The “Sophomore Slump”

Retrieved and adapted from http://www.beloit.edu/syi/sophomore_retreat/tips_and_tools/slump.php

WHAT IS IT AND WHAT CAN I DO?

What is the sophomore slump?
The sophomore year is likely to be a time when students find they cannot obtain the courses, housing, financial aid, or the type of academic advising and institutional attention they may have received as freshmen. For sophomores college is no longer new—the excitement and thrill of a new experience has worn away, and they now face the reality that college will be three more years of hard work, courses, papers, and significant financial investment. These feelings of transition also come at a time when students may be struggling to determine career goals, dealing with personal development issues, and experiencing other diversions that may make academic and social integration even more difficult to attain.

How do I beat the sophomore slump?

1. Recognize that it exists and others are going through it too. You’re not alone!
2. Do some soul searching on why you are in college. Why did you decide to go to college? Would life be better if you did something else? Is the grass really greener on the other side?
3. Take stock of what you have or don’t have in your current situation. Do you feel in control of your life? Do you like what you are studying? Do you have some close friends? What is important to you?
4. Talk to your advisor or someone you trust about all of these issues. Will things really change if you transfer, or are the problems you are facing more internal than external? Think of places you can go for help to sort out any confusion you have to ensure the decisions you make will be the right ones.
5. Take control of your life! Sophomore year is a time when you will make big decisions about your future. Thinking about your strengths, weakness, potential, and limitations can be difficult, even threatening, but confronting these issues will help you honestly answer these important questions:
   a. Who am I?
   b. What do I want to become? What will I be like personally, professionally, morally, spiritually, ethically and socially? Am I comfortable with these decisions?
   c. What do I need to do to get where I want to go? Where can I go for help?

Explore Majors and Careers with DISCOVER

October 27, 2009
1:00 PM — 2:00 PM

Still not sure you are in the right major? DISCOVER is an online, interactive, comprehensive, developmental career guidance and information system designed to help students make important career and educational decisions. This workshop teaches students how to effectively utilize features of the DISCOVER career planning program for career exploration and occupational research.

Registration for SCS services is needed (http://scs.tamu.edu).
Seven Not-So-Obvious Reasons to Take Advantage of Your Campus Career Center

by Peter Vogt

You may find it surprising, but many college students know little or nothing about a wonderful resource that’s right in their “backyard” - the Campus Career Center.

Most every college or university has a career services office whose sole purpose is helping students with career-related issues. But despite the career services office’s best efforts to market themselves, surprisingly few students take advantage of their expertise. And that’s a shame - because, as many recent (and not-so-recent) college graduates can attest, the career services office could well be the most important resource on your campus when it comes to helping you envision and plan for your future.

Why should you pay a visit to your school’s career services office? Here are seven not-so-obvious reasons:

• It’s staffed by professionals who are specifically trained to assist college students with career-related concerns. Most campus career counselors hold master’s degrees in counseling or a closely related field, and many have additional educational background that focuses specifically on college student development issues. In addition, many campus career counselors have worked in the corporate or nonprofit sector, so they can give you a sense of what to expect in the “real world” of your work life.

• Its staff members work closely with the employers who will someday hire you. Career services professionals are very well informed on employment trends, in great part because they’re talking with actual employers every day. They also keep up on career-related trends through their professional reading and involvement in professional organizations. “Careers” are their career, and they can pass on some of their considerable knowledge to you.

• It’s the best place on campus to help you figure out what you want to do with your life and how. One of the misconceptions that many campus career services offices must fight every day is the notion that they’re the place to go only when you’re about to start your job hunt. Most career services offices also focus extensively on “career planning” issues -- helping you learn more about yourself (e.g., your interests, skills, values, personality), what’s “out there” in the world of work, and even how you might put certain majors to career use (in answer to the common question, “What can I do with a major in ________?”). In other words, career services offices can help you not only with “how will I get there?” questions, but also with “where am I going and why?” questions.

• It’s loaded with career-related resources, whether in print or on the computer. Among other things, most career services offices offer job and internship listings, information on careers you might pursue with various majors, information on specific companies and organizations, and even (in some cases) information on the jobs and salaries of past graduates from your school. All of these resources can help you learn more about the employment possibilities that exist and which ones might appeal to you.

• The more “known” you are to the career services staff, the better the chance a staffer will refer you to an employer looking to fill a specific position. Let’s be clear here: It is not a campus career counselor’s job to “get you a job.” But picture yourself as a campus career counselor for a moment. If you saw a student in your office once a week learning about the field of, say, marketing, wouldn’t you be more likely to refer that student to a company you know of that’s looking for a marketing intern or full-time employee? Needless to say, it doesn’t hurt for you to be in the back of a campus career counselor’s mind when he or she is working with employers looking to fill positions.

• It’s a good place to meet other students who share your worries. Whether you’re a freshman or a senior, you’re not alone in your career concerns. By visiting the career services office, you’ll likely meet other students who are “in your shoes” -- and you can then help each other by tossing around career ideas, critiquing each other’s marketing materials (i.e., resumes and cover letters), and perhaps even making each other aware of companies and organizations you know of that might be hiring college students or new grads.

• You’re paying for it! Your tuition dollars help to pay for career counselors’ salaries as well as all of the equipment and resources in the career services office. In other words, you help fund the office and everything it has and does - so you ought to gain maximum benefit from it.

Most campus career counselors go into their field because they genuinely want to help people like you who might be wrestling with career issues of some sort. But you won’t benefit from their passion and expertise if they don’t know who you are. So give your campus career center a try. You’ve already invested some of your money in this valuable resource; combine that with your investment of time and you’ll be that much more likely to find a career that makes you happy for years to come.
Are you planning on studying abroad during the summer of 2010?

A study abroad program is an excellent opportunity to explore a foreign country and experience a different culture. Scholarships & Financial Aid can help make your trip a reality. With this excellent opportunity to study abroad you need to make sure that everything is carefully planned prior to leaving for your experience. Each student needs to be aware that coming to the financial aid department is a must, and not just for one visit. You need to be diligent in the planning and conscious of important dates with regards to the program you choose.

So, what should you be doing right now?

Step 1: Attend a program informational session and/or meet with a Peer Counselor in the Study Abroad Office to obtain information on finding and funding a global experience. Check the Study Abroad Programs web site, http://studyabroad.tamu.edu for program information or subscribe to the listserv (“Join Listserv” on main page) for event announcements. To see a schedule of upcoming informational sessions, please check http://studyabroad.tamu.edu/information_session.asp.

Step 2: Meet with a Study Abroad Advisor in Bizzell West.

Step 3: Set up a meeting with a Financial Aid Advisor to discuss possible financial aid opportunities to help you fund your study abroad trip.

Step 4: Choose a program and complete the online Texas A&M Study Abroad application related to your program type via the application portal: http://studyabroad.tamu.edu/application.asp. Per the application instructions, obtain signatures (if needed) and return the application to the Texas A&M Study Abroad Programs Office (1st floor, Bizzell Hall West).

Step 5: Once your program application has been approved by TAMU, complete any additional applications/paperwork and return that on or before any deadlines indicated by the program liaison (i.e. application and acceptance forms for independent study abroad transfer credit program).

Step 6: Obtain a Study Abroad Budget Request form from the Study Abroad Office and bring it into the financial aid office so your COA (Budget) may be increased.

Step 7: Set an appointment and meet with a counselor in the Department of Student Financial Aid to discuss options for funding your program.

Step 8: Apply for Texas A&M Study Abroad Programs Office scholarship(s): Study Abroad Fellowship and International Education Fee Scholarship (for any credit-bearing global experience). Check for other scholarships via the Study Abroad web site and apply, if eligible.

Step 9: Attend any meetings required by program, as well as the Texas A&M pre-departure orientation meetings to obtain important information and resources for traveling abroad. Check out the Study Abroad web site, http://studyabroad.tamu.edu or subscribe to the listserv (“Join Listserv” on main page) for Texas A&M pre-departure orientation information
Successful students at Texas A&M are those who learn how to utilize resources, solve problems, get connected with others and take advantage of the many opportunities available to them in Aggieland.

To help you get involved in Amplify, the workshops and programs are divided into 8 programmatic themes:

- Academic Engagement/Success Strategies
- Health/Wellness
- Leadership
- Civic Engagement
- Global Awareness & Diversity
- Financial & Debt Management
- Current Issues
- Life Skills & Personal Development

Registration for workshops is required. October workshops include:

**Talking with Professors (October 8)**
Are your stereotypes about professors accurate? Attend this workshop to learn how to work with professors and achieve success in the classroom.

**Perfectly Imperfect (October 12)**
Perfectionism is a double-edged sword that can keep you from meeting your goals! This workshop will help you understand the difference between healthy striving and perfectionism, and help you learn about healthy ways to manage your perfectionistic habits and coping skills. Accept yourself as perfectly imperfect!

**QPR Suicide Prevention Training (October 13)**
Can you spare 2 hours to help save a fellow Aggie’s life???
Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students. Within a few days or weeks before a suicide attempt, people almost always give clues that they are considering suicide. Would you know what to look for...what to say or do...how to help?

**Stress Management & Test Anxiety (October 13)**
Feeling stressed with school? Attend this workshop to learn how to manage stress and test anxiety.

**CommUnity Conversations: Race and the Media: What does a Massachusetts policeman and a Harvard professor tell us about the portrayal of race in America? (October 14)**
CommUnity Conversations is a series that brings students, faculty and staff at A&M together to learn about, and talk about, issues of topical concern to ourselves and the larger world. The format varies with the topic; everyone is welcome to attend. Meal is provided and additional RSVP is strongly encouraged so that enough food may be ordered.

**Study Success Strategies (October 20)**
Make sure your study techniques are college level. Learning strategies for reading texts, taking notes, test preparation, and taking exams will be covered.

**Ethics and Decision Making (October 20)**
The Ethics & Decision Making workshop assists students in recognizing the consistencies or inconsistencies in what they say they value, and what their actions reflect as values. Part I focused on building a basic shared understanding of morals, values and ethics. Part II looks at building ethical standards, decision making skills and a focused understanding of integrity and personal character.

**CommUnity Conversations: “Art and Justice—Art as a Response to the Social World” (October 29)**
CommUnity Conversations is a series that brings students, faculty and staff at A&M together to learn about, and talk about, issues of topical concern to ourselves and the larger world. The format varies with the topic; everyone is welcome to attend. Meal is provided and additional RSVP is strongly encouraged so that enough food may be ordered.
The mid-point of the semester is a great opportunity to reflect on your progress towards your academic and personal goals for the semester. It is a time to think about what you want to achieve by the end of the semester and evaluate what, if any, changes you need to make to attain those goals. There are several important steps in making this evaluation and increasing your opportunity for success.

1. Be honest with yourself: Any good evaluation begins with an honest assessment of your current situation. Anything less than being realistic will result in an unfair evaluation and will not lead you to make necessary changes to meet your goals.

2. Assess your goals. Make sure the goals you have set for yourself are what you really want to achieve. Goals that are not in line with your values and your true desires can lead to low motivation and behaviors that are likely not in keeping with those goals, which can result in feeling like a failure. Goals that are true to who you are and what you want can generate greater energy, focus and a sense of purpose. Goal setting should be done in a S.M.A.R.T. manner.
   a. Specific goals – your goals should be well defined.
   b. Measurable goals – set goals so it is clear when you have achieved them.
   c. Action goals – set goals that involve taking action.
   d. Realistic goals – goals should be attainable.
   e. Time specific – set a specific time frame in which to achieve your goals.

3. Evaluate your behaviors. When you have defined your goals, evaluate whether your behaviors are consistent with those goals. If you have a goal to wake up at 7 a.m. each day, but set your alarm for 10 a.m., your behavior (setting your alarm) is not congruent with your goal (waking up at 7:00 a.m.). When behaviors do not lead you towards your goals, you can begin to feel like a failure for not meeting your goals. Give yourself the best opportunity to achieve your goals by making sure your behaviors support goal attainment.

4. Evaluate barriers to your goals. If your goals are still not being met, you may need to reflect on what is getting in the way. Look at internal and external barriers. Internal barriers may include personal concerns that distract you while external barriers may include too many commitments or conflicts in relationships.

The staff at the Student Counseling Service can help with any and all of these steps. We have academic, career, personal and psychiatric services. We work with students in groups and individually and have workshops and other resources readily available to help you. Give us a call (979-845-4427), register for services on-line (http://scs.tamu.edu/), or come by Cain Hall to see what we have to offer. It is never too late to make changes. Some change, even taking steps towards making change, can help you realize that you have control in your life and the opportunity to determine your own goals and choices. If you want to get that process started, we can help.
Profile of: Amber Briggs  
Major: Sociology (& a minor in Africana Studies)  
Hometown: Copperas Cove, TX  
Hobbies: Spending time with friends, meeting new people, and (guilty confession) cleaning!

I had the fortune of meeting Amber last fall, when she became the Chair of the Regents’ Scholars Program Student Planning Board. Spring came and Amber and I got ample hangout time in Paris, France, the beautiful City of Lights, where we traveled during spring break, compliments of the Financial Aid Connection academic success program. Amber and I are truly kindred spirits: we both enjoy the movie theatre experience (we watched three movies together this summer), we want to travel to at least 6 of the 7 continents of the world, and we can both be incredibly random.

Sweet, passionate, and quirky, Amber is a dear friend of mine. Though she isn’t quite sure what path she will take post-grad, traveling the world, going to grad school, taking advantage of any and all opportunities that come her way, and changing the world through a career that involves politics, social justice, and one that provides assistance to kids are just a few things on her list. She is currently interning with the Public Policy Internship Program in our nation’s capitol – Washington D.C. – to broaden her college experience and get herself ready for the real world.

What made you decide to pursue the Public Policy Internship Program?  
I started to become very passionate about Urban Policy Reform, thanks to a few of my sociology classes. I knew that this would give me a chance to experience policy reform and I would have that chance to make a big impact.

How did you find out about this internship program?  
I received an email about PPIP from my sociology adviser.

What was the application process for PPIP? How did you finance your participation in this program?  
I applied for the program in early February. I had to prepare a resume, cover letter, writing sample, and fill out the PPIP application. After I submitted all of my materials, I had to interview with the program coordinators. My internship is being funded through financial aid. In order to receive aid while you are gone you have to take at least 6 hours (and I am registered in classes).

Prior to going to D.C., what was the thing you were most excited about regarding this opportunity?  
I was most excited about working in our nation’s capitol. After all, DC is the place that everything happens, and I have the opportunity to make things happen...that is exciting!

Prior to going to D.C., what was the thing you were most scared about regarding this opportunity?  
I was most scared about getting lost. My sense of direction is TERRIBLE, and I was worried about getting lost in a huge city!

Now that you are there, how do you feel about the things you were excited about? What about the things you were scared about?  
I am STILL excited about working in the Capitol! Sometimes after work I walk around in different parts of the city, and it is amazing to just walk passed things like the Washington Monument….or the White House! As for getting lost, I have! But, it is not as bad as I thought it would be (and I am starting to get around a whole lot easier!).

What has your experience with the program been thus far?  
I am really enjoying the program. The coordinators did a great job preparing us before we got here, and are doing a great job of making sure our experience is amazing (I love it!).

What do you do for your internship, in other words, what are your responsibilities?  
First and foremost I have a responsibility to represent myself and Texas A&M. As for my job, I am working with a firm who acts as a sort of bridge between the community and companies that are building in DC. As an intern, I help out with the general office stuff and I will help out with the major projects (In other words, there is a lot...but it’s all awesome).

How have you adjusted to the different surroundings and atmosphere?  
I definitely have. I admit I miss certain parts of being in College Station, but I am getting used to the culture (I’m really enjoying it, too!).

How has this enhanced your college experience, and how do you think this opportunity will help you with your future endeavors?  
This internship has already shown me things about the real world that you can only learn from experience. This internship will help me in my business and communication skills as well as confidence. I will go back to College Station, I will know what I still need to learn before I graduate, and I will feel more confident in my strengths.

Is there anything else you would like to tell our sophomore Regents’ Scholars?  
Look for opportunities like an internship, or study abroad program!!!!!! They will change your life, and are SO worth the experience!

As a blogger for the Regents’ Scholars Program, Amber comments, “There are just some things that you can’t learn inside a classroom. You have to learn by putting your school-skills to the test in the business ‘briefcase’ world…Luckily, my internship is a short glimpse of so-called ‘briefcase’ life. I get to learn how I need to grow before I graduate and go full-time into a briefcase lifestyle.”