Greetings Scholars!

A very warm welcome to the 256 new freshmen who joined our Program this Fall! Our total University Scholars community is now at 905 students, and continues to grow. In addition to our steady increase in numbers, we are also experiencing growth in terms of quantity and variety of events and programs. Our committees continue to work hard to develop ideas for new and exciting events to host for our student body (a recap of some of the events that have taken place can be found in this edition). If you are not already a member of either the Academic, Outreach, or Social Committees, we urge you to consider joining one to contribute your input on future programming ideas.

The Scholars Team, in conjunction with our Faculty Advisory Board, has been working to conceptualize a new structure and 4-year curriculum for the Scholars Program. The plan is to focus on areas of professional and leadership development that will allow our students to be most successful not only here at Stony Brook, but in their future lives and careers as well. We hope to begin introducing these courses incrementally next Fall, and will keep everyone updated as things progress. It’s important to note that, if implemented, this curriculum would be optional for continuing students, and would be a requirement only for new freshmen accepted into the Program after the implementation date.

We hope the semester has been an enjoyable one and, as always, if there is any way we can be of help to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. Good luck on your final exams, and have a wonderful break.

Brian Colle, Jeremy Marchese, David Maynard
This year’s Faculty Panel took place on September 29th, and consisted of an impressive array of faculty members, each with a totally unique, yet equally intriguing story. It included Professor Hemmick, recognized as one of the top professors in America; Professor Esther Takeuchi, a recipient of the National Medal of Technology and Innovation; the well-traveled Ambassador Harsh Bhasin, who at one point worked with Nelson Mandela; and Professor Stephen Reiner, a former journalist for CBS News and All Things Considered.

The night began with introductions, before turning into a question and answer-type forum aimed at offering advice and guidance to the students in attendance. Professor Hemmick’s words about seeking out your passion seemed to become one of the main themes of the event. Each Professor spoke about his or her own unique experiences, emphasizing the importance of taking advantage of every opportunity that presents itself in life. Professor Reiner encouraged listeners to be aware of everything that is happening in the community and world, and to be active participants in it; while Ambassador Bhasin challenged students to be open to opportunities outside of the US. Professor Takeuchi elaborated, urging the audience to “do the best you can at what you are doing now,” even if it isn’t something you are passionate about.

The event was inspirational for all in attendance, thanks to the fascinating background stories and helpful guidance of the experienced, well recognized panel.

~Brent Freestone

Spooky Walk

On October 25th, ten brave University Scholars went to the annual Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck Spooky Walk in Center Moriches. In addition to getting the wits scared out of them, the students were also able to volunteer to raise money for the camp – a program for children with disabilities. The walk was an outdoor path, spanning about a mile through the ghostly woods and scenic lake of the camp’s territory. Walkers were subjected to several exhibits where they were scared by devious clowns or invited to boogie with dancing witches – to name a few. Members of the University Scholars Outreach Committee joined Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck’s team for a second year of volunteering for the organization. While four members worked at security points throughout the path, the remaining six were able to scare (or dance with) unsuspecting walkers. The walk was attended by ten thousand people over its four day period and raised over $150,000 toward new programs and facilities for the children. It was a record breaking year for the camp, and the Spooky Walk was named one of the best Halloween attractions on Long Island. The Outreach Committee would like to thank the volunteers and hopes to continue working with the Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck team for many years to come! Therefore, the committee invites University Scholars to come join us at our annual camp clean-up in the spring, where we help prepare the grounds for the upcoming summer session.
Hundreds of Stony Brook students gathered in the Center for Global Studies and Human Development on Tuesday, October 21st to participate in a gender equality revolution lead by Dr. Charles Robbins and Gerardo Porteny Backal.

Dr. Robbins, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the Undergraduate Colleges, is an NGO delegate to the United Nations and represents the International Association of Schools of Social Work. He is especially renowned for his research and activism in the gender equality movement, where he met the speaker of the hour, Mr. Porteny – a youth leader in the UN Women’s HeForShe campaign. Together, Dr. Robbins and Mr. Porteny announced that Stony Brook is to become the first HeForShe campus and, therefore, an example for campuses worldwide on the basis of equal human rights. Porteny explained that so far, the issue of gender equality has been pursued by women alone. However, “How can we win a fight when half of the team is on the bench?” It is important that we work together as one humanity, rather than by gender, to create a world where all humans can enjoy their lives completely, without discriminating limitations. This means that women should no longer earn 77 cents on the dollar for the same labor that men complete; or that every one in five women should be victims of sexual assault. It is up to us to change this history, Porteny says, and Stony Brook will be trailblazing this movement as the first representative campus, through our Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities, run by Dr. Michael Kimmel.

Unfortunately, if we continue at the minimal pace that we have assumed over the years, every single woman on this planet will have equal access to education by 2086, claims Porteny. It is the goal of UN Women to speed up gender equality and gain equal opportunity for all by 2030. At Stony Brook, we will begin with having a mandatory gender orientation where students will be educated about the importance and implementation of gender equality. Here, students will learn startling statistics about the three billion women who, every morning, wake up to a world that limits them. They will also learn how to lower these statistics both actively in their communities and in their personal lives. In his not-for-profit NGO, Young Men for Gender Equality, Porteny found that so many men from all over the world have joined the conversation, making it difficult to communicate in all the different languages. However, in one of his very many inspirational lines, he said “our common language was love.” This is the very basis of the movement – a fight, by both men and women, driven by what is just through the common language of love. Mr. Porteny and Dr. Robbins invite us to be a part of the conversation on the Stony Brook campus by e-mailing heforshe@stonybrook.edu to take initiative on campus, or on the heforshe website, heforshe.org, worldwide.

~Alisa Rybkin
College can be a frightening time. The time when teachers held your hand and guided you through classes, homework, and extracurricular activities seems like an evanescent memory of the past; however, this is where the University Scholars Program plays a pivotal role. New students are assisted by a small, tight-knit group of high achieving individuals, not only in their academics, but also in their four years here at Stony Brook. Throughout the year, the Scholars program puts on a plethora of events to help students learn about resources and opportunities available to them. The Beyond the Classroom event that was held on October 22 did just that. Guest speakers included Steven Adelson, Margi Livingston, Kristin Walter, Matthew Hannigan, and James Vassallo.

These Scholars spoke about the many activities they are involved with on campus. Steve is a junior who is majoring in Political Science. He is the Vice President of Academic Affairs in the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). He discussed the various responsibilities of USG, such as planning the fall and spring concerts and organizing budgets for the more than 150 clubs and organizations. Margi, a sophomore biochemistry major and a University Scholars Fellow, spoke about the highly regarded Fellows Program. She explained how this program teaches you to become an undergraduate TA for the Scholars 101 class, helping new Scholars acclimate to Stony Brook. She stressed that you are more than just a TA, you become the bridge between students and faculty members, an essential link for any student. Kristin discussed her breath-taking studyabroad experience in France. She placed emphasis on the fact that when you study abroad, you do not just learn a language and take a course, you absorb a culture, learning everything about it by diving head on into it. Matt is an RA in Dreiser College and an Undergraduate Research Assistant. He discussed that being an RA allows you to be a support system for freshmen who are scared and need a friend; helping from any angle, whether it be academic or social. He stated that being an RA is a very rewarding experience, one that he highly encourages students to apply for. James is both an Orientation Leader (OL) and a Commuter Assistant. Being a commuter, he mentioned, can be difficult, especially when it comes to meeting people. He explained how the Commuter Assistant program, that he is involved in, allows upperclassmen to be mentors to underclassmen, teaching them the tricks they need to be successful and engaged members of the campus community.

Although this group of individuals represented a wide array of the co-curricular activities we have on campus, they all reiterated one powerful message: no matter who you are, what you do, what you like, or what you think you like, you will never know until you get involved and move your education beyond the classroom.

~Dawood Rashid

Get Involved!
Click on any of the links below to find out more!

Undergraduate Student Government
Study Abroad
Resident Assistant
Research
Orientation Leader
Commuter Assistant
The past year saw the formation of a new undergraduate research team: iGEM at Stony Brook. iGEM is an international, intercollegiate competition focused on the field of synthetic biology; a multi-disciplinary field with applications for today’s biggest problems in energy, industry, medicine, environment, and more. In the words of team member Maryam Ige, “Synthetic biology is a field we can use to push the limits of bio and technology. iGEM gives students the opportunity to utilize the field to advance society.”

The iGEM Jamboree is an annual event where teams from around the world present their projects. This year, the Jamboree was held from October 30th to November 3rd. To celebrate the competition’s 10th anniversary, a Giant Jamboree was held, with all 245 registered teams invited. The Stony Brook team had the chance to talk to people from all over the world and learn about their projects. As team member Janki Patel describes the Jamboree, “It was incredible how all the teams from all over the world were able to unite to share one common passion of science.”

That Sunday morning, the Stony Brook team presented their own project, Apis-Biotics. There are many competition tracks, and the team this year entered the track for Health & Medicine. The project focused on combatting the rising antibiotic resistance worldwide by producing the peptide melittin, a component of honey bee venom and a possible alternative to today’s antibiotics. The goal was to transform E. coli cells to effectively produce melittin in the presence of certain pathogens. As the first presentation for the day, the team confidently took the stage. The very next day, the competition results were announced and this first-year team had won a Bronze Medal!

This group of undergraduate students had the honor of working on their project in their own lab space, and under a great board of advisors. Dr. Gergen and Dr. Czaplinski from the Department of Biochemistry and Cell Biology, Dr. Balazsi and Dr. Chan from Biomedical Engineering, Dr. Rest from Ecology and Evolution, and Dr. Meng from Materials Science and Engineering were all instrumental in getting the team this far. It also couldn’t have been done without the support from affiliated departments on campus, corporate sponsors, and especially the team’s anonymous donors.

Aside from just focusing on research, the iGEM team has also made its goal to increase scientific literacy in the community and started the University’s first synthetic biology club this semester. The club meets monthly to talk with interested students about synthetic biology, getting involved in the team, and other topics about undergraduate research in general. The club has had 2 events this semester. The first was a Scholars for-credit event, where the team gave an in-depth presentation of this year’s project. The second was an informational where the team described what iGEM was and explained how students could apply to the team for next year. Applications for joining iGEM at Stony Brook have been released and are open until December 27th. The team hopes to see even more prospective team members apply than last year, and a blooming interest in synthetic biology in Stony Brook students!

~ Nicolai Tayco
The University Scholars Book Drive has gained considerable traction this semester, kicking off its book collection in local school districts in early November. Efforts have already lead to a collection of over 1,700 books! This Scholars-led initiative is working with local middle and high school students to organize Book Drives in school districts in Suffolk County. Among their current partners are the Three Village School District, the Mt. Sinai School District, and Smithtown High Schools, with more districts to come. Book collection will be kicking off this spring on the Stony Brook Campus, as well. There will soon be collection bins located in the Library, the SAC, the Union, and Scholars-designated residence halls throughout campus.

These efforts will culminate later this Spring in a donation event in the Wyandanch School district, where poverty levels are highest on Long Island. Families from the community will be able to come to the event to take any books from our collection that they wish. Any books that remain will be sent to the organization Better World Books. This for-profit group collects books of all types, selling those in good condition to raise money for worldwide literacy charities and to cover international shipping costs of books to donate abroad.

This project is also a no-waste initiative. We collect books of any condition, no matter how damaged. These pieces will be properly recycled by Better World Books to give rise to a new generation of books in the future.

This February 3rd, from 6-8pm in SAC A, the Scholars program is hosting a fundraiser to raise money to cover costs such as collection bins, promotional materials, and storage expenses. An admission donation of $10.00 will include 20 raffle tickets toward a variety of prizes donated by local businesses in the area. This event also includes a variety of performances from campus clubs and performing groups. We hope to see you there!

~Bryan Szeglin

Like what we’re doing? Check our our website and like/follow us on social media!

you.stonybrook.edu/bookdrive
Ana Castro is an outgoing and studious senior who has been very involved in the University Scholars community, as well as Stony Brook University as a whole. Castro is originally from Holbrook, New York here on Long Island, and is a commuter student. Since her time in high school, she knew she wanted to pursue a career involving science and mathematics. With these already-established interests, Castro enrolled in the chemistry program at SBU and rekindled her passions, eventually declaring a double major in Chemistry and Applied Math & Statistics.

What drew Castro to Stony Brook was its welcoming community and size. With its large campus, Castro feels she was able to meet various students and faculty members and come across numerous opportunities.

Castro has greatly taken advantage of these opportunities throughout her time here at SBU. Inside of the Scholars Program, she has become a Fellow, been a part of the Scholars Council, and assisted with various events, such as research panels and volunteer events – like the Sandy Hook Benefit concert. Castro’s involvement has stretched far beyond the bounds of the University Scholars community as well. She also works at the Staller Center, is a former Commuter Assistant, and is heavily involved in research. As a Commuter Assistant, Castro mentored incoming commuter students and helped plan events targeted at commuter students during her sophomore and junior years. Castro has worked in a computational chemistry lab studying a steroid known as trenbolone, and is currently working on research which involves trying to synthesize a detector for arsenic levels in water. Castro has also been a Teaching Assistant for general chemistry and organic chemistry.

Castro’s experience as a TA correlates to a long-time aspiration of being a teacher. Although working in academia is a goal of Castro’s, she wants to gain more experience in her field first. Castro is in the five-year master’s program here at SBU. After graduation, she wants to be able to take the lab skills she has acquired and apply them to research. Regardless of the exact field in chemistry she ventures into, Castro says she thinks she wants to work in quality control or synthesis.

Castro finds motivation from her inner drive and work ethic, but credits her parents and friends as being a great support system. Her advice to current Scholars students is to get to know professors and faculty as soon as possible, be open minded, and get involved in the University Scholars Program. She stresses that there are so many things to participate in with the Scholars community – from community service to the Fellows program. Castro’s involvement on campus – in and out of the University Scholars Program – has largely influenced her time here at SBU and she can only wish the same to all students alike.

~ Taylor Brant
A Diary to Remember

Karizma Chhabra

Release
I open my hands and let go
My hands divulge secrets my mouth won’t say

Contract
Have I revealed too much?
Will any eyes but mine see this?

Relax

Let them see!
See what my mouth refuses to say
What my mind tries to hide
But what my heart cannot contain.
These poems are my diary
No formal salutations
Or closings and signatures
There are just words
Strung together to tell a tale
A message in a bottle
Read it if you will
Form an opinion of it if you must
It does not matter
It is written!
Written for my own content
For my own peace of mind
Some things are not meant to be forgotten.
This is how I remember
One day I’ll look back
Every feeling will resurface
I’ll see how much I’ve grown
How much has changed,
And I’ll smile
Because I wouldn’t have moved forward
If it were not for these written words
Preserved on a page
Frozen in time
Freeing my mind of its burdens
And my heart of its sorrows
All in the hopes that what happened today
May not necessarily come tomorrow
Walking along the Bebek waters, holding waffles overflowing with strawberries and chocolate sauce, looking back at the moon with my friends, I felt grateful; grateful to have spent two magical months in Istanbul, Turkey. This summer had flown by rapidly and I would have thought it was all a dream were it not for my camera which had allowed me to capture these moments forever.

Before leaving, some of my friends and relatives wondered what studying abroad in Turkey had to do with my career goals and Psychology major. During the application process, I too questioned my reasons for wanting to go. A friend even suggested I apply to an internship in New York City instead, which offered practical experience in psychology. She figured since I already had a study abroad experience to put on my résumé, it might be wiser for me to go for the internship. I discussed my dilemma with my research mentor, who gave me the answer I wanted to hear. “Go to Turkey! When will you encounter such a chance again?”

I am obsessed with Turkish TV series, which I watch with English subtitles. I love the sound of the language and the heavenly scenery. I was very excited to begin this opportunity to study in Turkey, where I could practice the language with locals, immerse myself in their culture, and bring those TV sitcoms to life. I also enrolled in a ‘Gender and Politics in the Middle East’ course, a subject which was only offered as part of the Study Abroad program, and was relevant to my research project, focusing on the mental well-being of Muslim women. These courses would count towards my Middle Eastern Studies minor. But the question still remained; how does this minor relate to psychology?

Many might expect study abroad students to just want to have a good time. Sure, part of the experience is a chance to explore a new country, meet the locals, and experiment with the language. However, living within a culturally different world provides a means to not only gain independence and adaptability, but also to broaden your goals and aspirations. For example, I wasn’t aware of my passion to study the Middle East until my first study abroad experience. Plus, many faculty members and upperclassmen had always recommended I try different research labs to identify which population and area in psychology I wanted to focus on. Who knew my study abroad experiences would enable me to recognize a novel manner to merge my interest in the Middle East with psychology?

For my writing class this semester, we read the article, “College Pressures,” by William Zensser, who wrote, “What I wish for all students is some release from the clammy grip of the future. I wish them a chance to savor each segment of their education as an experience in itself and not as a grim preparation for the next step. I wish them the right to experiment, to trip and fall, to learn that defeat is as instructive as victory and is not the end of the world.” Two years ago, I had almost laughed in my study abroad advisor’s face when she suggested I look at summer or semester programs because there would be more options than those in the winter. My logic was that if I can complete my course requirements at Stony Brook, stay in my comfort zone with family and friends in a secure, planned routine, why would I bother with long-term study abroad programs?

Now, starting my senior year at Stony Brook, I am thankful to have taken advantage of such opportunities to learn outside the box. Along this journey, I have forged strong bonds with my professors, friends, families and even the shopkeepers abroad. These bonds have helped me understand the importance of cross-cultural interactions.

Thanks to the support I received, I was able to study abroad. I would share the same advice I received to other students. Pursue your passions and dreams right now even if they don’t seem to relate to your major. It is with this that all of your experiences will culminate in your growth as an open-minded student and informed citizen of the world.

~Qurat-ul-ain Gulamhussein

View from 15th century Rumeli Fortress
On Monday, December 1st, the University Scholars hosted their annual “Toys for Tots Charity Ball.” This year’s theme, selected by Scholars students through online voting, was “Old Hollywood.” This year nearly 400 students, many dressed in attire evoking images of the golden age of Hollywood, attended the event as a send off for the fall semester. Scholars were encouraged to bring a new toy to donate to Toys for Tots, and, as usual, they did not disappoint. A record 492 toys were collected at the event, and the United States Marines in attendance representing Toys for Tots greatly thanked the Scholars community for their help in brightening the holiday season for those in need in Suffolk County.

The event could not have come together without the hard work and dedication of the University Scholars committees. The Outreach Committee planned a great deal of the event, and began coordinating with the Marines for the donations very early on this past semester. The Social Committee was involved in identifying possible themes and then, once a theme was finalized, transforming SAC Ballroom A into a beautiful piece of Old Hollywood – including a red carpet photo wall and scenes from black and white movies. Delicious refreshments were served and the DJ got everyone onto the dance floor to work off some last-minute final exam stress. Those in attendance greatly enjoyed the festivities, and were very pleased to have the opportunity to help underprivileged children in the area.

The Toys for Tots initiative began in 1995, when it was approved as an official activity of the United States Marine Corps, and an official mission of the Marine Corps Reserve. In the nearly 20 years since its formation, Toys for Tots has distributed more than 469 million toys to millions of children around the United States.

~Taylor Brant and Jeremy Marchese

Left to Right: Alisa Rybkin, Maddie Massa, Jeremy Marchese, Dana Castro, Varun Sayal, Jessica Hundal, Dhara Doshi, and Victoria Ly

Nearly 400 Scholars were in attendance at the Toys for Tots Charity Ball
All University Scholars are encouraged to take advantage of their exceptional Advisors: Faculty Director Dr. Brian Colle, Advisor and Senior Staff Assistant Jeremy Marchese, and Advisor Dr. David Maynard. From academic planning to research to general advice, the University Scholars Advisors are an invaluable resource to students. Check the Scholars Website this Spring for their posted office hours or make an appointment by email below.

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Jeremy Marchese
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We wish all University Scholars the best of luck on their final exams and look forward to seeing everyone in the Spring Semester! Enjoy your winter!

Academic Deadlines:

Dec. 9-17  Final exams for courses, please see Registrar Final Exam Schedule for details
Dec. 17   End of Term
Dec. 18   Commencement

Important Dates for the beginning of the beginning of the Spring 2015 Semester

Jan. 23    Credit limit increases to 19 for the Spring 2015 semester
Jan. 26    First day of the Spring 2015 Semester
Jan. 28    Credit limit increases to 23 for the Spring 2015 semester
Jan. 30    Last day to enroll in a class on a wait-list
            Last day for all students to submit a major/minor change
Feb. 1     Last day to drop a class or withdraw from the University without tuition liability
Feb. 2     “Cards for a Cause” For-Credit Event. 7-9pm, SAC B
Feb. 3     Scholars Book Drive Fundraiser, For Credit Event. $10.00 admission, 6-8pm SAC A
Feb. 6     Last day to add classes and/or process a swap
            Last day to drop or withdraw from the university without a “W”
Feb. 11    Scholars Council, 1-2 pm, SAC 303
Mar. 11    Scholars Council, 1-2 pm, SAC 303
Mar. 16-22 Spring Recess
April 8    Scholars Council, 1-2 pm, SAC 303

Want to help out with The Torch? Email us at sbuscholars.torch@gmail.com!