

"My best experiences at Stony Brook are related to my involvement as a Resident Assistant. It is a demanding position, if taken seriously, but it brought me many joys, many friendships, wonderful memories and a thousand opportunities to help the campus community."

—AUDREY, STONY BROOK STUDENT

Introduction



College is not only an opportunity to expand your intellect, but also your skills and experiences. While at Stony Brook, you may expand your academic knowledge, for example in calculus, beyond what you already learned in high school. Or you may acquire a completely new academic experience, perhaps in Art History, that you never experienced in high school. The same is true of your skills and activities. You may wish to continue to develop activities that you did in high school, such as in student government or gospel choir, or you may choose to embark on a completely new arena, such as academic judiciary or ballroom dancing. Regardless, your out-of-class experiences will shape your college experience nearly as much as your in-class experiences. These are opportunities to gain new skills, develop your existing skills, and meet new people. You will learn to work with and motivate others, manage projects, set goals and accomplish objectives. These are the traits of a strong leader.

Leadership is something that anyone can develop. Some students enter college with leadership experiences from their high school, church, or community. Others enter college without leadership experience, but with skills in other areas such as communication, logic, athletics, or the arts. Stony Brook University takes a proactive approach to leadership development on campus. We believe that all students should take the opportunity to assess themselves and get involved in those activities or organizations that interest them. Those who wish to become an effective leader will use this involvement as a stepping stone. The additional steps as well as our University's vision of leadership are outlined in this chapter.

Vision Statement

Stony Brook University aims to provide a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills. Leadership is creating a vision, establishing compelling goals, and gaining the commitment of others to help accomplish these goals. It is assessing needs and managing and monitoring tasks, including delegating responsibilities, forming

teams, negotiating, and resolving conflicts.

At Stony Brook, students create their own organizations, serve in elected office, and organize activities and events. They apply what they learn in classes to test their leadership skills in an environment that encourages experimentation, problem solving, and critical thinking. Stony Brook students build professional relationships with faculty, staff, and fellow students in ways to achieve shared goals. Through feedback and reinforcement, they acquire insight about their leadership skills and knowledge, while learning what they do well and what areas need improvement. Students become continuous learners who value and respect the contributions of colleagues from diverse backgrounds and start a long-term process of leadership growth that will prepare them for a successful career no matter what their profession.

Six Steps to Becoming a Campus Leader

Take a brief look at each:

- Step 1: Self-Assessment
- Step 2: Getting Involved
- Step 3: Training and Preparation
- Step 4: Taking on a Leadership Role
- Step 5: Giving Back

Step 1: Self-Assessment

With hundreds of leadership opportunities on campus, taking the time to choose your niche is important. Like any decision making process, you should think about what you want to gain and choose opportunities that offer benefits. Knowing your strengths is key to your success. Developing an action plan in order to develop and hone these skills is essential to achieving your goals. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I naturally good at?
- What are things I struggle with?
- What type of leader do I want to be?
- What are things that I need more experience with?
- What can I do to develop, practice, or hone these skills?

Take some time to reflect on these questions. Get feedback from those who know you best and write the answers down. Then create a plan on how you will develop these skills and create both long-term and short-term goals. The “Get Your Foot In The Door” program, offered by the Division of Student Life, can help you assess your current skills and help you find your niche.

Step 2: Getting Involved

There are many departments on campus that provide outlets for students to refine their leadership abilities and a place where new leaders are born. Below is a list of a few places to start.

Office of Student Activities

Visit stonybrook.edu/sblife. SBLife is an virtual involvement portal. Here you can join any club/organization on campus, learn about what each group is doing, and learn about all campus wide events. The Office of Student Activities manages a craft center, WUSB (90.1FM), and the SAC Art Gallery. If you are not interested in a club but you love ceramics or you always wanted to DJ a radio station, stop by and visit.

Campus Recreation Center

The Campus Recreation Center offers a variety of sports clubs and open recreation and intramurals. If you are into Fitness and Wellness this is the place to visit. Open recreation is geared for any students that is interested in playing any sport. Grab some friends and put together a pick up volleyball game on Tuesday mornings.

Commuter Student Services

This office is available to all Stony Brook students. If you are interesting in becoming a Commuter Assistant or a Commuter Student Association member, pass by. Here you will meet other commuter students.

Leadership

Are you interested in fine tuning your public speaking abilities? If so you should check out P.E.P. (Practicing Engaging

Presentations). If you have already visited SBLife and you are still unsure of your perfect match, make an appointment with the Get Your Foot In The Door student consultants. Here you will be matched to the right club/organization or campus opportunity.

Undergraduate Colleges (UGC)

Learn more about your Undergraduate College by becoming a fellow. Being a fellow will offer you the opportunity to have peer to peer contact with new students entering Stony Brook University. Fellows also have the opportunity to serve as teaching assistants. Take some time and talk to your UCG advisor.

Undergraduate Student Government (USG)

Order in the Court!!! If you are interested in changing policy, deciding club funding, hosting large scale events and passing resolutions to make change on campus, visit the USG or stop by a Senate meeting.

Residential Programs

Curious about how your Resident Assistant was selected or how you can be an RA, visit your local quad office and learn about the different leadership roles that are offered. Every residence hall is governed by a Hall Council, check out a hall council meeting and meet fellow residents.

You can find leadership opportunities everywhere on campus, Athletics, Academic Department, or Community Standards. Take some time to review different parts of the Stony Brook University website and see all of you at the September Involvement fair.

Step 3: Training/Preparation

When developing your strengths it is important to gather knowledge and hone your skills. This will help you become better a better leader. Participating in various training opportunities such as workshops, training sessions, conferences, classes, and programs can sharpen your leadership skills and build confidence. Stony Brook University offers numerous educational, training, and development opportunities. Programs exist such as leadership workshops, L.E.A.D./G.O.L.D. programs, the LEADSTRONG Conference and Student Life Internships, just to name a few. Information about all of these programs is available at the Leadership Nexus website

Step 4: Taking on a Leadership Role

If you have assessed your own leadership style and strengths, received the training you need and have become involved at the participant level, you are ready to take the next step: taking on a leadership role. Taking on a leadership role does not mean you need to be on the executive board of an organization. Leadership can come in many forms and especially when you are starting out, you may want to start smaller. For instance, you could coordinate a program for a certain organization. Another option is to run for the Hall Council executive board before running for Under Graduate Student Government or applying for a Resident Assistant position. Finally, you could work as an office assistant on campus which may offer an opportunity to become a “leader” or “supervisor” within that office.

All of these opportunities have one thing in common: becoming a leader on campus is beyond “getting involved.” It is articulating a vision for a program, an office, or an organization. Then, it is gathering the people and resources necessary while guiding the group to a successful completion of set goals. Remember always to reflect on the experience while evaluating yourself and others. Consider what went well and what you could do differently in the future in order to enhance the outcome the next time around.

Step 5: Giving Back

Leaders with a sense of civic engagement find it important to give back to the community and help those in need. There are numerous philanthropic and not-for-profit organizations that you can become involved with in order to make a difference in this world. As a leader you can encourage others to give back by volunteering at a local soup kitchen, raising money for a charitable organization, or promoting positive actions such as recycling. How you model this kind of behavior could be the key to getting others involved as well. There are numerous opportunities to participate in community service activities on campus through departmental events such as Take Back the Night or 'Tis the Season. There are also opportunities to serve through a community service-based club or organization. Make sure you visit the Community Service and Learning site for more information on how to get involved.

Step 6: Personal and Professional Development

You may be asking yourself, “What can I do now to continue to become a better leader?” Perfecting your leadership skills is a continuous process and requires time, energy and effort. The opportunities afforded to you are designed to develop your leadership skills, and are varied. Here are a few:

Mentors: A mentor, a trusted counselor or guide who can be invaluable as you work towards achieving your leadership goals. Your mentor might be someone you meet through a structured program or it could be someone you meet on your own. Finding an experienced professional on campus to act as your mentor may be something that you wish to pursue. This may be your advisor, supervisor, hall director, professor, TA, or any one of a host of other professionals on campus.

Choosing a knowledgeable mentor is important in the development of a leader. Sometimes leaders have several mentors. In different situations various people could be of assistance to you. For instance, maybe in your career goals you have one mentor and in your on-campus involvement you have another. Although there are a lot of different tactics to finding a mentor, remember that it is important to feel comfortable with the person and trust that the information they are giving you is truthful and in your best interest.

Programs/Workshops: Short-term programs and one day workshops offer a wealth of information to assist you with your own personal leadership development. At Stony Brook there are a variety of offices offering many such programs and workshops. For instance, there are workshop series that are offered such through L.E.A.D. and G.O.L.D. There are also full day programs offered such as LEADSTRONG, Stony Brook Day in Albany, and other programs which would assist you in gaining leadership skills in a variety of areas.

Classes: Finally, many classes may offer you information and insight about effective leadership strategies, historical leaders, ethical issues confronting leaders and other information critical to a full understanding of leaders in today’s world. For example, Sociology 268 is a class that could offer you development and understanding about leadership. Peer Education classes also offer you a variety of leadership skills such as communication, public speaking, personal skills, motivating and educating others, as well as outreach, to name just a few. There are several Peer Education classes including: AIDS Peer Education, Chill, CHOICE, and Swallow This! Each one of these Peer Education classes is very different in its organization and purpose, but each one offers the opportunity to develop you as a leader.

Leadership Online

There is no doubt that today’s college students utilize computer technology more than any previous generation. There are many positive aspects of online communities for college students, such as keeping in touch with old friends, connecting with current or prospective SBU friends, expressing one’s individuality, or sharing exciting events in one’s life. Those wishing to be, or thinking about becoming a leader on campus should be particularly aware of any online profile information that they choose to display. These students should think carefully before joining any group, posting any pictures, attending any activity, or participating in any action that might appear to be inappropriate for a campus leader. For tips on creating a positive online persona please refer to information provided in Chapter 3 of this book.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided you with an idea of the actions you can take on Stony Brook University’s campus to expand your leadership skills and involvement. However, as we hope you realize, simply reading this chapter will not help you develop your skills and experiences. Students need to take the time to join a club, contact an organization, and develop their skills. Being involved on campus provides you with invaluable skills that will assist you in your future endeavors, whether it is graduate school or finding a job after graduation. Did you know that medical school applications require students to provide documentation of their volunteer experience and service hours? A leadership role will help you gain skills and experiences, not just the GPA, to achieve your goals in the future.