

## College magazine guides: a useful tool, but nothing more

SRIYESH KRISHNAN

U.S. News and World Report ranks Yale as the number one university in the nation.

Unfortunately most college-bound seniors, when picking their top universities, do not realize that this is only the magazine's opinion. When looking at a ranking such as the one given by U.S. News, it is necessary to first understand the principles that go into making such a ranking of universities.

Most students look at the rankings and say, "Hey look, Yale is number one! Since Harvard is only number three, I guess I should apply to Yale instead." It is this sort of approach to the college rankings that results in the misuse of what could otherwise be a beneficial tool. The fact is, rating colleges is

not quite as simple as U.S. News makes it seem. A magazine often has a "Guide to the College Guide" explaining what is used in determining a college's ratings.

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Most of us do not realize that there is not much difference between the number one and number three universities. The rankings are simply indicators of which universities are better than others, but nothing more. For example, the top five colleges are probably significantly better than colleges ten through twenty, but this does not mean that there is

a significant difference among the top five themselves.

One of the faults of the U.S. News college guide is that it is next to impossible to quantify some of its college attributes. The actual numbers are very subjective; the mathematics is sound, but is based upon relatively meaningless data. I do not know what it means if someone gives Harvard a rating of 4.0 on academic retention. The magazine may use perfectly legitimate mathematics to arrive at this number, but if the topic is subjective then the number will be as well.

Even if U.S. News has hit upon an accurate system of rating colleges, a student should not be interested in the overall ranking, but rather the ranking pertinent to the student's interests. If you are planning to major in business you should aspire to attend the school with the top-rated undergraduate business department, not necessarily the number one school overall.

It is also necessary to understand that the

U.S. News college guide is only one magazine's interpretation of what universities are best. Each magazine has its own set of principles upon which to base its rankings, and thus may come out with a completely different top ten. The more magazines you look at, the more informed your opinion will become.

It is vital that you realize that what is considered the best university for the population at large is not necessarily the best university for you. A magazine's ratings should just be one of many factors which help you decide where you want to go to college. Examine the specifics of the university, such as location, atmosphere, etc., and visit the university if at all possible. Although dozens of magazines can give you millions of numbers, there is no substitute for experiencing the college yourself.

## No matter how hard it may be, you are not alone

ERICA JONES

"Here I am at this new school that's over two hours away from all of my friends and family. I am not at the top of my class any more. Heck, I doubt if I'm even in the middle of it. There's so much work for me to do. I have at least 10-20 pages to read for English, 5 problems (ea. with 10 or more parts) every night for Math, reading AND problems for Chemistry, ... etc., etc., etc.. I can't handle this stress! There's no way for me to let it out. If I go home my family will be disappointed and all my friends will think I couldn't hang. And I don't need to lie to myself, I really can't hang. I think I will just go home.

No more can be done for me here. No one here cares how I'm feeling. It's already 2nd quarter, I'm not going to make it, and there is absolutely no one that could possibly understand or help me ... help me ... help me

... HELP!"

When you came to S&M, I hope you weren't expecting fun and games. Now that you are here, I hope you don't expect things to get easier. However, the above student was very wrong when he/she said that there is no one who could understand or help.

S&M provides a whole new world of stress. S&M has an endless supply of it and an endless amount of ways to bring it upon you. The flip side to this situation is that there are also limitless ways in which you can get the help and understanding you need. One of the things most students would rather not do is talk to their teachers. If the problem is your workload, then they are the people you need to communicate with. Maybe you can work

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something out with them. Maybe not. Either way, you're not losing anything by trying.

Then, there's always your SLIs. Believe it or not, they are not just here to make you follow rules or to act like your parents. They really are smart and since most of them are closer to our age, they can truly understand what we are going through. Some of them are in college, so they can relate to our workload, teacher problems, and even some more personal problems (relationships).

Next, we've got academic advisors and our very own guidance counselors. Academic Advisors can help you with school-related problems such as dropping a class or else refer you to another person that may be better able to help you out. Most students go their guid-

ance counselors. They are a multi-purpose group and deal with some of everything. You can go to them with ANY type of problem or concern.

And last, but not least, you always have the rest of the student body here at NCSSM. Please remember that over 500 other young adults are going, or have been, through the same things you may be dealing with. We are here for each other. Lean on us and let us help out.

So please, before you decide there's nowhere for you to turn and you just have to "check out" of here, think about all your other options. This school really dislikes losing students. Because it's the last thing they want to happen, they will really try to work with you as much as possible. Remember, we've got teachers, SLIs, RLAs, academic advisors, guidance counselors, and about 500 other students who can help you out or just give you advice. All you have to do is ask.

## Suing tobacco companies

ADAM TARLETON

The Surgeon General warns us of the dangers of tobacco products on every package of cigarettes, cigars, and tobacco chewing products sold in the United States. "Cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide." New studies harping on the ill effects of tobacco smoke regularly appear in medical journals and newspapers, yet Americans point to tobacco companies for forcing emphysema and lung cancer on them.

Seventeen states are suing six different tobacco companies for the costs of treating cancer and emphysema patients. Florida courts recently awarded \$750,000 to a man diagnosed with lung cancer. After fifty years of smoking, he sued Brown & Williamson tobacco company in Florida civil courts for producing a "dangerous and defective product," according to the Associated Press.

The dangers of smoking are obvious. If one can die from smoke inhalation in a fire, common sense would imply the long-term dangers of regularly inhaling smoke. Admittedly, cigarettes were

once a common and socially acceptable product with alluring and familiar advertisements, leading more Americans to begin smoking than may start now. The blame for smoking-related diseases should still lie on the individual, not tobacco products.

We don't sue Smith & Wesson every time someone is murdered with one of their handguns. We have yet to put Anheuser-Busch out of business with lawsuits over drunken-driving casualties. Makers of cigarettes are becoming scapegoats for those who choose to smoke.

Choosing to become a smoker is a personal decision. No tobacco company ever forced anyone to smoke. Joe Camel is an advertisement and not a source of disease. By suing Brown & Williamson, Liggett & Myers or R.J. Reynolds, we are setting a precedent for future scapegoats.

It is neither feasible nor justifiable to sue every tobacco company left in the country for causing cancer, emphysema, heart disease, and birth defects. Smokers must take responsibility for the ill effects of their habit rather than capitalizing on them.

## NCSSM time demands

JOHN BOWMAN

The time demands that NCSSM place on students can be overwhelming. Classwork, work service, and other required activities can take up all of a student's time and make NCSSM a very stressful place. NCSSM should give students more free time both here at school and during breaks, making everyone a little happier and less stressed.

Each activity that NCSSM requires has a purpose, I admit. Classes and homework are obviously useful for learning new things. Work service requires students to give something back to the NCSSM community. Housekeeping is just part of sharing a living space with other people. All of these activities are useful, but perhaps NCSSM could structure them to allow students more free time. Classes should continue to be demanding, but students need time to pursue the many other worthwhile activities that are available here.

NCSSM's time demands apply not only

during school, but also when students go home for holidays and extended weekends. Work is assigned over most of these breaks. For example, during the last week of the first quarter, a particularly stressful time for everyone, Juniors were assigned a telephone poll regarding the election to complete over fall break. After spending a whole week doing nothing but schoolwork, I wanted a fall break where I did not have to even think about NCSSM. The poll and other assignments over fall break were too much. Breaks provide most of the free time that students have; they should not be unnecessarily shortened by schoolwork.

As a residential high school, NCSSM has more power to require student time than most other educational institutions. The school should use this power in considerate way, giving more free time to students and thereby living up to NCSSM's promise of a "student-centered" school.