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## NCSSM Sweeps Siemens Westinghouse

By CONNIE CHU

This year, ten regional finalists in the Siemens-Westinghouse Competition came from the North Carolina School of Science of Mathematics. Buro Mookerji, Amanda Mason, Lucie Guo, Xianlin Li, Claire Reddy, Yajing Gao, Ying Liu, Jeff Hu, Nick Cook, and Lee Ricketson were flown down to Atlanta, Georgia, along with Dr. Myra Halpin where they stayed in a five star hotel, courtesy of the Siemens Foundation. Each regional finalist received a \$1,000 scholarship, a medal, and a backpack with various prizes, including a digital camera. Buro Mookerji went on to win fifth place at the national level of the individual competition, an honor that comes with a \$20,000 scholarship. Lucie Guo and Xianlin Li advanced to win first place at Nationals as a team; they will split a \$100,000 scholarship.

"[At Regionals] there wasn't really much competition because we were all friends, so it was kinda like a vacation where we had to pres-

ent a few times," said Ying Liu. Regional finalists were required to prepare a poster display of their research project, deliver a 12-minute oral presentation about their research and findings, and participate in a 12-minute private question and answer session with the judges. They were judged on clarity of expression, comprehensiveness, creativity, field knowledge, future work, interpretation, literature review, presentation, scientific importance, validity, and, in the case of the team competition, teamwork.

Dr. Halpin said of the regional finalists she advised, "[At the competition] I just get to sit back like a proud momma and say, 'Didn't they do well?' It's a lot of pleasure

to see them grow as researchers and see them ask questions and find the answers themselves. The students do all the work; I just get to support them in all their efforts and learn from what they're

power naps."

"It was one of the best weekends of my life!" said Amanda Mason. "The quality of the projects was truly amazing. I know this sounds nerdy, but I was completely riveted by each of the talks. Also, the Siemens people really treated us all like VIPs. They made us feel like our work was important."

Buro Mookerji's project, entitled "Synthesis and Characterization of Novel Phenylbis(mercaptoimidazolyl)

Borates of Manganese and Zinc," focused on the fundamental coordination chemistry of zinc. It dealt primarily with synthesizing transition metal salts of the ligand system known as phenylbis(mercaptoimidazolyl)borates. "The novelty of this research," Mookerji says,

"[lies] primarily in the fact that [historically] this ligand system has only been synthesized with the element rhenium. So, by using simple precipitation reactions in methanol and a series of analytical chemistry techniques, we can develop this understanding of the reactivity and structure of these ligands." Through his work, conducted during a ten-week summer session when he was enrolled as an undergraduate student at UNC Charlotte, Mookerji discovered a metal bonding sphere of zinc and a potential model of an enzyme used in the production of DNA nucleic acids.

Mason studied the genetic basis of hybrid sterility in hybrids of *Mimulus guttatus* and *Mimulus nasutus*, two closely related yellow monkeyflower species. The purpose of her project was to help scientists understand the evolution of these two species from a common ancestor. "Biology was always my thing."

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Siemens Regional Finalists from Science and Math

Dr. Halpin

## Boarman speaks

KRISTOPH KLEINER  
AND YING LIU

Walking into the office of Dr. Gerald "Jerry" Boarman on the second floor of Royall on a clear October day, the first thing you notice is the strategically arranged array of books on the bookshelf behind his desk. Titles range from Colin Powell: *Epic of Man* to *Children of Color* to the *Book of Golf*. Although it looked more like the office of a corporate CEO than the principal of a high school, Dr. Boarman cheerfully welcomed us in and answered our questions.

To begin the interview, we asked Dr. Boarman why he took the position of Director/President of NCSSM. Surprisingly, he did not apply for the job. Instead, he was asked to suggest someone else. Later however, the search committee did offer him the job, but found him already with a prior commitment. They asked again a year later,

and Dr. Boarman arrived at NCSSM in 1999.

However, when he first arrived at NCSSM, the campus was in minor ruins. Royall was boarded up, Bryan was a mess and the swing set area was covered in barbed wire and graffiti. The technology at the school was horrible, and Dr. Boarman noted, "the computers were lame."

Although not beautiful, the school's dogma appealed to Dr. Boarman, and he decided to come to NCSSM. Since his arrival, Dr. Boarman has instigated major changes.

Dr. Boarman views his role as "myriad." He is responsible for fiduciary responsibilities like the budget and procuring funds. Since his arrival, he has worked with the legislature to secure an additional \$1.4-1.6 million dollars.

He is also the "instructional leader of the school." His major

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## O'Dell talks about the future

TYLER HUFFMAN & JOSH  
WETERINGTON

"I'm worried for the future of this school." -- Carol O'Dell

As president of the Faculty Council, instructor of mathematics and sponsor for various student organizations, Carol O'Dell is one of the most active and outspoken members of the NCSSM community. Despite her contributions to the school, Dr. O'Dell was recently informed by a letter from NCSSM President Gerald "Jerry" Boarman that she will no longer have a teaching position at NCSSM following the 2004-2005 school year. In a separate letter signed by NCSSM Senior Vice Presidents Sally Adkin, Joan Barber and Steve Warsaw, Dr. O'Dell was informed that the grounds for this decision included giving lower grades than her colleagues, having a large number of parent complaints and dis-

tributing data that was deemed erroneous. In a recent interview with the Stentorian, Dr. O'Dell said that she views this action as the next step in a string of events that is reducing the school to the level of an ordinary "good public high school with block scheduling."

The NCSSM Student Handbook states that the school "supports and encourages freedom ... of inquiry and expression for faculty members and students so that they may responsibly pursue" the goals of "transmission and advancement of knowledge and understanding." However, according to Dr. O'Dell, the NCSSM community does not support this carefully worded policy which was adopted by the Board of Trustees in 1995. She claimed that many teachers have been chastised "for asking questions administrators didn't want to answer."

A few years ago, while doing a study to see whether NCSSM should

become more in line with the UNC system, Dr. O'Dell requested salary data from the school so that she could compare NCSSM teacher salaries with those of professors from smaller schools within the UNC system such as UNC-Wilmington and Western Carolina University. Despite the fact that these are public records the school is required to provide, she was denied the information and prevented from completing her research.

Members of the class of 2005 may remember the surveys given out at the end of the 2003-2004 school year asking about their experience at Science and Math. After posing a statement, students were left with five options to choose from: "Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree, or No Opinion". The survey appeared to be biased, since from a statistical standpoint it offered three ways to agree and only

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