

## Senior Reflection 2011

When I sat down to think about how to sum up the four years in which I have been involved in the marching band here at Stony Brook, what came to mind most was just how much has changed since the fall of 2007. My first year here at Stony Brook was the marching band's second year of existence. There were barely fifty members, and we still looked quite tiny on the field in LaValle Stadium. I remember the first game of that season when we first ran out to make the SB for the pregame show, and afterwards my dad said, "Oh! Is *that* what it was?"

Everyone knew each other within a matter of days, and that first band camp was, as it usually is, a huge bonding experience. It affected me a great deal in particular; I grew up on a farm surrounded by hundreds of acres of empty fields, and I was thrown into a university on Long Island that big and somewhat terrifying, and the three hundred and fifty miles in between Stony Brook and Corning, NY might as well have been three thousand. But because I moved in early to join this awesome group of people, and because the older members were so welcoming and did so much to make my class feel at home, I was able to easily adapt. That year, it seemed like everyone was very much on the same page, and all we wanted to do was have a good time.

But then we got bigger. More people joined the band the next year, and the year after that, and we more than doubled in size. All of a sudden, our individual roles within the group were being questioned, and as the organization grew to play a bigger part in university life, we began to rethink and reimagine what the real role of the band itself might be. Suddenly we were trying to write mission statements and figure out new procedures to accommodate for more people, and this time there were a lot more opinions to consider. Since then, we have evolved into a completely different type of group than we were three years ago, and I expect that we will continue to change and evolve and try to constantly improve ourselves as the years go by.

In that sense the journey the marching band has had in the past four years has been characterized by a continuous question of identity—of finding out who we really are, what various roles as individuals and as a group may be, and how we should accomplish what we want to accomplish. While I was thinking about this path we have traveled down together, I started thinking about how this bumpy but amazing journey the marching band has taken over the past four years is similar to the journey we all take as students. The first year at college, everything is exciting. You think you're going down one specific path, and in the process you make friends, form relationships, and in general try to keep up with the work you have to get done. But after freshman year, the bubble bursts. Using my own experience as an example, I came here to study biology, which was what I did during my first year at Stony Brook. But my second year, everything went haywire. I didn't enjoy what I was studying, and I had so many questions about what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go, and what kind of degree would get me there. Some of you who were freshman this past year might have similar questions about what fields may be right for you, what you'd like to do for your careers, and what kind of people you want to be. Essentially, you may also have some questions of identity. But I just want to tell you that, as with

the various questions the marching band has had and the various turns we've taken as a group, although it may take some time, the answer will eventually come. You'll have so many experiences and learn so many things both inside and outside the classroom, and then one day you'll turn around and discover that four years have gone by and you're a completely different person altogether. I'm about to graduate with a degree in history and study law in the fall, which is totally different from where I began. There have been times in the past four years where I've had no idea what to do with my life. But that's exactly why organizations like this marching band are so important. Although we've had our own questions and changes over the years, this solid group of people can keep us anchored and make sure we make the very most of the university experience, for you are not only defined by what you study or what you want to be, but by the experiences you have on the way. And this exciting story is not over. We still have a lot to learn about ourselves, and from each other. We will continue to change as individuals, and the band will continue to evolve as more people join and bring in their own multitude of experiences and opinions.

As the years go by, no one will remember those days when we played for a virtually empty stadium, and how we changed that aspect of Stony Brook simply by having a good time and enjoying what we were doing. Instead, there will be different memories. The band will continue to change and evolve over the term of its existence, as will everything in the dynamic world we live in. However, in the long run- and here's something for those of you who are freshman- the important thing is to make the most of your experiences while you're at Stony Brook. So keep it fun, and I wish you the very best on your own journeys- both as individuals and as part of this very special group of people.