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WELCOME TO ROME



Miniterm 2000



rita zola

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I've seen IMSA, but it's 'Uni Pride' for me

shayerah ilias

In the midst of the corn fields of Aurora, Illinois is a boarding school that is similar to NCSSM in many ways—and completely different in others. Meet the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA), a sister school of NCSSM. For Mini-Term, twelve NCSSM students and chaperones Dr. Steve Warshaw and Ms. Terese Taxis lived at IMSA.

Unlike NCSSM, IMSA is a three-year school, and students apply during their freshman year for admission. About six hundred students attend the school, with some two hundred students in each grade. Students must pay about \$950 a year to attend IMSA (fee waivers can be requested).

One goal of the project was to learn more about IMSA in hopes of improving NCSSM. This goal was met through immersing ourselves into life at IMSA.

The IMSA campus is similar to a college campus. The classrooms, faculty and administration offices, gym (by the way, IMSA has an indoor pool and an outdoor track), cafeteria, and library are compounded in one building. IMSA is very tight with its security: Students must card into just about anywhere. Females can access all female halls with their cards, and males can do the same on male halls. Students use keys to enter their rooms.

"I felt like big brother was watching over me," said Senior Matt Petrie.

Students' residences are located in seven separate buildings. There are three female complexes, three male complexes, and one co-ed complex (four other NCSSM students and I stayed in the co-ed complex). The co-ed complex is evidently the "happening" complex, because males and females can interact after check, since students are allowed to be in the main lounge. Students have curfews at IMSA as they do at NCSSM, but IMSA upperclassmen's curfews are generally half-an-hour to an hour earlier than their NCSSM counterparts' curfews are. Sophomores observe even earlier curfews. As at NCSSM, in-room is the most frequently broken rule.

However, IMSA students do not get a Level I for breaking in-room, because the disciplinary code does not include levels. Punishments are given on an individual basis, and the in-room rule is generally overlooked. For major offenses, students are suspended for a week or if the crime is serious, expelled.

"Because punishments are individualized, it is more difficult to be fair in making sure that the punishment fits the crime. The suspension rule is rather harsh, because teachers are not allowed to give students homework for that week. So, basically, students fail the weeks that they are suspended," said Senior Greg Aldrich.

IMSA is similar to NCSSM in that it has RLA personas (called CDs - Community Developers) and SLI figures (called RCs - Residential Counselors). Something interesting to note is that the CDs do not have much authority. Unlike their NCSSM counterparts, CDs do not take check or make sure that everybody is doing their housekeeping. IMSA did not like the idea of students having power over other students. Of course, CDs still fulfill the friend role—they are always willing to help sort through problems and give advice.

One of the best parts of IMSA is the cafeteria food. Not only is the food great and the silverware an acceptable size, but the cafeteria is open for longer periods of time. When we NCSSM students remarked about their high-quality food, IMSA students stared back in amazement and pity. In fact, IMSA's food service provider's contract ends this summer, and the issue of whether or not renew the contract has flared up. Unlike at NCSSM, IMSA students are not an integral part of ensuring that the cafeteria functions properly. Work service, on a whole, is not as strict as at NCSSM.

IMSA is in the middle of corn fields, so there are not many places for students to go on foot, students are not allowed cars except for prom and other occasional events. Students can take van loops to nearby attractions, like the bowling alley and the movie

~IMSA-P2~

Mini-Term: The New SPW

katie watlington

In a perfect world Special Projects Week (SPW) is a wonderful time when every student is learning on their own about a particular subject that interests them; but things like SPW are never perfect even here at NCSSM. There will always be a select group that wants to do as little as it takes to get by. For some students in the past, SPW was more of a vacation than a learning experience. This concerned many of faculty members and as a result Mini-Term was designed.

Mini-Term will be a two year experiment and, after the next school year, will be carefully evaluated. After the two year period, a decision will be made whether or not to continue with Mini-Term, return to SPW, or try something new.

"Mini-Term was more academic than SPW. It addressed the teachers' concerns about students not doing enough academic work during SPW," said Tom Clayton, Assistant Director of Academic Programs.

But was Mini-Term too much work?

Many students felt that Mini-Term was very tiring and too much time was spent in the

classroom. However, the majority of the students felt that they did learn a lot of interesting information.

A speak-out was held April 4th about Mini-term, and the pros/cons of Mini-term and SPW were thoroughly addressed.

SPW was such a positive experience because students were learning independently. However, it was estimated only about one-third of the students gave SPW their hardest effort. The other two-thirds either just barely got by or were somewhere in the middle.

Mini-term hoped to accommodate the two-thirds of the student body that were not working diligently by providing classes, but still allowing the other one-third to do their independent projects. The problem with this was that only about 85 students proposed independent project, and only 65 were passed. Independent projects were extremely hard to design and get running this year due to the lack of sponsors and support. Also, students feared that their projects would not pass.

Many other features rendered Mini-term far from perfect. The classes students took during Mini-term were designed by the teachers and subsequently

encompassed their own interests, not the students. Also, trips off campus were longer and more expensive. Some students were not able to take a trip because of price.

Only 40 students did not receive their first, second or third choice. This was very frustrating for the students, but most still managed to enjoy themselves.

"I didn't get any of my first three choices, but I still learned a lot and had a good time doing the chemistry web page with Mr. Curry," said Junior Thomas Coyington

While Mini-term was designed mainly to address faculty concerns, many were not totally sold on Mini-term. The teachers ended up doing as much work as the students in preparing for and teaching a mini-term course.

"I felt that with Mini-term between 3rd and 4th quarter there was not enough time to get ready; it seemed as if we crammed a course into the regular courses. Mini-term was a good experience but was very tiring," said Dr. Sarah Allen

For the current Juniors, SPW is a thing of the past. Mini-term is here to stay for at least one more year, and after that, who knows!