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NCSSM makes major calendar changes for 2012-2013

By: MIA MADDURI

NCSSM cut back on Thanksgiving and Winter breaks and set the graduation date on Memorial Day weekend for the 2012-2013 school year.

Compared to last year, this year's major holiday breaks have been shortened to accommodate the earlier commencement date.

The change in the calendar was designed to align commencement with Memorial Day weekend, to prevent having trimester exams on Memorial Day, and to allow faculty, staff, and students to celebrate Memorial Day.

Thanksgiving break has been shortened by 4 days. Where it started in 2011 on Nov. 19 and ended Nov. 27 it will now run from Nov. 21, 2012, to Nov. 25, 2012. Winter break is shorter by two days, and graduation will take place on May 25, a full seven days earlier than last year.

Some students would prefer that the calendar remained the same as last year. Senior

Siddarth Modi said, "I would rather have a later graduation date with longer breaks during the year. This will give us more time to spend with our juniors and give us more time to relax from the intense workload and stress we encounter during the school year."

NCSSM sends students home during standard extended weekends (the three-day breaks students get about each month) and therefore cannot lessen these required breaks.

By shaving days from holidays and vacation, the school is giving its students a summer that will last one week longer.

"I honestly think it could go both ways," said senior Keerthana Velappan. "I think Smathers definitely deserve those breaks, but an earlier graduation, especially before the long weekend, is so much better. Also, it'll give the seniors time to relax and enjoy the long weekend with their friends and family as well as attend their home school graduation, if they wish."

*Thanksgiving break shortened from
Nov. 19 - Nov. 27 to
Nov. 21 - Nov. 25*

New SLIs arrive for Hill and Hunt

By: SARAH LEE

Each new NCSSM school year brings with it many changes, and among other new faces are five new Student Life Instructors.

Mike Ward: 4th East

Ward is a recent college graduate who was born in Canada. He moved to U.S. at the age of seven and has since lived in Pennsylvania. He graduated from Ursinus College and majored in Neuroscience. He enjoys playing rugby and ice hockey.

Ward is most excited about meeting students here and seeing them grow from the unique options available to them at NCSSM. An interesting fact about Ward is that he has eleven scars on his body.

Jon Bystrynski: 2nd Hill North

A Triangle native, Bystrynski attended Cary Academy and graduated from Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. At Ursinus, new SLI Mike Ward was one of Bystrynski's RA's. His main reason for working at NCSSM is his students. He is excited to work with students from all over the state and learn from them as he helps them grow.

Bystrynski wishes to become an advocate for all

students in all areas of their lives.

Bystrynski enjoys painting, reading and running. His father was a writer for NBC and his brother is a playwright, leading him to be an avid writer as well. In his free time, he writes screenplays, television scripts and everything else literary. He also likes to scuba dive

Ellis Johnson: 1st Hill

Johnson was born in Detroit, Michigan, and attended Michigan State University. He says, "I am a Detroit native, and I have been lucky enough to call Durham my home for the past year. I graduated in May 2011, and moved to North Carolina last July to work for the non-profit Citizen Schools."

Johnson went to high school in a museum. His claim to fame is a question he posed on Time Magazine's Facebook wall for Fmr. FL Gov. Charlie Crist was featured in an article.

Ross Knight: 2nd Hill East

Knight is a North Carolina native from Madison. A graduate of UNC Chapel Hill, he received his degrees in English and history. Knight has experience working in Virginia at a small school with 200 students as a hall director.

The number one reason Knight is looking forward to

being an SLI is for the student interactions. Knight likes to paint abstracts, portraits and landscapes. He also enjoys reading comics and playing board games. He is obsessed with all things British.

Also in Student Life, Alum Cierra Hinton will act as Second Beall SLI while Gerri Odum is on maternity leave.

A number of individuals have also joined the faculty and staff this year. Gloria Barrett and Hope Concannon joined the math faculty, Gail Boyarsky and Kim Monahan joined the Biology faculty and Joe LoBuglio will teach engineering.

Charlie Payne from Northern High School is set to teach physics and Darrell Spells joined the chemistry faculty. Dennis Yeh is returning from leave to teach computer science. New DEEP faculty includes Candace Chambers, Amy Garrett, and Crystal Woods. Ross White will fill the Dean's position in DEEP.

Greg Jarvis is the news Athletic Director, Tracy Fulgraf will be working with the budget, Jan-Rae Castillo will serve as the Internal Auditor, and Alum Scott Schwart will be an intern with Counseling Services.

Assad's Syria faces heat from all sides

By: ANITA SIMHA

In the latest chapter of the Arab Spring revolution, Syrian protesters have demanded that President Bashar al-Assad of the ruling Ba'ath Party step down from his post. The Syrian conflict has continued as part of the wide sweeping push for democratic reform in the Middle East since March, 2011.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA), composed largely of defectors from Assad's forces, recently succeeded in killing four high-ranked officials, including both his brother-in-law and his defense minister.

Differing theories of the affair include a bomb placed in a water cooler and a suicide mission by a turncoat guard. Regardless of the method used, the event demonstrated to Assad the FSA's ability to infiltrate his ministry.

Several Syrian officials have fled the country to neighboring Jordan. Riyad Farid Hijab, the most recent and notable defector, formerly held the post

of Prime Minister. His support of the opposition and its cause comes as a blow to Assad and marks his loosening grip on the

country.

Continued violence has forced over 200,000 people to

Syria, has largely failed to tone down violence in the country.

As fighting escalates in Syrian capital, Damascus,

Assembly passed a resolution by a wide margin criticizing violence in Syria and asserting that the first step to peace should be taken by Assad's government. Saudi Arabia, supportive of a new president and ruling party, has funded the Syrian opposition with \$117 million.

Nearby countries Turkey and Qatar have also expressed support of the reform movement.

While Russia and China have taken firm stances in support of the Syrian government, the United States holds that this position is a hindrance to Syrian freedom.

President Obama has signed an order allowing for covert aid to Syria through agencies like the CIA, only drawing the line at providing lethal weapons or troops.

In the past 17 months of unrest, over 20,000 people have lost their lives. It is still not clear whether a divided Syria will reach a peaceful settlement in the near future.



Bashar al-Assad speaks at recent press conference

Courtesy of The Guardian

country.

The rebels aim to take control of Syria's largest city, Aleppo, which is seen as a crucial battleground because control of the city provides

flee Aleppo in recent times.

Many are seeking refuge in neighboring Turkey. A six-point plan to peace proposed by Kofi Annan, the United Nations Special Envoy to

and largest city, Aleppo, the international community is increasing the pressure on Assad's regime.

The United Nations General