyn had many credits under her belt, which indicated she was taking higher level Biology courses. This also made it even more difficult to connect with students in her year. She felt like a lost fish in a new and bigger pond trying to navigate all the undiscovered elements.

Thankfully, Kaitlyn met faculty, mentors, and friends through the Scholars Program that sealed her stay at SBU. Her Peer Assisted Leader (PAL) was extremely helpful and inspired her to get involved in the program. Having a sense of community dialed down her fear, and soon enough, she decided to become a PAL and a Fellow. From the very beginning, she was positively impacted and wanted to do the same for the incoming class; to make them feel safe, comfortable, and welcomed.

Her involvement in the University Scholars program is exceptional, and she gained the confidence to branch outside of it. As a Biology major on the premed track, she found it fitting to join the Phi Delta Epsilon Medical Fraternity. It allowed her to network and meet professionals and other students. Through attending events such as clinics, research presentations,
lectures, etc, she had built another community for herself to thrive in. She seized the moment and became the Vice President of Recruitment for the fraternity. In addition to that, Kaitlyn has been a TA for BIO 201 and BIO 314. She has done research at the Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program in Commack. Kaitlyn is currently an EMT at Port Jefferson Emergency Medical Services. She accomplished all of this because she wanted to grow. As a freshman, she was scared and timid, but she valued growth and put herself out there.

Through hard work, dedication, and support from the Scholars Program, Kaitlyn accomplished her goals. She is merely weeks away from graduating and commencing a fresh chapter of her life. She intends to ace the MCAT, which I have no doubt and will be moving to Florida. Kaitlyn will take a gap year to work, and gain more experience. She has plans to get involved in research and continue to work as an EMT. On a more personal note, she is very thrilled to explore her new home. In her free time, she plans to pick up new hobbies like surfing, scuba diving, and hiking. Additionally, in the future, she plans to attend medical school and become a doctor. She is interested in specializing in Cancer; however, she believes her calling will find her at the right time.

This leads me to what Kaitlyn advises freshmen to do, which is to take everything day by day. She believes that having a complete plan is a nice idea but most of the time nothing goes as planned. And while change is unexpected, she optimistically believes that one's goals will be reached no matter what. She also guides the freshmen to not be too hard on themselves. This was a tough pill to swallow for Kaitlyn but once she did it made her realize that numbers (grades) don't define her.

Meeting Kaitlyn was a wonderful experience, and she is truly genuine, sweet, and passionate with all her actions. Just in the short meeting we had, I know exactly why she is awarded the Senior Scholar of the Year title. Kaitlyn also wants to give a huge thank you to Jeremy Marchese, Director of the University Scholars Program; not only for what he does, but for his assistance and support towards every individual student. She gives all credit to Jeremy for how far she has come and hopes he knows that she couldn’t have done it without him.

Kaitlyn took the “torch” as a freshman, shined bright with it through the years, shared her light, and is continuing the tradition by passing it on to the younger Scholars.
Throughout her four years at Stony Brook University, Senior Scholar of the Year Award recipient Pavithra Venkataraman has shown herself to be a promising leader in the campus community with a passion for helping others. She is a Women’s and Gender Studies major with minors in Philosophy and Political science. Hailing from Columbus, Indiana, she decided to move away from her family for her undergrad and ended up finding a new home within our SBU community. Although originally an Applied Math and Statistics major, Pavithra first came upon the Women's and Gender Studies field in her freshman year and was instantly intrigued by the importance of the study and the discussions she had in class. “I realized I wanted to work with people and help people, and math doesn’t necessarily lend itself to that in the most direct of ways; I took a Women’s Studies course in my second semester as an SBC and absolutely fell in love with it,” she said.

In her time at Stony Brook, she has contributed greatly to the University Scholars Program through numerous positions such as a Scholars Fellow, Lead Editor for the Torch Newsletter, past Scholars Council Secretary as well as interning for University Scholars Program for six consecutive semesters. As an editor, she played an essential role in the newsletter by managing a staff of 15 and helping to design each edition released every semester. As an intern for the program, she has been able to help grow the program through initiatives such as the Fellows Advisory Board and the Course Assistance groups.
Outside of the University Scholars Program, Pavithra has also demonstrated her commitment to making SBU a better place in the many positions she has held. In her role as a Resident Assistant and Council Representative for Benedict Hall and H Community, she has been able to offer guidance to residents and helped foster a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for all.

As one of the SBU representatives for the SUNY Student Voices Action Committee, Pavithra has dedicated her time to helping college students discuss relevant issues such as mental health, diversity, and food insecurity. Pavithra has also invested into activities that involve her passions, such as singing. She has been the President of the Stony Brook Vocalists, the all-gender a capella group on campus, for two years now and is looking forward to ending her time with the Vocalists by performing during the SBU Commencement ceremony.

Additionally, Pavithra has held several internship positions over her undergraduate career. She worked as a Research Intern for Measures for Justice, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the transparency of criminal justice data by states. She currently acts as a Social Media intern for Response Crisis Center, a 24/7 suicide and crisis prevention organization focused on Suffolk County. Pavithra has also participated in several bystander trainings in response to critical situations, such as alcohol and drug overdose (Red Watch Band), abusive and unhealthy relationships (One Love), sexual assault bystander intervention (Green Dot), and warning signs in peers who may be suicidal (QPR).

When asked how she’s grown while at Stony Brook, Pavithra stated that “Academically, Women’s Studies has taught me things I didn’t even know there were to learn about; there’s so much out there in this world related...
to oppression, and there are so many different factors that influence how people have to live their lives. It’s given me a deeper understanding of how everyone is unique in their own way.” With regards to how she’s grown personally and what advice she’d give underclassmen, Pavithra advises, “Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there,” and that “It’s okay to ask for help when you need it; I’ve been really fortunate with wonderful peers and supervisors who are all very supportive and have helped me to learn that it’s not a bad thing to ask for assistance.”

As for Pavithra’s next adventure, she will be attending Penn State Law School. “As I’ve had more leadership experiences, I realized my strengths really lie in the organizational aspect of things, so what appealed to me about law is that everything you’re doing is advocacy work, at least in public interest law,” she said. Although Pavithra is closing this chapter, the experiences she’s had at Stony Brook will undoubtedly help her in her career and all future endeavors.
Advising
Ranging from academic planning, pre-professional advising, involvement, to general advice, your University Scholars Director is an invaluable resource for students! Feel free to contact by email.

Jeremy Marchese
jeremy.marchese@stonybrook.edu

Fall 2022 Academic Deadlines

- Aug. 19: Credit limit: Increases to 19 - 23 credits
- Aug. 22: First Day of Classes
- Aug. 26: Major/Minor Changes End
- Oct. 7: Drop Down Deadline
- Oct. 21: G/P/NC Deadline

Best of luck on final exams, and have an amazing Summer Break!!