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To "Torre,F.Jason" <FTORRE@NOTES.CC.SUNYSB.EDU>

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Subject Helping students concerned about the war in Iraq and terrorism

Dear Colleagues,

With our nation at war, tensions will inevitably develop over differing views of this conflict. As members of a university community it is important for each of us to foster an environment that encourages tolerance and learning. A number of people on campus are working together to help provide constructive outlets for expression of various views. The guide, Helping Students Concerned about the War in Iraq and Terrorism: A Guide for Faculty and Staff at Stony Brook provides useful information for how to support students in and outside the classroom as well as campus referrals and internet resources for more extensive assistance.

For further direction with this issue, please feel free to contact our Dean of Students, Jerrold Stein at 2-7320, Director of the Office of Student Services in the HSC, Dania de la Campa at 4-2111 or Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Donna Di Donato at 2-7080.

Many thanks,

Robert L. McGrath
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Helping Students Concerned about the War in Iraq and Terrorism: A Guide for Faculty and Staff at Stony Brook

Threats of terrorism here and the dreaded impact for all involved in the war in Iraq instill feelings of helplessness, anger, and fear. Different people react, and cope, in vastly different ways. A student's natural temperament, social support, prior life experiences, and ways of coping contribute to individually specific reactions. Even when students do not express verbal concern, they may experience strong internal reactions. In classes and elsewhere faculty and staff are likely to see students in need of assistance. Anticipating potential reactions, considering possible interventions, and knowing the resources available will help the campus community to work effectively with these students.

Possible reactions:

- Fear for the safety of family or friends
- Preoccupation with terrorist incidents and the war
- Inability to focus or concentrate on studying
- Anxiety about arguments with those with strong opposing views
- Increased hostility toward or fear of foreigners
- Watching television news coverage excessively
- Increased reactivity to smaller issues and events

- Increased moodiness, anxiety, anger and/or insomnia
- Strained relationships with friends and family; increased isolation or irritability
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

What concerned faculty and staff can do to help:

- Students whose families live in the New York metropolitan area, and those from other major metropolitan areas, may be especially likely to react strongly to the threat of terrorist activity. They may need to stay in contact with family.

- It is usually beneficial for people to continue with their usual routines as much as possible. Encourage students to keep up with assignments, classes, and other activities. Even so, be aware that some students might need some time away.

- Do not feel pressured to lead a class discussion on terrorism or the war, especially if it does not pertain to the course material or your own feelings might interfere.

- If you discuss course topics directly or indirectly related to terrorism or the war keep in mind that some students may react strongly, some have family in the Middle East, some have friends and family in the military. Try to be sensitive in how you introduce such topics, and be tolerant if some students need to take a break during class. Do not permit ridicule or disrespect of anyone's viewpoint.

- Listen. Allow students who confide in you individually to share their experience. Expect conflicting feelings that are not "rational." Encourage students to confide in friends or family who can be supportive.

- If students express hostility toward individuals from specific countries, help them appreciate the distinction between the country's leaders and the innocent population. Increased divisiveness will not ultimately help students feel safer.

- Be aware that strong reactions may come from many sources, including previous experiences of trauma. What seems like an unreasonable response to an observer may be perfectly understandable in the context of the responding person's life.

- Keep in mind that some students see their teachers as authority figures or parental figures they depend upon to remain calm and hopeful. For these students, hearing "the grownups" express fear or anger can be overwhelming.

- If some students' reactions seem particularly strong, or if the reactions continue over time, make a referral to a professional:

1. The Interfaith Center, second floor, Stony Brook Union houses chaplains of many faiths. The offices and telephone #s are:

Baptist	Union 278,	2-6564
Jewish	Union 201	2-6565
Catholic	Union 265	2-6562
Protestant	Union 275	2-6564
Islamic	Union 271	2-9769

2. International Services, 2401 Computer Sciences, for information about international events, travel and safety issues for international students and visitors. Tel: 632-INTL

3. The University Counseling Center provides free, confidential counseling for students and is available for appointments or on a walk-in basis for emergencies. The Center is located on the 2nd floor of the Infirmary Bldg.) and can be reached at 632-6720. (Mon-Fri., 8am-5pm, 5-7pm on Tues.) Faculty and staff members may contact the Center for consultation on any mental health issue and for referrals to off campus practitioners for themselves or family members.

4. The Wo/Men's Center, 216 Student Union is available with

professional counselors in the office from 12 noon to 8 p.m. on weekdays, at 632-9666.

5. RESPONSE hotline is available 24 hours/seven days per week at 631/751-7500.

6. Keep in mind that faculty and staff members are also experiencing stress. Call the Employee Assistance Program, Room 140 Old Chemistry, tel: 632-6085.

The following resources provide relevant information:

Updates of information for the SB campus will be placed on <http://www.sunysb.edu>

To access Stony Brook's Emergency Management plan and instructions for staying informed about emergency situations go to <http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/sb/emergency/>

For information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, go to

<http://www.ready.gov/index.html>

American Psychological Association:

<http://helping.apa.org/daily/terrorism.html>

<http://helping.apa.org/daily/traumaticstress.html>

<http://helping.apa.org/resilience/war.html>

National Mental Health Association:

<http://www.nmha.org/reassurance/anniversary/index.cfm>

Anne Byrnes, Ph.D., Director, U. Counseling Center

Adapted from materials by Dr. Karen Lese, U. San Diego, 2003