

Past decisions should not be confidential

Staff Editorial

NCSSM recently held a meeting between students and Executive Director John Friedrich regarding expulsion procedures. One of the main topics of discussion at this meeting was the subject of consistency in disciplinary action.

Several students expressed the feeling that there have been inconsistencies in the level of punishments dealt to persons who commit serious offenses. Many students voiced concerns that two people can be given very different punishments for similar offenses.

The students at the meeting believed this was a problem that needed to be dealt with. Unlike a legal trial, which is open to the public, NCSSM's hearings are sealed. Students and faculty who participate in hearings are told not to discuss anything they have seen or heard.

This is, according to the administration, to protect the defendant. The result of this is that students and faculty lack the right to learn how other situations have been dealt

with. The problem with this policy is that the precedent system, the regulator of modern justice, is nullified.

Past decisions must be remade, without full knowledge of previous justification. This vastly increases the chance that two similar cases will result in different judgments.

The administration claims that no two cases are exactly identical. Of course not. If precedents were used only in cases that were exactly the same, they would never be used. It is, on the other hand, possible to compare cases and find similarities. This is the basis of the United States judicial system.

The NCSSM community should be given access to records of past trials. All names could be removed from the records to protect the persons involved. This simple alteration would give students an opportunity to know better the results of their actions before they act, thus deterring students from misbehaving. It would also prevent the possible injustice of inconsistency.

Although the end of the year is approaching quickly, I want to establish a community forum so that it will already be in place next year at the start of school. The Forum will appear on the Opinions and Editorials pages and will allow all members of the NCSSM community—students, teachers, and all other staff—to voice their opinions on issues important to them. This part will be called "Forum" as opposed to "Letters to the Editor" to emphasize the fact that this is an opportunity to address the rest of the community, not just the editor. Opinions may be e-mailed to "davenportd" or given in hardcopy to Elizabeth Moose in Watts 109. Submitted opinions should be signed, be no more than 250 words in length, and contain no profanity.

The Stentorian reserves the right to edit opinions for length, grammar, and clarity. The selection of opinions for inclusion in the paper will be based on timeliness and a balance and diversity of viewpoints.

Thank You,
Daniel Davenport,
Editor-in-Chief

The Stentorian

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Pro and Con:

DO YOU SUPPORT THE PROPOSED BAN ON SMOKING?

Earlier this quarter SLIs discussed with their halls the issue of having a smoke-free campus within two years. Currently, there are designated smoking areas where smokers, whether students, staff, or guests, may puff in peace. Should NCSSM have a smoke-free campus?

PRO

Julie Thibodeaux

I am not a smoker or an advocate for smoking. I have never smoked and I do not feel the inclination to do so. I speak for the population of NCSSM students who are not afraid to admit that smoking is a repulsive habit. Of all the things that should be emphasized at the "best school in North Carolina," a smoke-free environment should be the most.

The mission of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is "to help meet North Carolina's need for responsible leadership in the development and application of science, mathematics, and technology" (taken from The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics 1995-96 Handbook, p. 1).

The evolution of science through technological advancements has provided statistics which prove that smoking hinders the lives of both smokers and those who live with them. Thus, by endorsing tobacco products on its campus, does NCSSM not violate the first sentence of the first page of its handbook of rules and regulations?

To all who are infuriated by my opinion of what the smoking policy at NCSSM should be, channel

"...by endorsing tobacco products on its campus, does NCSSM not violate the first sentence of the first page of its handbook of rules and regulations?"

your frustration (or degradation, so be it) toward your own lack of strength which prevents you from living independently from tobacco addiction. It is the dependence on this unhealthy substance that degrades human life. To keep with the logistics of academics, shouldn't NCSSM be more interested in upgrading human life?

For this reason, I openly support a NO-SMOKING policy on NCSSM's campus. I challenge NCSSM to divert its young "leaders" from the well-trodden path of tobacco addiction.

CON

Theresa Fine

I was told that administration is considering banning smoking on campus effective in the fall of 1997, and I have considered both the good and bad sides of this. Of course there are cigarette butts in the pit and at Wyche, but most of these end up in the ash trays. Second-hand smoke cannot be complained about because we only smoke outside. There is also the reputation of the school to consider. I do not feel that cigarette butts and second hand smoke are even valid complaints.

Therefore, I will address only the appearance of students smoking on campus. I'm sure that this makes a bad impression on parents and other visitors; so do the couples that incessantly make out in Hunt Lobby. But PDA is not allowed! So logically, if smoking is not allowed, does the community really think that we still won't do it?

There are still three options: smoking in hidden places on campus, smoking off campus, or smoking in our rooms. There is no one in this community who can honestly tell me that going off campus at night is not extremely dangerous, and that smoking in dorm rooms is not a fire hazard. These problems, in addition to smoking illegally on campus, only create more work for SLIs and security guards. So the decision comes down to this: community safety or a small blemish on the school's reputation.

In making this decision, one must consider that smokers are not visible from the street. If the pit and Wyche are too open to visitors, then the smoking areas should be relocated. My only other point is student rights. Because we live here, we have nowhere else to smoke, especially at night when it is not safe

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to leave. With the exception of the van loop, we are stuck on campus in the evenings. Therefore, should smokers be punished because we live at school?

Nicotine is addictive, and, without placing blame on this addiction or discussing the moral aspects of it, few students can take the stress of quitting smoking in addition to the stress of attending this school. So the smokers have two choices if smoking is banned: the stress of quitting or risking their personal safety and the safety of others. There are many ways to ease the controversy over student smoking areas. The administration can obtain parent permission, restrict smoking to students who are 18, or, as suggested earlier, make the smoking areas more inconspicuous.

Forgetting that I smoke and remembering only that I am a student with concern for other students, I feel that the best solution to this problem is not to restrict the rights of students and take the easy way out by getting rid of the problem altogether; it is to compromise and come up with a solution that is beneficial to the entire community.