

Class of 2017 By the Numbers

By AVRA JANZ

As graduation approaches, many seniors are reflecting on what the last two years have held: good friends, remarkable teachers, run-ins with administration and contentious arguments on Facebook. Beginning this year, *The Stentorian* administered and analyzed a survey of the experiences of the Class of 2017 in an attempt to add nuance to those reflections. What are our goals? Would we attend NCSSM again? How many levels did we receive? Based on an annual survey by *The Harvard Crimson*, the first annual survey of the graduating class featured four sections, on demographics and politics, college, the NCSSM experience, and gender discrimination, a special-interest section for 2017. 198 out of approximately 350 seniors responded to the anonymous survey, which contained both multiple-choice and short-answer questions; although not every member of the class responded to the survey, respondents are referred to as “seniors” and “the class” in the accompanying analysis. Results are as follows:

Demographics

Seniors outlined their religious and political affiliations, combined family incomes and locations of origin in detail, establishing the Class of 2017 as a remarkably diverse one. Certain trends, though, stood out. Although no one county accounted for more than 17.7% of the class, a plurality of seniors are from either Wake County (17.7%), Durham County (8.1%) or Mecklenburg County (7.6%). Slightly over a third of respondents (34.8%) hail from the Triangle, and the majority of the class live in suburban areas (54%).

Most of the students in the Class of 2017 identify as white (64.6%), with 28.8% of students identifying as Asian, 9.1% as Black or African-American and 1.5% as American Indian; respondents could identify with more than one race. 4.5% of students identified as Hispanic or Latino. Most survey respondents were female (58.6%), though females compose only about 50% of the class.

Average members of the Class of 2017 grew up in relatively rich households. According to the US Census Bureau, the median household income in the United States in 2015 was \$56,516. By

comparison, 50.5% of survey respondents indicated that their parents’ combined incomes were greater than \$109,918, and 8.1% of respondents indicated that their parents’ combined incomes were equal to or greater than \$250,000 annually. 5.1% of students, in contrast, have parents who make less than \$21,884 annually. Less than a third of students (29.8%) had held a paid job with regular wages.

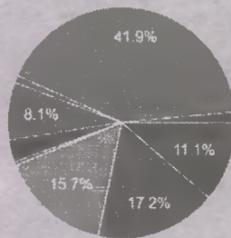
College

Members of the Class of 2017 detailed varying college plans, but again, certain trends were prevalent among their responses. More than half of respondents (53.5%) will attend a public, in-state school, and 68.7% of students plan to stay in the Southeast U.S. A large majority of students – 70.7% – plan to major in fields in science, math and technology, and an additional 12.6% attend to pursue a major related to health and medicine. 35.2% of students majoring in a field related to science, math or technology plan to pursue majors related to engineering, and 20.4% plan to pursue majors related to biology.

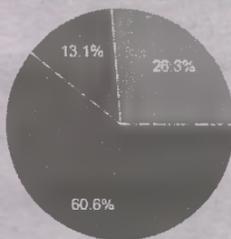
A plurality of respondents (42.4%) plan to work both during their first semester and second semester or quarter in college, while a third of students do not plan to work at all during their first year. 54% of students will receive financial aid during their first year of college, and 10.6% have received a full or large merit scholarship. Nearly half (47%) of students do not plan to take out any loans in order to pay for college, but 12.6% of students plan to take out \$40,000 or more in loans over four years. The college decisions of the Class of 2017 were largely motivated by net cost; a plurality of seniors, 29.8%, indicated that net cost was the key factor in their college decisions. Course or major offerings came in as a close second, motivating the decisions of 27.8% of students. Seven students plan to take a gap year, and thirteen plan to play a varsity sport in college. Nearly two-thirds (65.7%) of students plan to play an intramural sport in college, while 62.1% of students have played intramural sports at NCSSM.

NCSSM

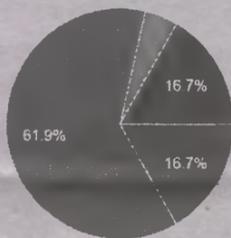
Seniors detailed a variety of viewpoints regarding the



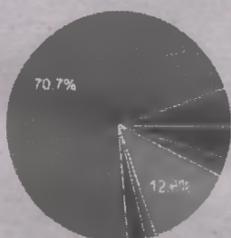
Religious affiliation.



Political affiliation.



2016 Presidential election votes. 42 seniors voted in the election. All Donald Trump voters indicated that they had remained satisfied with their votes as of late April or early May; at least one senior who voted for each other candidate no longer felt satisfied or was unsure.



Intended major or field of study. Science, Math and Technology (70.7% of students) and Health and Medicine (12.6% of students) were the most popular intended fields of study.

administration at NCSSM, race relations at NCSSM and their overall experiences at the school, but on the whole, opinions were positive – with the notable exception of opinions on mental health.

A plurality of seniors (42.4%) indicated that they were satisfied with the administration at NCSSM, rating the administration a 4 on a 1-5 scale; 39.4% of seniors rated race relations a 4, though eight seniors rated race relations a 1, or “negative.” A sixth of students (16.7%) indicated that they had been discriminated against by peers as a result of their race, while 5.1% of seniors indicated that they had experienced racial discrimination from teachers.

About a fifth of students (20.2%) had refrained from expressing an opinion in an academic setting for fear that

they might offend others, and similar percentages of students (22.7% and 21.2%, respectively) indicated that they had felt excluded at NCSSM because of their political or religious beliefs. More than half of students (52.6%) indicated that attending NCSSM had affected their mental health negatively, though a plurality of students (29.8%) reported that attending NCSSM had not affected their mental health. 86.4% of students would choose to attend NCSSM again, given the option.

Nearly half of respondents (47%) had never cheated in an academic context while at NCSSM, but most cheaters were serial cheaters: 32.3% of students who had cheated had cheated more than three times. More than half of NCSSM students participate in varsity sports (57.6%); only 15.2% of

students have never played a sport at NCSSM. More than 9 in 10 students (90.9%) agree with the recent decision to eliminate the wi-fi cutoff, but few students support the Morganton campus: on a scale from viewing the campus “negatively” to “positively,” a plurality of students, 33.8%, rated the campus a 2, and only 5.6% gave it a 5.

Gender Discrimination

About a fifth of students (20.7%) indicated that they had been discriminated against by peers as a result of their gender, and 13.7% of students indicated that they had experienced gender discrimination from teachers. Students shared a number of stories detailing their experiences with gender discrimination at NCSSM, and many students noted that they had experienced heightened discrimination in high-level STEM classes. Says one student, “I experienced [a stigma against female students] most often in the high level STEM classes where female representation is low. The inequality was often subtle but still enough for me to feel like I needed to “prove” myself to these teachers.” Says another: “Even within STEM classes I still get the feeling that my answers are not correct, even though they are, because I am a female. I’ve found myself having to repeat things over and over again just to get a singular point across. More often than not my repetition is ignored completely.”

Female students in male-dominated STEM classes reported having difficulty finding lab partners, having opinions ignored or discredited by male peers, and having had male peers take credit for their answers. Students also indicated that gender discrimination was intertwined with racial stereotyping in high-level STEM classes, as well as at school in general: one student noted that if she performed relatively poorly, teachers and students would expect others of the same gender and race to perform poorly as well.

Students who identify as transgender or nonbinary indicated experiencing significant discrimination. Says one student, “People don’t use my pronouns or respect my gender... this has

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