

iAddicted? Embrace the Experience



By AVANI UPPALAPATI

It would be no exaggeration to say that NCSSM students are addicted to the Internet. The place practically demands it: we send emails to teachers, administration, fellow students and others daily. Most of us use Facebook, AIM and other social networking software almost every day. We check assignments on Moodle and then submit them on WebAssign.

We rely so heavily on the Internet that the students and staff were almost handicapped for information when the server was under repair for a few days during third trimester last year. I remember hoping fervently for the Internet to work again so that I could stop running through the halls to communicate with teachers and administration.

I realized the importance of the Internet at this school the summer before I started attending itself. Months before the school started, I was already being asked to learn chemistry online and communicate electronically with my new roommate.

Because NCSSM makes it so important to be connected 24/7, it is easy to forget that you don't *really* need to be connected everywhere you go. I learned this lesson in India this summer. Over the course of the school year, I had become very attached to

my laptop, and of course took it with me on my trip. What I found was that it had been, in some ways, a bane to my experience there.

Though my laptop provided great entertainment and some productivity, it also served as a huge distraction from my family. I spent about half the time I normally would have around people with my laptop.

Back at school, hours of time seemed to waste away. The explanation is that I spent time doing little to nothing useful on my laptop. I used YouTube, Facebook and AIM much more than I should have. The hours I wasted were precious ones I could have used for sleep and work.

Before you start using your laptop or the Internet, ask yourself if it is really worth it. Are you losing (or gaining) anything by going online? Could you be using your time more effectively? Short term choices can pave the way for long term repercussions that may or may not be easy to fix. Now that I have had time to reflect, I realize that with a little more self control, I would have been a lot happier about how I spent my time.

You can enjoy yourself without your laptop. Go to Ninth Street with friends, take pictures, read. There really is time for a lot more things to happen than it may seem like. How your time is used depends on the choices that YOU make.

The Internet will be your friend at NCSSM, but beware: it can also turn into a foe. Make sure that you don't let yourself waste away in front of the computer screen, spending more quality time with social networking sites and YouTube videos than with the human beings breathing right across the hall.

By ERICA JANE VENNING

It won't be long before the advice starts pouring in: obey the two-week rule, bring food from home, take the stairs. But perhaps the most important piece of advice any senior can offer you is to fully embrace the NCSSM experience.

Embracing the NCSSM experience will mean much more than simply attending the elongated meetings scheduled for you in your orientation packet. By this time, I will assume that you have avidly flipped through your packet of information and read the Move-In Schedule on At-A-Glance at least three times. If so, you will have noticed many of the informational, intimidating, and potentially embarrassing functions we have prepared.

Why would the administration put you through this? Mostly, it's to help you get to know your peers. However, in order for us to meet you, you must not be afraid. Please, feel free to ask questions at the meetings you are most interested in. Be sure to be brave during the "scary" ones, and be outgoing during the embarrassing ones. At NCSSM, we humiliate ourselves on a daily basis—it becomes your norm, and you will learn to love living in such a socially free and accepting environment.

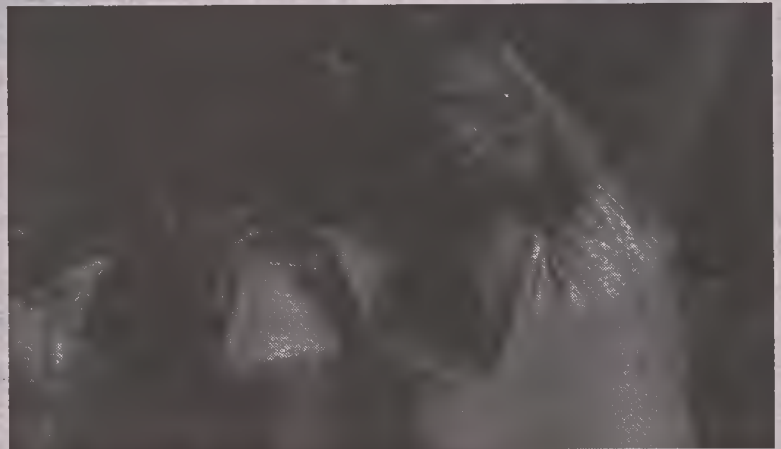
The other perhaps most prominent aspect of the NCSSM Community is the renewed sense of family. In your packet, you will notice mentions of "Hall Meetings and Brother/Sister Hall Activities." These are chances to bond with your on-campus family for the year.

Referring to your hall as your family may sound a little extreme to our newcomers, but every senior will look back and relay the same message. Your roommate may not seem, at first, like someone you would want to live with. Give them a chance.

Roommates at Science and Math are matched up according to interests and habits, and more than likely you will find that your roommate is more than willing to work with you to make your living experience as fantastic as possible. Do not be afraid to get to know your hall. Your seniors, your RLA's,

to dance or not. I remember meeting my RLA's at this first dance, and acting like a fool with all of them. I had never felt so welcome around kids my age before, and hopefully all the new juniors will feel just as comfortable.

The other activity that helped me familiarize with the NCSSM norm was the 4th West Mixer. This annual mixer becomes much more than simply a "dance." If you choose to attend, you will hear your seniors mention the ceiling "raining" sweat. This will hopefully be explained by your seniors the night of the mixer,



Venning enjoys herself at a 4W mixer.

your SLI, and the other juniors on the hall will be there for you no matter what, whether you choose to place your faith in them or not.

Hall Activities and Required Meetings are not the only ways to get out and meet your new family. One of the most significant "Meet-and-Greet" activities to me was the Ice Cream Social/Dance. This annual activity allowed me, as a junior, to become acquainted with the overall NCSSM attitude. Nearly everyone is out on the dance floor when music starts, whether they like

August 21st. These mixers are different and original from other dances hosted by our school because we use our own students as DJ's, instead of our regular hired hand. This year, expect to see lots of faces you don't recognize, attributed to a large grand-senior attendance. With at least a quarter-of the campus expected to attend, every junior and senior will have a chance to meet new people, scream like there are no rules, and dance like no one is watching—which, to me, embodies the social lifestyle that is NCSSM.

Budget Crunch

With the state budget ratified, the tuition grant has been secured for this year's seniors. But what about the rest of the budget? NCSSM to cut costs and tighten its belt this year as the state and country go through a serious economic recession.

By ALEX LEW

The state budget was ratified recently and things looked good for NCSSM. A manageable budget cut of around 6% will require NCSSM to tighten its belt. On the other hand, the cut is much less severe than NCSSM had anticipated.

"The process really affirmed the support that they give us and their appreciation of our mission," Director of Development Brock Winslow said. "I'm certainly grateful for the support that we've gotten, but that's not to say that it's everything we wanted."

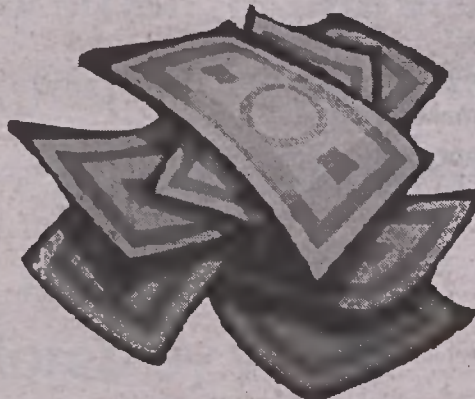
In one of the triumphs in this legislative battle, NC-

SSM's administration secured the tuition grant for the classes of 2009 and 2010. (But watch out—it only extends to 2014, so students taking a gap year may not get their last year of college free.)

On the other hand, NCSSM did have to make some sacrifices. Under normal circumstances, all annual funding would be adjusted for inflation and budgeted accordingly. However, this year teacher salaries and electricity costs were not adjusted for inflation.

"On the one hand, everyone still has a job, that's a good thing. But in real terms, assuming inflation has occurred, we make 97% of what we made

last year," Winslow pointed out. "The energy is another issue. We can control what we



pay people. We can say, 'We'll pay you X, and you can stay or you can go'. But we can't tell

gas companies we'll pay them X. Let's just hope for a warm winter this year."

Budget cuts also came from the state's Department of Public Instruction. The DPI has suffered large cuts this year and has had to lay off a few teachers from around the state. The DPI partially funded NCSSM's distance learning program, paying for four faculty members to teach distance learning courses. This year, it's had to cut that down to two. However,

NCSSM is committed to not letting anyone go.

"They're now only giving us 2 [full-time employees], but we've committed to finding a way to pick up the slack," Winslow said.

Cut things, not people, is and will be NCSSM's motto as it works through this difficult time.

The blow is not as severe as it might have been, as NCSSM still receives a per-student allotment of around \$27,000 per student per year. Because it created 11 new spots for students this year, NCSSM will receive almost \$300,000 this year in enrollment growth funding.