

NCSSM Students Rant and Rave

I just love...

- "...the people during RLA week"-Anonymous
- "...burgers"-Kagan Griffin
- "...jamming to hot tunes with my jazz combo, The Sound Function."-Shawn Blazer
- "...the people at Science and Math. They make everything worth it--Amstud papers, PFM food, and all-nighters."-Sean Lindsey
- "...the PFM croissants."-Imani Williams
- "...riding loops to Southpoint with my friends."-Lamar Richardson
- "...good company."-Gino Lerebours
- "...eating off campus with friends."-Alyssa Rabel

I just can't stand...

- "...the emptiness during RLA week."-Anonymous
- "...Leaving Mother Lake."-Kagan Griffin
- "...staying up all night doing homework."-Shawn Blazer
- "...people who aren't punctual."-Imani Williams
- "...people who are too much."-Lamar Richardson
- "...not having a chill senior year."-Timbi Shepherd
- "...parents stressing over college apps."-Gino Lerebours
- "...Dubstep."-Tucker Jones
- "...when the PFM doesn't have soy milk."-Jaehee Yoo
- "...hard work."-Tucker Owen

Not all science and math schools are made alike

By DAVIS GOODNIGHT

In May, just before exams, the NCSSM Quiz Bowl team traveled to Chicago for the national NAQT competition. While there, the four-man team, Saamil Jariwala, Matt LaBarbera, Neil MacIntosh, and myself, journeyed off the beaten path to the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) to see how it compared to NCSSM.

The differences between the two institutions began to show on the train ride to Aurora, IL where the school is located. Unlike NCSSM, located near the heart of Durham, IMSA is along a country road, with no restaurants or malls for miles. Like us, students cannot have cars, so they have to improvise and make do with their surroundings.

Immediately upon arriving, the contrast between the two schools became even more striking. While NCSSM's campus was once Watts Hospital, IMSA's began as a standard public high school. A sprawling, single-story building contains all classrooms and offices, the library, the cafeteria, and essentially every part of campus besides the students' rooms. To us, the idea of not having residential and academic halls side-by-side is foreign, but to our tour guide, IMSA Student Body President Sid Sapru, our campus arrangement is just as novel.

Touring this large building revealed some similarities, however. We found ourselves saying, "Oh, that looks just like 3rd Watts," or "That hang-out spot is like our Chiba" at different places throughout the building. Academics at the school are similar to those at NCSSM, as well, with a focus on science and math, but with required courses in all disciplines.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the two schools, though, is that IMSA has a sophomore class, the possibility of which for NCSSM has caused much controversy over the past

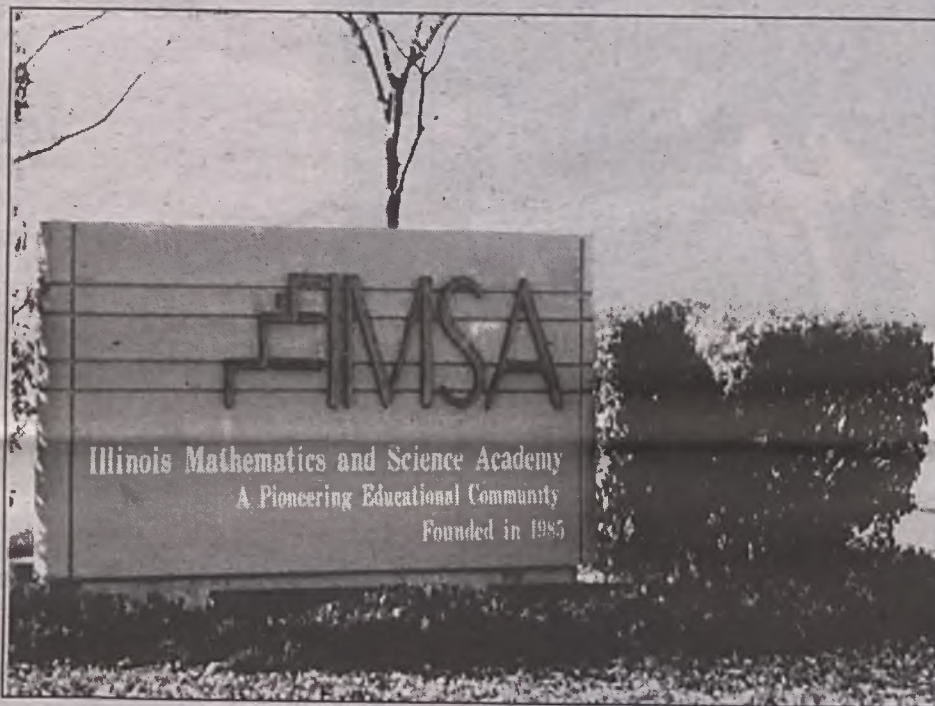
few years. When chatting with students, they seem to be indifferent to having a 10th grade class. While at NCSSM, the discussion of one immediately rouses students' passion on both sides of the argument.

Residential life at IMSA is also different from NCSSM. There are seven residential buildings on campus, three all-male, three all-female, and one coed. They are all identical and are referred to only by a number, not a name. All the same, each hall has a personality and stereotypes much like NCSSM's. Halls have newer facilities and furnishings and bathrooms inside all rooms, but rooms are smaller than most at NCSSM.

Work service and leadership positions are a part of IMSA life, but not nearly as large as they are at NCSSM. Work service requires only a few dozen hours of work over the course of the year, and leadership positions are handed out to both seniors and juniors. Many positions are very similar at both schools, with IMSA having Student Ambassadors and Peer Counselors who fill a role similar to NCSSM's PCC's and MPC's.

Leadership roles in Residential Life seem very different from that of the RLA's at NCSSM. Their equivalents at IMSA have few responsibilities of their own and work much more as an assistant to the adult on hall, similar to an SLI, than as an independent hall leader. As a whole, work service is given less regard; students at IMSA do not always know what leadership role their friends have, and students typically think twice before telling others their job.

The final difference, and perhaps the most important as far as the schools' personalities go, is the weekend life on campus. We visited on a Sunday afternoon, and the campus was virtually empty. Save a few people in lounges or playing catch, the parking lot was empty and most students



Above is the sign that welcomes students, faculty, and visitors to IMSA's campus. IMSA was founded only five years after NCSSM opened.

Photo from http://staff.imsa.edu/~scott/General_Info.html

were home.

Sapru estimated that sixty to seventy-five percent of all students go home each weekend. Because of IMSA's proximity to the Chicago area, where Illinois' population is centered, most students live within easy driving distance, and the location of the school, away from all the excitement, leaves its students believing home holds more than school on weekends.

IMSA and NCSSM have two distinct histories and cultures, and as an NCSSM student, I felt that IMSA student life seemed incredibly alien. The fact of the matter is that most IMSA students would feel exactly the same if they visited our campus. Each campus has adapted and grown in a way suited to its environment. This key fact, as I have realized, is the reason why NCSSM continues to maintain its uniqueness among a slew of other similar schools in the nation.

NCSSM's Mission Statement

To meet North Carolina's need for responsible leadership in the development and application of science, mathematics and technology To act as a catalyst for educational improvement throughout North Carolina and the nation

— Endorsed by NCSSM Staff and Students
2/16/90, Adopted by NCSSM Board of Trustees
3/2/90, Revised 3/6/98

From <http://www.ncssm.edu/about-ncssm/history-and-mission>

IMSA's Mission Statement

The mission of IMSA, the world's leading teaching and learning laboratory for imagination and inquiry, is to ignite and nurture creative, ethical scientific minds that advance the human condition, through a system distinguished by profound questions, collaborative relationships, personalized experiential learning, global networking, generative use of technology and pioneering outreach.

From https://www3.imsa.edu/about/profile/mission_and_beliefs

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