

## Students see problems with testing schedule

By MARY KOHLMANN

Despite the best attempts of the NCSSM testing weeks policy, many students still feel that their tests are bunched too closely together.

The testing schedule posted on At-A-Glance says that "in order to effectively distribute the academic workload and to allow our students to do their best work, major assignments and tests are scheduled throughout the trimester according to a weekly calendar developed by Academic Programs." Students see this calendar daily in the labeling of their planner pages.

This system, implemented during the 2004-2005 school year, is the latest in a series of attempts to balance the testing needs of different teachers. Originally, Academic Programs had a sign-up calendar for teachers to post testing dates in advance. Students were to check the calendar on a regular basis, and any person who had three or more assessments on a single day could reschedule the last one. However, this system was upset whenever a faculty member forgot to post a test date or did not know exactly when a test was going to take place. Also, it was entirely the students' responsibility to arrange their testing dates. Approaching a faculty member about moving a test was difficult for students who were either intimidated by their teachers or too stubborn to ask for what they saw as help.

"This was to no one's advantage," said Director of Academic Programs Tom Clayton. "It is best for students to take tests when they can prepare well and study, and it's not good for faculty because students can't actually show what they've learned."

The current calendar was designed to prevent bunched tests. However, most teachers

want to test immediately before breaks and the ends of grading periods. In years past, many students had to take five tests in the two days immediately preceding Thanksgiving Break. Under the new system, only two departments can test on a given week.

However, departments can petition Senior Vice President for Academic Programs Steve Warshaw for exceptions to the testing rules. The Physics department did so the week before Winter Vacation, which was reserved for Math, Computer Science, and Humanities.

"I think sometimes it just conflicts," said Physics teacher Jonathan Bennett. "It was just really important to give a test to see who needed to switch [levels]. The students didn't need to wait another week to find out if they were keeping up in the class."

But the additional test left many students feeling as though exams were happening over again. Clayton said that the Physics exception was "unusual" because it involved so many students. The current system, he also points out, still holds to the rule of three: a student with three or more tests on a given day can move one with the help of either an instructor or Warshaw.

"I feel like many of the teachers don't abide by the [testing] rules anyway," said senior Amanda Sadler with a shrug. "I always end up feeling like it's exams right before an extended. But I'd rather have two tests [in a subject] with one of them on the wrong week than one huge one."

People on both sides of the classroom seem to feel the same, and so the testing schedule continues to go awry. Said Physics teacher Jacqueline Bondell, "I think it's good in theory, but in practice..."

## New teachers arrive mid-year

Korah Wiley, Jacqueline Bondell join Science faculty

By GRACE KIM

In offices yet to be filled with the usual clutter of settled-in teachers, Korah Wiley and Jacqueline Bondell, tell of their first years as science teachers of NCSSM.

Korah Wiley heard of the Anatomy and Physiology opening at NCSSM from one of her friends, math teacher Philip Rash. Although she has no prior formal teaching



Korah Wiley

experience, she claims to come from a family of educators. She says becoming a science teacher has always been her "ultimate goal" and her "plan since [she] started undergrad."

Finding "a balance between [making lessons] fun and engaging and still giving necessary information," she said, is one of the most difficult challenges in teaching. As a graduate from Duke University, she knew

stories of Duke undergraduates asking the Teaching Assistant difficult questions just for the sake of "stumping" him or her. Because she knew the reputation of NCSSM, she wondered if the students here would be interested in "learning or trying to prove something." However, in only a matter of weeks, she dubs the students as "definitely one of the pluses," and enjoys her "freedom to explore and innovate."

Wiley's interests include sports, especially basketball and pool, theatre, and watching movies. She adds,

"I admit... I am a movie junkie!"

Jacqueline Bondell teaches Physics with Advanced Topics. She thanks an NCSSM alumn for recommending this school when he heard she was

moving into this area. Before coming to NCSSM, she taught at a private school for two years

and then continued teaching physics at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

She expected to be kept busy here, but it turned out to be even "more hectic than I imagined!" Bondell says, "It's a lot of hard work, but worthwhile," perhaps expressing a sentiment present in some of our own students.

Bondell loves to travel, and has been to Russia, Poland, Mexico, Canada, and Hawaii. During the interview, she reminisces of her honeymoon in the Caribbean, and points out its beauty in a picture of her and

her husband.

She is also interested in rowing, cooking, baking, and sports.

When asked to choose three words to describe her personality, Bondell answers that she is patient, resilient, and goofy. "Just

ask my students," she says with a smile. "I make bad jokes and go off on tangents."



Jacqueline Bondell

## Admissions process in full swing

1320 apply to be in class of 2008

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cause they are still deciding whether they wish to attend and leave their home," Mason said. "Leaving their school requires sacrifices, like leaving football, marching band, and friends behind."

This year's Discovery Days are on February 25th, March 11th, and March 18th. Welcome Day is on April 29 with the make up day on May 17th.

Mason suggested that all prospective students should tour the school at least once before being enrolled here.

Mason said that every year there were several instances where parents have to call the school to correct an application because they were filling out the paperwork for their children and accidentally put their own birthday or social security number in instead. "This

year more students are filling paperwork out on their own, with parents helping to get it polished, because this is a joint family decision," she said.

"The application process weeds out a lot of the people who really wouldn't do well here," said current Juniors, Mary Kohlmann and Mandy Sullivan. "It was long, but necessary because of the huge number of applicants."

## Juniors adjust to schedule as workload increases in second trimester

By AMY BRYSON

With the beginning of the second trimester, many juniors have been forced to adjust to changes in schedule and workload.

"The main difference between the fall trimester and the winter trimester directly affects juniors as they are required to now take five core courses instead of four," Senior Vice President for Academic Programs Steve Warshaw said.

Junior Rebecca Lee added Anatomy and Physiology as her fifth core course, and found her schedule did not change much, but the amount of work required of her did.

"The workload is definitely more," Lee said. "I'm handling it pretty well because I am just getting it done, but I'm not sleeping that much anymore."

Junior Scott Ouzts anticipated that the addition of his Anatomy and Physiology class to be difficult.

"I knew if [first trimester] was so much work with four

core classes, then adding another one would have to be lots of work and studying," Ouzts said. "Also by adding Anatomy I knew I would have so much new material to learn and understand on top of my other classes. The only thing I didn't expect was that I would have so many assignments and due dates to keep straight with an additional class."

Originally the school was set up in a semester system with students required to take seven courses every semester. When the school switched to a trimester system two years ago, it was decided to give juniors fewer first trimester requirements.

"The first trimester was established to give the students the opportunity to adjust to the academic environment," Senior Vice President of Student Life Joan Barber said. "Adding on additional classes now will only involve students practicing good time management skills."

Junior Anna Rains added American Studies to her schedule and found her schedule has drastically changed.

"[This trimester] is a lot more work," she said. "I think that they definitely need to make American Studies only a first and second trimester course, because it is like adding two courses instead of one."

Despite the challenge many students face as the winter

trimester begins, the administration has faith backed by statistics that the students will adjust.

"Juniors are now typically able to better handle these five courses because as a group they have improved and have, for the most part, come to understand what it takes to be successful here," Director of Academic Programs Thomas Clayton said. "Most juniors have evolved and literally have enhanced their ability to handle the stress and work. As a result, despite the addition of a course, we had fewer juniors last year make D's in the second trimester than in the first trimester."

If help is needed in the adjustment, administration advises students to take advantage of tutorials, peer tutors and the optional Super Study held on Watts' third floor. Students are also encouraged to talk to their teachers and to utilize their support team, made up of their academic adviser, counselor and SLI.

"Every student is different," Clayton said. "Each student is going to have to deal with the addition differently."

Rains has already started to adjust her habits to work with the new trimester.

"I am trying to buckle down and have definitely learned to be more efficient with my time so I can get all my work done and still have a social life," she said.

Senior Teryn Norris-Hale remembers his transition to winter trimester as a positive experience.

"Basically, I added on Environmental Science the second trimester," he said. "The work level wasn't that bad. I actually enjoyed [second trimester] more than first trimester."

Another major change that affects the winter trimester is the weather and the length.

"The winter is sort of the long trimester. It seems it is a long, depressing period," Clayton said. "People need to recognize that and prepare for it."

"The workload is definitely more."  
-Rebecca Lee