



**Webcast: Student Emergency Support Fund**  
*How Emergency Support Has Helped Our Students*

**Tuesday, June 2, 2020 ~ 7:00pm**

**Moderator:**

*Deborah Lowen-Klein: Interim VP for University Advancement*

**Meeting Presenters:**

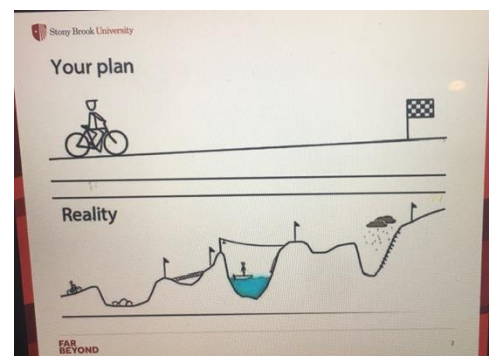
*Rick Gatteau, PhD: VP for Student Affairs and Dean of Students*

*Ellen Driscoll, LMSW: Interim Associate Dean of Students*

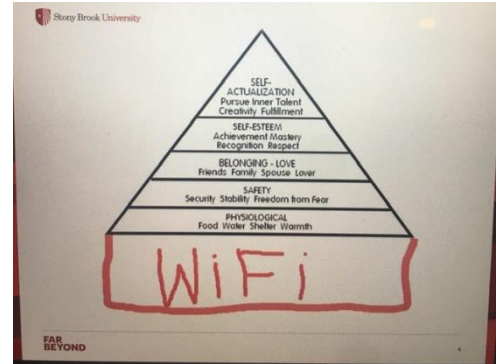


**Rick Gatteau**

- Thank you everyone for taking the time to join us for this webcast and for generously supporting this initiative. Tonight, we hope to share a lot of what student affairs is doing surrounding the student support fund. We are so grateful for everybody's support.
- I want to thank Deborah and the Advancement team for such a wonderful partnership.
- Student Affairs works with all 26,000 Stony Brook students (17,000 undergraduate and 9,000 graduate), many are first generation college students, who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, that didn't even think going to college was possible.
- Rick shared a slide he uses at every freshman orientation, which depicts the difference between the student's plan and the reality of their college experience. Students have high inspirations and set a certain path they think college will take, but there are always obstacles.
- It is Student Affairs' role to reinforce the "you can do it" attitude to students and that they can overcome these challenges. Stony Brook students need to know they are here for a reason – they are among the brightest and the



best - and Student Affairs is here to help them cross the finish line.



- Rick also shared another slide which depicts “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.” Although all the parts of this pyramid are important, a critical component for Student Affairs is keeping students safe. Especially at this current time, safety cannot be taken for granted.
- Stony Brook needs to make sure that the university is creating an environment where students feel safe, welcome, included and cared for, and one in which they can succeed.
- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, students always say that their most important need is Wi-Fi; Ironically, this has actually become very true for many of our students since learning has gone completely online.
- **Student Support Team:** [stonybrook.edu/studentsupport](http://stonybrook.edu/studentsupport)  
Efforts during COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Reaching out to students who are not attending class
  - Supporting students diagnosed with COVID-19 or with parents/family members diagnosed with COVID-19
  - Providing support in the event of the death of a loved one from COVID-19
  - Helping resolve unexpected financial difficulty: Sometimes we have cases where a student would have to drop out of college if it wasn’t for that ‘little bit’ of financial support that the Student Support team can provide
  - Helping resolve food or housing insecurity
- **Student Emergency Support Fund**
  - In December, because of the growing need by many Stony Brook students, Student Affairs and Advancement started planning the establishment of a student support fund, which would provide funding for those students in dire need. The goal was set to raise \$100,000.
  - Once COVID-19 hit, Student Affairs and Advancement partnered to raise funds for students affected by this pandemic
  - This fund provides small grants to undergraduate and graduate students who face emergency situations
  - To date, 1,100 students have completed applications related to COVID-19 financial needs
    - We did a lot of advertising for applications because we have found that a number of students who sometimes have these financial needs are embarrassed and don’t readily ask for help
    - The application process allows for a conversation and many of the students want to tell their story
  - To date, over \$935k has been raised, of which \$870k has been distributed
  - Supports living needs, food, medicine, and technology for classes so there is no interruption in their academic work

## **Ellen Driscoll**

- Ellen shared details and stories of student emergency grant recipients
  - Many Stony Brook students live on campus all year long. They will take summer classes and stay at the University year round. When they went home for the pandemic, they found themselves not having their own private space and they had to sleep on the couch because there was no room for them.
  - Many students' double dorm rooms provide a larger living space for them than what they have at their homes.
  - Many students did not have computers or laptops at home. The SINC sites on campus are their lifeline.
  - Many students' families cannot afford Wi-Fi. On the occasions they do go home, they get internet service at their public library or at a coffee shop. Due to the pandemic, libraries and coffee shops have been closed, so they have no access.
  - Many students live in multi-generational households where they saw a family member get COVID-19 and sometimes die from it. Many students' parents lost their jobs and the student now needs to work while attending online classes.
  - 40 Stony Brook students lost their parents to COVID-19
  - Due to your generous donations to the Student Emergency Fund, we have been able to provide these students and many, many more with what they need to get by – whether it is for food, Wi-Fi boosters etc.
  - Students started sharing their experience with other students in need and when word got around even more students applied – it became known as “Seawolves helping Seawolves”
  - Thank you all so much for all your generous gifts

## **Questions from attendees:**

### **How did your office evaluate all the applications?**

**Ellen:** We were getting approximately 70 applications each night which we gave to about 8 staff members who made calls to the students every day. It slowed down once the semester ended, which has been nice because it gives us a chance to spend more time on the phone with the students. Now that the Summer session has started, it has picked up a bit. We have gotten into a rhythm, and the team has found a way to reach out to the students as quickly as possible.

### **Can you tell us how quickly funds are/can be disbursed to students?**

**Rick:** The Advancement and Bursar offices worked together to set up most of the funding electronically. Almost all students have their bank accounts set up with the Bursar, so that was a great way to get the funds to the students quickly and seamlessly. Since Ellen and her team were on the phone all day with students addressing their needs, it was really important for a quick turnaround time and get them funds immediately. I appreciate the work with the teams to make that happen.

**If school doesn't resume on campus in the Fall, what other types of needs do you see for the students?**

**Ellen:** The same kind of support as we have now. We should be able to tighten up all the concerns that students have with remote learning. SUNY has sent us laptops that we can loan out to students, which Rick has extended through the fall semester.

**Rick:** During the academic year we have a food pantry on campus for students, faculty and staff. Many of the students utilize this, so basic food needs are always a concern. Many of our students receive financial aid but they still face obstacles and challenges. Unexpected things, like medical or transportation issues, still come up which they cannot afford.

**Are there any remote counseling services available for students experiencing mental health issues during this time?**

**Rick:** Yes. All of the offices in Student Affairs – Career Center, Counseling, Student Health, Student Activities - pivoted very quickly to the virtual world. The big challenge we have (and will continue to have) is how do you build community in this virtual social distance world? As far as mental health counseling, we had already set up (and have made even more robust) tele-counseling through zoom and phone. This is an opportunity to create and use technology to our advantage as students are so accustomed to connecting in this way. Our counseling team has done an amazing job, and since mid-March they have had about 1,500 student appointments. All students that they were seeing at the beginning of the semester have continued with them through zoom. Mental stress has been enormous, especially as classes moved online. It was a completely different learning experience for most students and they needed to adapt.