

Support for the ETC, etc.

The Educational Technology Complex (ETC) is coming to NCSSM. The ETC construction promises to be noisy and a little inconvenient at least until May, 1997 (its scheduled completion date), but neither this year's senior class nor the class of '97 will benefit a great deal from it. It's easy to see how that could make some current students a little sour on the idea. Despite all this, the ETC is still a good thing.

The ETC contains some things that will make life a lot better for NCSSM students. A theater large enough for the entire student body and faculty will put an end to hard bleachers at assemblies, as well as providing a good facility for student productions. The Student Center will be better suited for dances and large gatherings than the gym. Also, there will be added computer and science labs.

The new building is not just for students at NCSSM, though. The new Distance Learning facilities will allow broadcasting of more courses. In this way, students around the state will be benefiting from the ETC. Those facilities will help students here, too, by giving them the opportunity to take a greater variety of classes.

Living with the racket and inconvenience of a major construction project for several months and getting nothing for the trouble in the end may seem like too much for some, but there are larger things at stake. This year's student body may not see the profit from the ETC, but future generations of students will, those at NCSSM as well as at other schools in the state. The ETC is a good idea, and we should all be patient enough to see it to fruition.

The Stentorian

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Don't judge me; get to know me!

Chloé Patenaude

I never have understood homophobia or heterosexism. When I look into the mirror I see an intelligent, honest, jocular, caring, helpful, enthusiastic lesbian with smelly feet (and a cool new hair-do). I look at myself and say, "Wow Chloe, you sure are a neat person." I imagine when others look at me they see a lot of the same qualities.

However, something makes people hate and fear me. (I don't think it's the smelly feet.) Very few people bring their reservations about my sexuality to my face; occasionally I'll get the ever-so-mild question, "Don't take this the wrong way, but do you think you were born that way, or is it how you were raised?"

Well, three weeks ago someone brought their not-so-nice reservations to my back as I walked away from Hunt Dorm after going to the clinic. The shouts came from a window, shattering my little glass bubble that made me believe this campus was safe, that I wouldn't have to deal with these issues now.

I was always supposed to deal with homophobia later. Yeah, later like when I got to college. Or, no not then, maybe later when I started working. No, I could just leave the job. So, I guess later like never. When I first started coming out, someone told me that "this is a 'choice' that will affect the rest of your life."

I had always thought: I won't have to deal

with homophobia, I'll make people know me, I'll make them unafraid of me. I thought it was the people in the closet that really had to worry—once a person conquered their internal homophobia she or he was home free.

I was wrong. It doesn't matter how nice I am, how willing I am to help anyone, how open and how non-judgmental I am—people will hate me. Someone someday might even kill me or rape me (to show me that men really are what I need for a "good time") or certainly someday someone will harass me. I live the life of a homosexual.

I know some of the fears people have about me—I'll make you or your future kids homosexual, I'm unclean, and I hate men. From first-hand experience, I know these fears are wrong; while I may skip a shower or two and re-wear my jeans, it's been statistically shown and reported by researchers at the National Institutes of Health that it is virtually impossible to make a straight person become homosexual. And those who have seen me around campus know "some of my best friends are guys."

I don't understand where these fears come from, and I don't understand why they are placed on an entire "type" of people. The queer community is diverse. A million different people and a million different lives. Sexuality is a broad issue that can't really be fit under the three little labels of gay, straight and bisexual. Still, we all fall victim to the same fears and the same hate. I didn't deserve it. I don't deserve it. Those of you hating me and fearing me, stop it. Come talk to me.

How to use your TI-82 (in two semesters or less)

There is a grave mistake being made at NCSSM: it seems that over one hundred students believe they are taking a standard precalculus course. The course is named Contemporary Precalculus Through Applications (CPTA), but this is slightly inaccurate. Through various attempts at helping unsuspecting mathematical victims, it has appeared that the course is an attempt at unlocking the mystery of the inner workings of the TI-82.

I believe that calculators should be a supplement to mathematics, not a substitute for it. There is not a student here who has not held a TI-82 in his hand, mainly because this school has made it a requisite for attendance. It does tend to be useful in both physics and chemistry, largely because it is relatively simple to print out a TI-82 graph.

Although I do not believe that the purchasing of a TI-82 should be required, I willingly admit it proves advantageous to buy one. I feel, however, that precalculus students are taught to lean too heavily on this computerized deity. I do not believe the programmers at Texas Instruments expected their TI-82 guidebook to become a bible for precalculus students, but it appears to me that this travesty has occurred.

Wherever an unfortunate CPTA student may venture, his TI-82, TI link, and extra AAA batteries (if he is a former Boy Scout) are probably not far behind. Were I an especially sadistic math teacher, I would add a little twist to the final precalculus exam: I would take away the students' TI-82s and

watch them struggle. Whenever I don't know how a precalculus student should solve a homework problem (for example, I may only know a calculus method), it is usually safe to assume that the method involves the use of a TI-82.

For example, when asked to find the x coordinate of the vertex of a parabola whose equation is of the form $y = ax^2 + bx + c$, a CPTA student will pull out his friendly neighborhood TI-82, graph it, and find the max or min. Someone who has not taken CPTA, however, will use the formula $x = -b/2a$, and come up with the answer much more quickly in his head. This is a shocking harbinger of our society's future, if the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is teaching such methods.

I must be one of those ancient oddities who remembers "back in the day" when they still taught math in math class. Calculators are tools, and it is fine to use them to arrive at the solution promptly; however, I feel the student should first understand what the calculator is doing. TI-82s are not "magic" boxes—there is mathematics behind the answers which "pop" out.

If you looked at a CPTA textbook, you would probably be shocked to learn that there is no chapter entitled "You and your TI-82." However, this oversight does not fool anyone who is familiar with the curriculum. Despite having great respect for the mathematics department and its valiant push for technology, I feel that the idea of mathematics is being lost somewhere along the way.

But it must soon cease, because now the disease is spreading—nearby schools are adopting the CPTA curriculum. Soon it will be an epidemic, and precalculus students will be plugging directly into their TI-82s....