

## The future of your report card

KITTY FROMSON

You've all heard the rumors, "I heard they were going to be labeling all the classes as Honors or AP" or "There's going to be class ranks next year." For the purpose of eliminating all confusion, here are the facts.

Ms. Gail Hudson, Head of Counseling Services, and Mr. Tom Trocano, chemistry professor, are co-chairs of a task force designed to address issues relating to college admissions and the use of GPAs. Also on the committee are numerous faculty and members of the NCSSM staff, two alumni, two parents, and about ten students who have volunteered their time.

The committee has divided its task into two parts. Their first step was to determine whether there is a problem with the acceptance rates of NCSSM students to the colleges of their choice. To accomplish this, the committee will compare our ac-

ceptance rates to those of other schools and compare our students' profiles to those of students who are accepted at top-notch schools.

Also, Ms. Hudson has requested information from 67 other consortium and 20 magnet schools around the country. The committee will be reviewing other schools' acceptance rates, transcripts, profiles, and all of the other elements of a student's application that would be sent to colleges. Based on this information and the statistics that the committee will examine, they will decide if there is a significant problem in our acceptance rates and the nature of that problem.

The second part of the

task is to fix whatever may be wrong with our college applications procedure. Possible ways

course titles or numbers, and the instating weighted GPAs.

Ms. Hudson firmly believes that all

content courses should be worth at least one quality point. Mr. Trocano brought up the issue that there are only two quality points that can be assigned, and for courses such as Chemistry, where there are three levels, the general course should be worth more than a four-

point A, because it is a challenging class as compared to any other high school's General Chemistry courses.

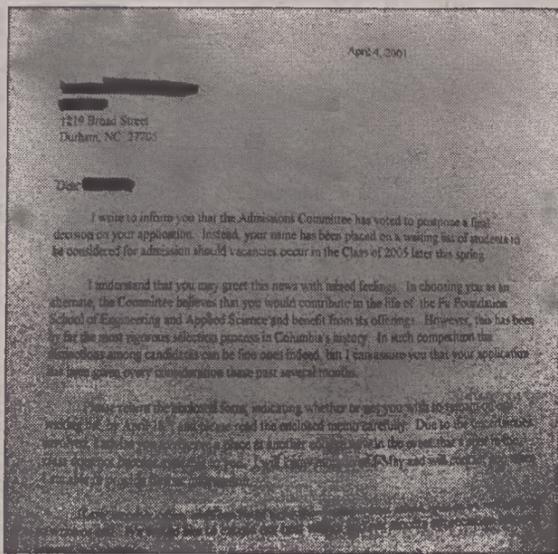
Although there are poten-

tial problems with having weighted GPAs, both co-chairs were adamant about reinforcing the message that class ranking will never become a part of the NCSSM experience.

GPA's are not unknown to NCSSM. Whenever a student applies to a service academy such as the Coast Guard or Air Force Academies the school must furnish a numerical average of your work at NCSSM. But under the current system an A in Advanced Physics gets the same amount of credit as an A in General Physics. Some would say that's not fair. And it's not as though the schools that receive applications from NCSSM don't compute their own GPA's when they receive NCSSM applications.

As Mr. Trocano says, "If what we're doing is penalizing you, the students, then we need to change that."

Ms. Hudson agrees, stating that "We want to represent you in a package that's the most favorable to you."



College rejection letters are not uncommon to seniors

Katie Watlington

of accomplishing this include, but are not limited to, changing the appearance of our transcript to include more detailed course descriptions, changing our

## GPA: our new TLA?

KATY BLACKWELL

It's on every college app, every scholarship app, practically every form that has anything to do with reaching Life Beyond High School: GPA. The one three-letter acronym that is not a part of NCSSM life...unfortunately.

In a perfect world, accepting the greater challenge and attending a school with "Science and Math" in the name would be information enough on my academic viability for anyone investigating my college potential. Well, guess what: the world is, in fact, not perfect.

Admissions is a questions of weeding out before selecting. First, the "minimum requirements" are checked, just to narrow the pool of possibilities; then people can dig deeper into a personality to decide who might fit. One component of those minimum requirement formulas is frequently the GPA. That simple two-digit number, an overall summary of one's

(academic) high school career.

I know I attend a school that finds the overly competitive and inaccurate quantification of intelligence to be archaic and unnecessary: We live in enlightened times. Problem is, those "enlightened" times might be just a little too advanced for the rest of the system.

Every time I come to the line for GPA, I print very neatly "n/a". Those two little initials are not the greatest conveyance of information one can possibly provide. Not applicable? Why? Questions that come to mind first are, are you just too lazy to go ask your counselor and, are you so far

above the system you think your GPA doesn't matter to us. Whether your school calculates GPAs doesn't enter the picture.

No one can possibly make

you think they didn't look, place some weight on those numbers? I certainly have no illusions on the matter. GPA can be a very useful thing.

Does anyone honestly think any harm would come of adding a GPA to our transcripts? Perhaps I'm missing something in the reasons I've heard against it. Petty competition and ranking? That extra degree of stress felt, especially by first quarter Juniors? It would make students seem bad? Please, I don't think so.

First, how well one does in classes is a poor measure of a person. I should think most of us know better than to put stock in some number that quantifies only one aspect of the human being. Why would we compete? GPA is basically a numerical version of a bunch of grades. I have yet to hear of NCSSM students comparing something so simple as the number of A's on a report card.

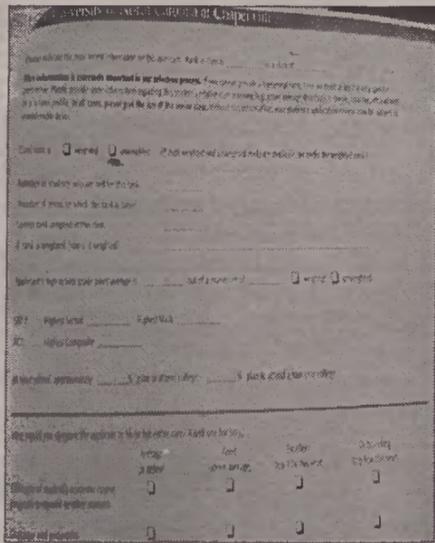
Second, no-one is going to be more stressed about the plunge of their GPA than they

are over the beating their pride takes when they haul home their first "bad" report card to their parents.

Third, this school would never rank students. We wouldn't let them.

Fourth and finally, numbers aren't going to adversely affect how any college looks at NCSSM students. GPA is not the end-all and be-all of our existence or any college's acceptance policy. And knowing this school, we'll never be asked to submit a GPA that doesn't meet the minimum requirements if we've earned it. Coming from this school, we more likely than not have earned those minimums.

No, the number isn't important, not in my daily life. But when I'm filling out college applications, I stress what spin is being put on those simple letters "n/a." That number suddenly being there, instead of being not applicable, will take stress away, not add it. I know that number isn't important—just useful.



The NCSSM report card

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a judgment given a few sheets of paper. They've come up with something that works, more or less, so let them run with it. Besides, I seem to recall that NCSSM received our GPAs. Do

## Olympians

group of 30." Grimsley High School, which nabbed the first place spot at the regional competition, was in the team's sights, but it once again claimed the top spot at the State Competition, with NCSSM finishing in 6<sup>th</sup> place.

Nonetheless, the team excelled in some events, such as Reach for the Stars (1<sup>st</sup>), Water Quality (2<sup>nd</sup>), Wright Stuff (3<sup>rd</sup>), and Road Scholars (4<sup>th</sup>).

Also, the 6<sup>th</sup> place finish at the state competition was also better than NCSSM's two previous trips to the state competition. Science and Math came in 7<sup>th</sup> in 1999 and 10<sup>th</sup> place in 2000.

Although many are disappointed with the finish, many others see a lot of hope for the Science Olympiad team. One bright spot for the future of the Science Olympiad team is the fact that over half of the team

consisted of juniors, who will return next year, coupled with a new junior class with even more experience in Science Olympiad. Many are quick to note that since Science and Math is only a two-year school, the team's dynamics change completely year to year. In fact, there is almost no way to deduce a pattern in NCSSM's future performance based on the results of last year. If anything, the

school's sixth place finish should give the captains something to beat for next year.

Next year's captains also hope to spark more interest in the club in order to develop a stronger team. Although some have a poor view of the school's showing this year, NCSSM's Science Olympiad team seems ready to capture the state championship in 2002.

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most notably first place in Wright Stuff and third in Scrambler. The team leaders, were then faced with the daunting task of cutting half of the regionals team, for only that many people can participate in the state level competition. Elango Cheran, team co-captain, said picking the A-Team was incredibly difficult. "I've never seen a better