

Outreach and the residential program: a debate of fut

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As NCSSM approaches the end of its second decade, the school's second mission - outreach to the rest of North Carolina - has taken an increasingly prominent role in the school's future and, some contend, in the allocation of state and school resources, an assertion that is denied by the NCSSM administration.

In an era of reduced funding from the state and tighter grant money from foundations and other private money sources, some NCSSM community members say that the school is losing sight of the original residential mission. They cite increased resource shortages in the residential program and point to the rapidly expanding Distance Learning program as an example of how NCSSM is changing in focus.

However, administrators say that the school's outreach programs are a natural extension of NCSSM's role. Not only do such programs not harm the residential program, they say, but they benefit, complement, and reinforce its position as the hallmark of the school and state. Furthermore, they say, NCSSM receives more resources than many other schools two and three times its size, and the school must show its willingness to repay the state's investment.

Teachers vs. Books

NCSSM has faced shortages or cuts in money for textbooks, equipment and personnel in almost all areas of the school, but teachers and students say nowhere has the crunch been felt more than in the academic departments.

"It's ridiculous for students here to have anything less than the best in terms of text-

books," said chemistry teacher Sarah Allen, referring to the chemistry textbook shortage. Allen said the chemistry department purchased new textbooks every year prior to 1991, when the state budgets were cut.

Last year's advanced chemistry and chemistry with topics textbook purchases were the first textbook purchases that the chemistry department had made since 1991, said department coordinator Kevin Currie.

Students also pointed to a shortage of textbooks as a problem. "I have to share my textbooks with three different people on three different floors," said senior Elana Gilbert. "At my old school, we had 1,500 students and yet I had my own book for the whole year."

In response, teachers and Academic Programs staff wrote up a detailed proposal that was instrumental in getting \$28,500 included in next year's proposed budget for textbooks, said Director of Operations Ed McBride. Although the money must be approved by the General Assembly, McBride said he anticipates that it will go through and that the school will receive a permanent yearly book stipend.

However, textbook problems may be indicative of a general trend in resource allotment, and teachers say this means they are often forced to do more with less.

"We are not capable of doing what we could in the past," said Currie. "In 1991, the state cut its budget across the board. For the last five years, we've been living off the fat of previous budgets."

"You can't do all the experiments you would like to," said Allen. "We used to have money left over at the end of the year to buy new equipment."

That money is increasingly limited, said Currie, and when it is available, has to be carefully spent.

"The big ticket items take bigger cuts [out of the chemistry budget] now," said Currie.

"We have to be a lot more careful and put off purchases."

As budgets have shrunk, the process of balancing resources between materials and personnel has become increasingly difficult.

"You have to make a decision on whether to cut back on things or to cut back on people," said science department head Marilyn Link. "[The science department] chose to cut back on things so we could focus on people."

Despite efforts to limit cutbacks in personnel across the school's academic departments, some positions have been lost, and more will disappear next year.

"Each department lost a half of a position," said Dr. Jo Ann Lutz, head of the math department. "We used to offer a certain number of courses - now we offer two less."

As part of resource limitations, math teacher Oleg Moiseenko will not be employed at NCSSM next year, a decision that Moiseenko says is unfortunate, but limited by resource funding levels that drop when grants run out.

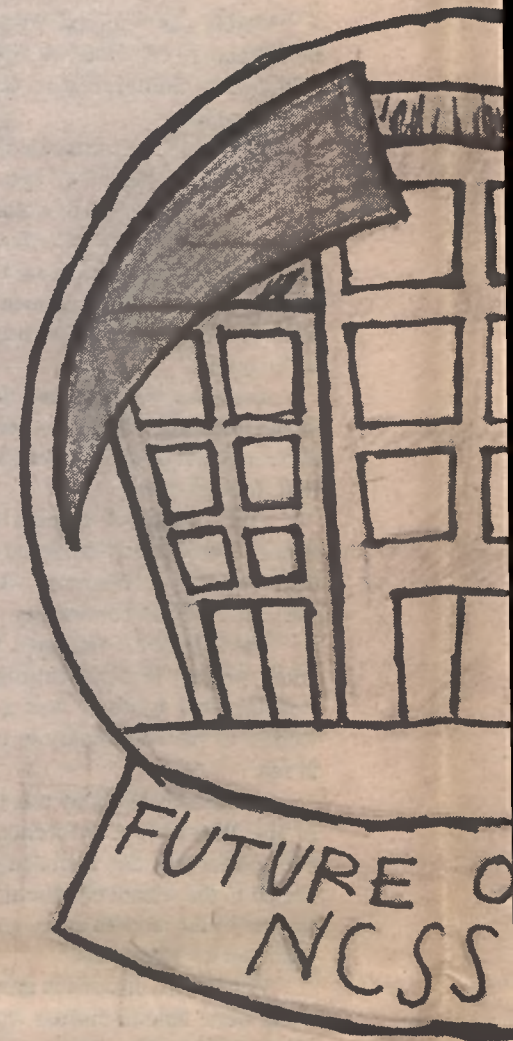
"I don't see [my not coming back next year] as a cut, but as [an example of] inadequate funding for the math department," Moiseenko said. "There is a clear need for more math teachers in the math department, so that more advanced courses can be taught . . . and so that the staff can continue to pursue things coming down the pipe."

Teachers say that the resource shortages will probably continue.

"[The science department] looks to have less materials in the future," said Link.

This shortage is echoed by other teachers.

"We're at a time when people want more and better computers, but we don't have the money to do that with," said Lutz. "We cut from the extra things until we run out of extras."



Even though resources may be tight, teachers say they work to keep academics strong.

"We've worked hard not to let it hurt the curriculum," said Allen. "We make compromises," she said.

In addition to academics, funds for student activities outside of class are facing limitations, both from the state and from private donors such

Distance Learning on a fast track to success at NC

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Taking a typical tour through NCSSM, you probably will not pass through Ground Reynolds or the Broad Street edge of campus where NCSSM houses its Distance Learning and other Outreach programs.

However, despite the fact that these two sectors are somewhat tucked away, they are the two major avenues for fulfilling part of the school's dual-mission.

"When the school was founded, there was a dual missionary statement—to start the secondary school and to impact the state," said Sally Adkin, director of Special Programs, Institutional Research and Evaluation (SPIRE).

One of the most integral parts of the quickly growing Outreach program is Distance Learning.

As an entity of the North Carolina Information Highway (NCIH), the NCSSM

Distance Learning program began five years ago as a project funded by private money from the R.J. Reynolds company. In its third year, the state took over funding, making Distance Learning a department, like science or humanities.

"NCSSM is the only one [broadcasting on the NCIH] funded by the state, and we provide about 10 % of broadcasts," said head of Distance Learning, Peggy Manning.

The program has grown from four teachers in its first year to 12 teachers now. There are 25 different courses offered to students in 17 different NC counties.

"I'm pleased to be able to serve all those students around the state," said Manning.

For teachers receiving training over the information highway, distance learning enables them to make ongoing connections between new teaching methods and their own students. The state sees the sharing of teacher resources as incentive for funding Distance Learning. Outreach also offers teachers across

the state and country training through residential and commuter programs taught by NCSSM teachers.

"Fifteen years ago if somebody was thinking of training teachers in calculus, they wouldn't have called on us. But we've proven ourselves and that has helped position us to get some of that funding," said Adkin.

As Outreach continues to grow, changes such as the renovation of Wyche will become more obvious. Adkin said that Wyche will become the Royal Outreach Center, a residence for teachers attending summer workshops on campus, and house Outreach offices because of a large donation from NC Senator Kenneth Royal.

Manning said that because of the way Distance Learning is structured and operates on the NCIH, it will be hard for it to expand, even with the growth and development of Outreach. She hopes, however, that as ETC funding happens, her department can expand more.

"I think we're [growing] along the same

track that we have been. I like the idea that [NCSSM] can serve more than just the residential students. I wouldn't want all students to take distance learning, but it's part of the future," said Manning.

In addition to Distance Learning, other Outreach programs include the Rural Science Initiative to help teachers in rural high schools make laboratory investigation a central part of their teaching, and the Science and Mathematics Initiative for Learning Enhancement to encourage greater interest in NCSSM among African-American and Native American middle school students. There is also Summer Ventures in Science and Math, a free residential summer program for academically gifted high school students, and the Glaxo Winners Programs.

"Four teachers—chemistry teachers Dr. Myra Halpin and Chuck Roser, and physics teachers Angelina Winborne and Dr. Loren Winters—travel to East Wake High School at least two times a week to train teachers, and

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