On Monday August 31st we had a guest speaker from the Learning Resource Center. Ruth Fleuger, our guest speaker explained many of the ins and outs of college learning and numerous tips on how to deal with the new learning environment. Ruth is the head of the Learning Resource Center, and has presented similar speeches to other classes to help freshmen get acquainted with college life. The seminar as a whole was a very informative one. There were numerous topics that Mrs. Fleuger talked about which many students would not be aware of.

**Study abroad**

The main topic presented about the LRC was about their programs to study abroad. Penn state has many programs available to students who are interested studying abroad. These study abroad programs have roots in many countries such as Ireland and Japan. Some students who travel abroad are bilingual, however many students who travel abroad go to countries which are English speaking such Australia and England. In order to study abroad students must keep their grades at or above a certain level. Study abroad programs are wonderful opportunities for students to experience new things and get the most out of their college education. While studying abroad is a wonderful opportunity I was more interested in the discussion about college life and study skills.

**Study skills**

Mrs Fleuger’s first point today, which for most students is very eye opening, was the fact that in high school, students spend roughly 30 hours in class. However college students spend 14 hours or less in class. Mrs. Fleuger also pointed out the fact that college courses are significantly harder than our previous high school classes. This means that we are spending less than half the time we previously did on classes which are now much harder. Ruth then explained that most college students must put in an extra two hours of time for each hour spent in class. This means 24-28 hours of study time put in out of class. In some majors, such as engineering, students normally put in 3 hours out of class for each hour spent in class. This would mean that an engineering student would have to dedicate up to 42 hours of study time a week. On top of the time already spent in class.

Another topic which Mrs. Fleuger presented is how are taught and process knowledge in college opposed to high school. In high school, there is more than enough time for the teacher to fully explain the topic or problem and give examples. If the class was struggling then the teacher would slow down and make sure that everyone was caught up before continuing. In college however there is not nearly enough time for the professors to spend explaining the same problem numerous times in an attempt to get all students on the same page. Due to the lack of time, the
professor simply shows you the main elements of the lesson and maybe does one or two examples. The rest of the information processing and teaching is up to the student. This makes even the simplest mistakes or speed bumps major obstacles. If you don’t understand where or how you are having trouble, it makes it difficult to learn from your mistakes and correct your work.

This is where the Learning Resource Center comes into play. The tutors employed by the learning resource center specialize in all different majors such as engineering, Mathematics, and English Literature, and are able to help students overcome almost any educational roadblock they encounter. Unlike high school tutoring, the tutoring offered by the LRC is for all students. It is not just for students who are failing or have learning needs. Most of the students who use the LRC are struggling only slightly and need that extra help to bring their grades up.

Levels of learning

The final topic that Mrs. Fleuger presented was the stages of learning. Most of the “learning” that students have done in the past has taken place on the comprehension level. At this level most of the information is simply memorized, and we don’t always understand how to apply it to new problems or situations. Mrs. Fleuger told us that it has been proven that without using information we have memorized, the information will disappear from our memory after 6 weeks. In order to actually make use of the knowledge that is given to them, students have to apply it to new and different experiments and problems in order to understand how to correctly use the knowledge we have been given. On this second level we will learn how to apply our knowledge in the way that the knowledge was meant to be used such as knowing when to use a certain math formula to solve a particular equation. This is an extremely important part of the learning process because the information is less useful if you don’t know how to apply it in the real world. The third stage of learning is evaluation and research. This is the testing stage where you affirm the fact that you understand the knowledge and know how to apply it to new situations.

All in all I believe the seminar that Mrs. Fleuger present was very informative. She brought to my attention many things that I was not previously aware about relating to college life and study skills. I am now fully aware of the fact that I will not be able to get high grades in college using the same learning and study skills that helped me succeed in high school. I will have to develop a new set of techniques that will help me achieve my college goals especially when it comes to out of class studying. If it wasn’t for Mrs. Fleuger coming and speaking to my class, I would have never realized how drastic the difference between college and high school was until it was too late and my grades were slipping. I think that by visiting freshman classes the LRC will reach out to countless new students and help them build the foundation to succeed in college.