Welcome back Sophomores!

I hope your winter break was relaxing and full of happy moments with family and friends. Now a new semester awaits you!

Last semester may have been a challenge, to say the least. You may have failed a test or a course, had consistent arguments with your roommate, or struggled with developing your own belief system that conflicts from your parents. Whatever your unique situation was, you weren’t alone. Marcia Baxter Magolda and Patricia King describe the sophomore year as a period of “self-authorship”. Self-authoring occurs when you internally define a coherent belief system and an identity that coordinates with your values.

Developing Self-Authorship

The sophomore year is like standing on a fence and looking backward and seeing your first year of college and childhood, and then looking forward and seeing the rest of your college career and future. Thus, you are standing at a crossroads where the decisions you make now are more important than ever before.

During your freshman year, you most likely made decisions randomly and moved through the college experience without much self-reflection. You most likely weren’t in touch with your internal voice and life seemed undirected.

Perhaps now your decisions are becoming more focused. You may be feeling frustration with your current relationships, with yourself, or with your academic experience. You may be questioning the choices and mistakes you’ve made. Complicating matters, you probably feel the pressure to declare a major (if you haven’t already) as well as to have a sense purpose about your future career and life direction.

Do you have a strong sense of what your values are? Do you have an internal voice that authors your decision making? Or are you randomly living your life without a compass?

If you are someone who makes decisions randomly, perhaps now is the time for you to become fully engaged in the learning process. In turn, you may connect with your inner voice, acknowledge external pressures, and make focused decisions about your future that are based on your internal convictions. When you engage in these processes, then you are more likely to make committed choices aligned with your personal values, which will create a solid foundation for the rest of your life.

Stay strong and stay the course. If you are committed towards your college education and obtaining a degree—then you are making a confident decision about your future. In commitment, you are already planning for your future, although the path may be unclear at times. Best of luck as you have an opportunity to make wise choices right from the beginning of this semester!

Learning Friendship

Got a friend? Studies have found that Americans report having only two close friends, down from three close friends found from a similar study completed in 1985. Even more shocking, one in every four persons reported having no one with whom to discuss important matters.

Why should you be concerned? In a time when students are accumulating “friends” by the hundreds on their Facebook accounts, they are also reporting loneliness and mental illness at unprecedented levels. Further, Americans are not engaging in conversations with friends during times of crisis and are less involved in community activities.

In his book *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*, Robert Lane presents evidence that humans have a genetically programmed need for camaraderie and companionship; thus friendship is necessary for our physiological health and well-being. Moreover, social bonds are the most powerful predictor of life satisfaction according to Robert Putnam.

Friendship is a powerful influence of learning. Researchers have found that creating conditions where students can bond with one another and have deep conversations were particularly effective for student learning. It seems that the more students find friendship, the more they are likely to learn.

“Friendship is perhaps one of the most important gifts a human being can possess throughout life, and while some are fortunate enough to find it by chance, luck, or blessing, many find themselves surrounded by familiar faces but overcome by loneliness. The good news, it seems, is that the pursuit of friendship is something that can be learned, and colleges and universities should be in the business of teaching it if we seek to make the world a more just, civil, and humane place” (Shushok, 2008, p. 20). Thus, friendship has the potential to have an amplifying affect.

What are you learning? Naturally, you might think of some theories or ideas that you have learned in your courses. However, what are you learning not only in the classroom, but outside of the classroom as well? Daily you are involved in many tasks such as eating meals, talking to your roommate, or attending a meeting of a student organization. What are you learning from your relationships with others? Or aren’t you?

Who are your friends? Are your relationships with others healthy? Or are they affecting you in a negative matter? What steps are you taking to pursue enduring friendships that are moral and healthy in their truest sense?

I urge you to seek friendships in your daily lives that have the potential to transcend the boundaries of your college experience.

Adapted from:

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Academic Advising—Vital During Sophomore Year

The sophomore year is a time of developmental growth and a period when academic advising and course selection become more important as sophomores are feeling more urgent about declaring and committing to a major. Set up an advising appointment today with Katelyn Romsa by calling 507-389-5498 to receive assistance about majors on campus as well as how to define your career path.

Check out the new sophomore website to access resources that pertain to your unique needs @
www.mnsu.edu/fye/sophomores

Katelyn Romsa
Sophomore Initiatives Coordinator
MSU Mankato Summer Job Fair
February 11 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
in the CSU Ballroom
The Summer Job Fair 2009 is sponsored
by the Recreation Parks and Leisure Ser-
vices Department. This fair will be held
on Wednesday, February 11 from 9:30 to
3:00 in the CSU Ballroom. Talk to em-
ployers like Valleyfair, Mall of America,
Department of Natural Resources, Man-
kato MoonDogs, Mankato Golf Club, nu-
merous camps, resorts, and recreation
agencies, as well as health care and early
childhood development organizations,
food service and retail/production busi-
nesses. Available opportunities include
summer jobs, part-
time employment and
internships. This event is FREE for ALL
MSU students and open to all ma-
jors! Free pop and popcorn will also be
provided!

Social & Behavioral Sciences
Spring Career Fair 2009
February 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
in the CSU Ballroom
The College of Social & Behavioral Sci-
ces has held a Career Day event for
the past twenty-seven years. This annual
event offers exhibitors an opportunity to
meet students to discuss potential em-
ployment and/or internships. Students
also attend informal panel discussions
on a variety of related topics. Visit the
SBS website for up-to-date information
on exhibitors and schedules at
http://sbs.mnsu.edu/advisingu/
careerday09.html

IEEE Job Fair
Feb 5 —on campus
For more information go to
http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/resources/
fairs.html

Spring Semester
Practice Interviews
January 27-29 & Feb 3-6—on campus
For more information go to
http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/resources/
fairs.html

Additional CDC spring events may found at
http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/resources/fairs.html
A Writing Opportunity!

The Office of FYE is looking for sophomores who have excellent writing skills to write an article for the sophomore newsletter.

Qualifications include the following:

- 2.5 GPA or higher
- Excellent writing ability including grammar, organization, and persuasion
- Willing to write an article about your sophomore experience

Application process:

If you are interested in writing an article for the Sophomore Connection, please email your name, tech id #, and attach a 200 words (or more) writing sample to Katelyn.romsa@mnsu.edu no later than Feb. 6th.

Incentives: An opportunity to express your voice to the MSU community, particularly other sophomores. Great resume builder by showing employers that you have published an article.

FYE—Employment/Leadership Opportunity

In January, the Office of FYE will be accepting applications for Learning Community Coordinators (LCCs). These are student staff who live in the Residence Halls and work with students involved in a Learning Community. Responsibilities: LCCs are responsible for providing academic support by being available to students, planning study groups, and making referrals to campus resources. They also help connect students to faculty and staff on campus. They are expected to create a fun, socially supportive and welcoming environment for students to be a part of. LCCs are required to live on campus, and are paid for their time. LCCs receive a single room, but pay the amount they would pay if they had a roommate (when available). Enthusiastic, dedicated students with solid communication skills are encouraged to apply!

Applications can be found @ www.mnsu.edu/fye/studentemployment.html.

“Enthusiastic, dedicated students with solid communication skills are encouraged to apply!”

FYE—Orientation Programs Wants to Hire You!

The Office of FYE seeks to employ undergraduate students who are committed to assisting new and transfer students with their transition to MSU. The orientation positions require students to serve as positive role models, mentors, discussion leaders, tour guides, educators, and/or class registration advisors. Summer orientation positions require students to be available from the middle of May through the end of July and periodically throughout the 2009-2010 academic year.

Applications for summer orientation staff positions will be available starting January 12, 2009!!!

Applications can be found @ www.mnsu.edu/fye/studentemployment.html.

Potential benefits include:

- Earn up to $3500.00;
- Free housing during the summer orientation programs;
- Free meals during the orientation programs;
- Earn university credit.
Study Abroad Fair
February 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the CSU (MAV AVE)

Are you thinking about studying abroad? Well, now's your chance to find out about study abroad opportunities at MSU Mankato.

Study abroad fairs are comprehensive information fairs for students, faculty and staff interested in learning more about the many exciting study abroad opportunities available at MSU.

Over 25 exhibits displaying information about programs for MSU students will provide you with a one-stop shopping experience!

At Study Abroad Fair you can:
- Talk with the program leaders about individual programs
- Chat with students who have already participated
- See amazing photos and artifacts from around the world

Study Abroad
by Miles Kipper

The last two months have been the best I have ever had, when I look back and think of all the things I’ve done it blows my mind. I came here with 13 other students that I had never met before. Alone and out of my element, I quickly became family with everyone. I truly believe the best way to get to know someone is to travel with them because it brings out the best and worst in us, we see our mates at their highs and lows, and you look out for them and they look out for you. More than that though, I think traveling is the best way to get to know yourself.

I have been enjoying all of my classes here, but really I have learned more on the road than I could in any class. We’ve traveled to six countries and probably twenty cities in the last seven weeks and have had the chance to see society and culture from a hundred different perspectives. In the USA we hear all these stories and see all these news ads that never carry any weight because they are so far removed from real life, but now that I have been thrown into the middle of all this I am seeing things and reading stories in a new light.

The defining moment of my trip came when we were in Switzerland. It was Sunday and we had been there since Friday, it was the most amazing weekend of my life. We had gone bungee jumping from an Alpine cliff into a 350 foot canyon, gone canyoning, which was the most amazing thing I have ever done. Canyoning is an extreme activity that involves putting on a wet suit and climbing into a glacial fed river that starts at the top of a mountain and runs its way through millions of years of eroded sandstone. You jump from 35 foot waterfalls into crystal clear pools and slide down natural water slides.

Our weekend came to a close the next day when two of my mates and I set off for a hike. We climbed 1400 meters in three hours and found ourselves on top of the world, sitting on the Alps and overlooking a lake, a town, and mountains as far as the eye could see. We ate Swiss cheese and Swiss chocolate to the sound of cowbells and rushing wind. There really is no excuse for not spending at least a little bit of time abroad in school.

—Miles Kipper

Miles is third from the left