

10/2 [~20min]

Interview - Sage Hall

from  
Queens

friendly &amp; comfortable - offered up schedule to prepare before interview began

- Assoc senior; better for class between intro wines - was stress relief during a stressful sem.

- Domestic → destroyed freshmen year → too hard for freshman year - is track  
→ just answer

- Works in room unless exam - goes to a professional space nearby

→ proximity to home = important

- try not to work w/ too many b/c distracting (fract. (cracked knuckles))

- works, interns, classes

- GPA boost, requirements, interest → spoke directly, calmly, articulately

- nutrition → takes up a lot

- works over the weekend → (explains w/ ~~her~~ her hands - indicating at schedule on computer screen)

- welfare → looks at schedule for memory prompt

\* assignments w/ friends are better \*

- does ~~extra~~ extra curriculars → related to major & career path

- internship takes up a lot

- laughed at stress question - always stressed (but not right now)

find way / plan to complete work to help w/ stress

- browsing jobs, internships etc → being proactive

took  
a while  
to think  
of

class

(fidgeting w/ ear)

- paints to stay calm, listening to music alone in room, exercise helps

(very smiley; drinks coffee - appreciates?)  
- stressed about imminent work (biochem)

(looks at schedule for memory prompts on assignments; class, etc.)

- "everyone goes through stress" → do you want to talk or get your mind off it?

now - friends give options - help you look outside the box & tips

- uses notes / myhomework

- organize by ← subjective criteria - now uses notes b/c too much work/time to

add to ~~the~~ my hw - too much of a hurdle to input classes & work (lol)

↓ some preliqs can hide from your eyes by categorization

- no resources by Cornell wants to do things on her own. ✓ yoga ✓ Meditation but done at home

- (engaged, leans in) - Cornell

- too many people at stress relieving events - cause even more stress

- barn = stress relief

- fav things: applefest, holidays depend on how it affects Cornell

↳ hanging out w/ friends shopping (limited)

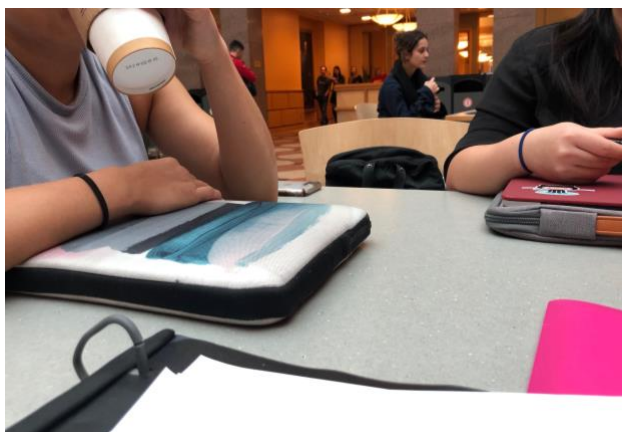
- weather → doesn't affect (uses afraid of SAD but not a problem here - enjoys rainy weather)

Seasonal affective disorder

specifically



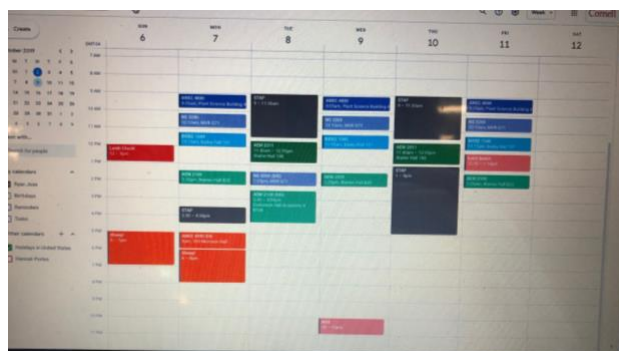
## Related Photos



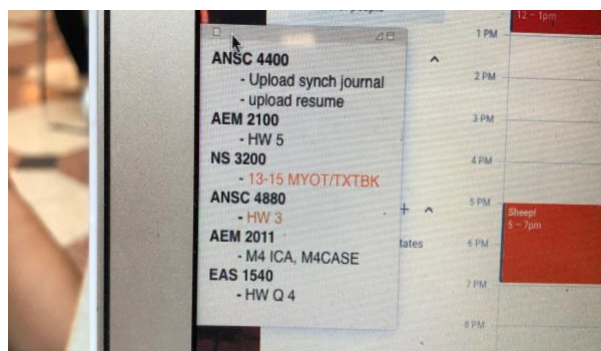
Participant on the left, interviewer on the right in the location of the interview (Sage Hall)



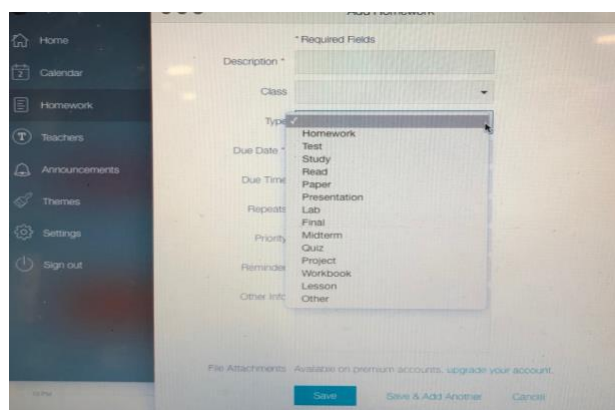
Different view of Sage Hall from the table at which we conducted our interview



Google Calendar utilized by participant to keep track of her courses. Main application for scheduling, shown to us by participant eagerly.



Notes application on MacBook utilized by participant to keep track of coursework in each class.



Application MyHomework, utilized in the past by participant but inputting the data became too tedious and she switched to Notes (as explained in interview).

## II. Participant and Interview Context

The participant was an Animal Science major in her senior year from Queens. As an Animal Science major, she has a heavy workload and a fairly defined academic path. She aspires to go to Veterinary School, after a some time off following graduation. She has two young siblings (4 and 6 years old) who she helps take care of during her time at home as her mother is a single parent. Family and friendship is very important to her and she is sociable, regularly seeing friends during the week and going out with them on weekends.

This participant directly relates to our project topic of helping students better manage stress at Cornell as she is a student at Cornell, who experiences stress. When identifiable, her stress originates from workload and pressure on her academic and professional future. She has experiences to offer on how she handles stress, how she has utilized Cornell resources to handle stress, and a different perspective on stress management at Cornell than offered in our group of 4 individuals.

The interview was conducted in Sage Hall. The time allotted was from 4:45PM-5:15PM but the actual interview lasted was 17 minutes, starting 5 minutes late around 5:50PM, due to the signing of the contract and getting settled. We bought the participant a coffee of her choice as a reward for her participation that she consumed during the interview. As it was evening and most classes had been finished, the atrium was mostly full and slightly noisy, as a result of the structure and composition of the atrium. The participant used Sage as an area to do work in on short notice, as it was close to Collegetown, where she lives, has a café, and regularly has a table available. It is a good environment for 30 minutes of work, 2 hours of work, group meetings, phone calls, and other general business. We thought it wise to conduct the interview in Sage Hall as it was a location in which the participant felt comfortable. As the participant had worked in

Sage Hall, it was intended that being in an area where she had worked, she would have an easy time discussing her work habits and workload; Sage was intended as a memory prompt.

Furthermore, we wanted the interview to in a setting where the participant was comfortable speaking openly, and we felt Sage provided this comfort.

### III. Session Summary

We met the participant in front of Sage Hall, and accompanied her to the café where we purchased a coffee drink of her choice as a reward for her participation. We found a table, conducted introductions, exchanged small talk, and had her look over and sign the consent form. She was comfortable, engaging, and content almost instantly. Upon hearing that we would ask to see her materials, such as her schedule and homework planner, she pulled them up on her computer screen to have them on hand when we reached that section in the interview.

As she consented to an audio recording, we recorded the session, from signing the consent form to the conclusion of the wrap up questions. Her body language communicated that she was engaged and relaxed for the duration of the interview. When she was not showing content, such as her course load or planner on her computer, she was actively listening and responding to the interviewer, Ariel. She maintained eye contact when speaking, only broken when she had to think intently about an answer to a question. She gazed into the distance when asked about her favorite class at Cornell thus far, and took about 45 seconds to answer the question. It was interesting to note that, contrastingly, she answered her least favorite class in under 5 seconds; it almost came as a reflex.

The participant was confident in her answers and she spoke slowly and articulately. She was excited to show her materials, such as her schedule and the applications she used to take down

her homework and record her exams. She also readily provided critiques of past applications she had used to record work, such as MyHomework.

With respect to the specific questions that were asked, she despised Domestic Animal Biology, a prerequisite for the Animal Science major that is generally taken Freshman year. In her opinion, this was a class that is too difficult for Freshmen and should not be taken Freshman fall, especially in conjunction with General Chemistry. The best class she had taken thus far, which took a while to be remembered, was Introduction to Wines in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it provided stress relief during an otherwise hectic semester. The participant works in her house, or areas close to her house, such as Starbucks, places on the Engineering Quad, or friends' apartments in Collegetown. She does this because work can go late and it is easiest to walk home at 2AM when you are working under 10 minutes away from your bed. The participant explained that she enjoys working with friends, but only one or two, as a larger group can get distracting.

This participant works on campus, interns on campus, and is in multicultural and major related societies. These are all scheduled into her Google Calendar, and provide a detailed visualization of her very busy weeks. The classes that constitute her schedule this semester were selected to meet requirements, boost her GPA, and out of general interest. Because of the way that her classes are structured a lot of assignments are due directly after the weekend, so although she said she was not stressed during the interview, she said she is frequently throughout the semester and anticipates being stressed tomorrow (Thursday). As she explained her courses and workload throughout each week she indicated the days of the week and relevant courses with her hands on her computer, actively engaging the interviewer, urging her to take a closer look and understand.

The participant used her schedule as a prompt to answer work and class related questions, such as which class took up the most of her time. She offered the opinion that assignments with friends are better, and that she would rather work alone than work with a stranger, due to negative past experiences with strangers, and positive experiences working with friends. The participant laughed when asked if she was stressed, and answered in jest that she is always stressed, but revised her answer to say that she is not currently stressed but is more stressed than not. Further, she explained that to manage her own stress she plans how to complete the things that are causing her stress. If she is stressed about jobs, she will browse current job postings on LinkedIn and Handshake. When she has an assignment she will make an outline and schedule time to work on it.

She excitedly and passionately answered that she paints to manage stress, as well as listening to music in alone in her room, and in serious cases she will go for a run to relieve stressful energy. The participant was particularly smiley when discussing her stress relieving activities, and took the opportunity to drink some of the coffee we had purchased at the beginning of the interview. She is stressed about assignments that she knows are upcoming, regardless of how far away they are. When discussing managing stress with friends she remarked “everyone goes through stress” and that she had both received and offered help from/to friends. In both cases it is best to have either someone to talk to and provide guidance or someone to provide some distraction from the work.

On the topic of keeping track of homework, over her past 3 years at Cornell she has tried a multitude of applications, and has settled on the very basic Notes application on her Mac. This is because it is the only application she has experienced that has the information readily available when opened. Other applications sort the information in ways that it is easy to forget about a

Prelim until it is the next day. With Notes, the information is explicit and almost impossible to ignore.

Similar to her work style, the participant is aware of Cornell's stress relieving resources but finds them stressful. Instead of attending the events, she will learn about what Cornell offers and conduct a similar activity in her room. When Cornell hosts Yoga, she will do it alone in her room; when Cornell hosted a meditation, she downloaded an application on her phone and did guided meditation alone. This resulted from her attending a few events and finding them extremely crowded, and more stress inducing than stress relieving. Solitude is consistent in her stress relieving activities, as her final example was Cornell's Barn, where she goes to be alone with and pet the animals that are there in the beginning of the Fall and end of Spring semesters. Wrapping up the interview, she remarked that the weather in Ithaca did not cause her any upset, despite her fear Freshman year of suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder. Being from Queens, she thinks it possible that she is used to the rainy and seasonal weather, and actually enjoys grey and rainy days, much like it was on the day we conducted the interview. She appreciates the large events associated with Ithaca and Cornell, such as Applefest and Homecoming, and finds those largely stress relieving. She offered up further insight, upon being prompted if there was any other information that came to mind, on her advisor and how she was driven to switch after her Freshman year advisor instructed her to take 3 high level courses that resulted in low grades and the worst semester thus far at Cornell. Her current advisor provides useful guidance and instruction on how to succeed each semester and which courses to take; insight which has helped her academic course over the past 2 years.

At the conclusion of the interview, we thanked her for her time and she happily and politely thanked us for the interview and coffee. It was around dinner time, and we all lived in



Collegetown, so we walked back in a group, and before finally departing reminded the participant that she should reach out if she has any more relevant or interesting information. The interview provided an interesting insight to other majors, as our group consists of Information and Computer Science majors, who have taken a majority of the same classes.

#### IV. Takeaways

I learned from the participant that stress is unavoidable, and though it may be hard to pinpoint exactly where the stress originates, organization provides peace of mind. The participant pointed out that even though she might not start an assignment when she is stressed about it, creating a plan of attack or strategy alone helped her stay calm. It is important to understand common approaches individuals take before any solutions can be proposed, as the solutions will ideally be based off of behaviors individuals already have tested and approve of.

I also noted that the participant's mood lifted when she discussed the stress relieving activities that she enjoyed, such as painting and running. This indicates that despite the stress surrounding her life she is able to separate herself from her duties and truly enjoy her relaxing activities. This too is intriguing to understand what can individuals can still derive joy from, despite their stressful schedules, and if there is a time in which the stress will be too great to truly enjoy a stress relieving activity.

It was interesting to note that the participant found Cornell's events intended to act as relaxing study breaks overwhelming. This indicates that there is something in the structure or nature of the activities that is so off-putting, the events achieve the exact opposite of what they are intending. This is particularly interesting because the participant noted that Homecoming and Applefest are enjoyable activities, so there is something more than the size of the events that is off-putting.

Her approach to notetaking is striking, as it highlighted yet another way individuals like to keep track of their workload. It is very simple and not a method I was familiar with, so this indicated to me that there is not a single record-keeping method that is preferred by all. The design of a meticulous application that I may prefer is not the best fit for others.

Lastly, her approach to workspaces highlighted the different qualities students look for when finding locations to work after school hours. It is not solely on convenience, ambiance, location, interior, or comfort. This could be interesting if there is a correlation between some design aspect of places individuals do or do not like to work, and seeing if this is a widespread phenomenon or very personalized. This could be important if part of our project solution involves some recommendation for study spaces.