

# the stentorian

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## 20th Annual Research Symposium & Grandparents' Day

EMME JOHNSTON

NCSSM hosted its 20th Annual Research Symposium on April 22nd. The event, coinciding with NCSSM's Grandparents Day, featured student presentations and an announcement of an important new collaboration between IBM and the school.

NCSSM students involved with different research programs and classes, such as the specific science research classes and the NCSSM Mentorship program, prepared presentations in order to share their research with others. The presentations were organized into five different sessions, with approximately ten presentations going on during each session. These presentations took place in the Bryan classrooms and the ETC. Each presentation was introduced by a student in the NCSSM community and most included a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question and answer session.

The students shared their research in a clear and concise manner, and answered questions knowledgeably on a wide variety of subjects. This broad range of topics included research in the life sciences, physical sciences, and computer science, as well as mathematical and social science research. NCSSM's Robotics Team 900 also presented its award-winning robot.

Each presentation concluded with the students explaining where the research could be taken next. Many seniors hope to continue their research in college; juniors have plans to continue their research at NCSSM next year.

Prior to the Research Symposium, NCSSM celebrated Grandparents Day with a picnic lunch on Bryan Lawn. After a short speech welcoming everyone, the assembled crowd moved en masse towards the picnic tables weighted with a barbecue luncheon provided by the Development Division.

## Did Trimesters Really Kill Your Puppy?

KRISTOPH KLEINER  
& YING LIU

"Trimesters killed my puppy." Tan t-shirts sporting this logo were sold by 3rd West, clearly stating their collective feelings about the trimester system. The administration believes that the trimester has been an overall success, but this t-shirt begs to differ. Although it only reflects the opinion of one hall of about thirty guys, how does their opinion compare to that of the faculty and students as a whole? A survey conducted at the end of the 2nd trimester sheds some light on faculty and student opinions of the trimester.

When the administration set out to create the trimester system, it had ten objectives that included more course choices, a healthier lifestyle, more free time, and more research opportunities for students, as well as fewer classes for teachers. The administration believes that it has met the majority of these goals.

Students seem to have more time and more classes to choose from, and teachers seem to be teaching fewer classes.

A series of surveys comparing 2004 juniors to 2005 juniors and 2004 seniors to 2005 seniors found that satisfaction with classroom instruction, class variety, number and kinds of assignments, grading procedures, and value of the work basically stayed the same from the semester system to the trimester system. Both 2004 and 2005 seniors and 2005 juniors found that it was harder to get requested classes, but in this year's survey, the level of dissatisfaction rose significantly. 2005 seniors also had higher dissatisfaction with the pace of instruction compared to 2004 seniors.

However, the most striking change amongst students is the number of free periods per day. On the least demanding day, senior free periods went from 3.3 to 4.1 with the trimester. Juniors saw an increase of 1.9 to 3.3 on their



Ellie Norton

Christian Estes sports the "Trimesters killed my puppy" t-shirt

least demanding days. Keep in mind that these surveys were taken in March, not during 1st trimester, when juniors were required to only take 4 classes. Even with all the free time, tutorial attendance has not increased significantly and still remains below 0.5 nights a week on average for all subjects.

Ryan Neely, a member of the Student Improvement Group, commented on the changes this year. "It was the consensus of the student members of SIG that the switch from semester to trimester had

a very marked effect on the work ethic of the juniors at NCSSM." He added that "having the trimester, we found that the juniors were not as challenged as we were last year. This did not instill the academic vigor that S & M should hold."

As for teachers, the number of students taught per semester has gone down, but the number of new courses taught has increased. Although teachers are spending less time outside of class grading and working, they are

"Puppy," continued on page 2

## NCSSM Says Farewell to Deans

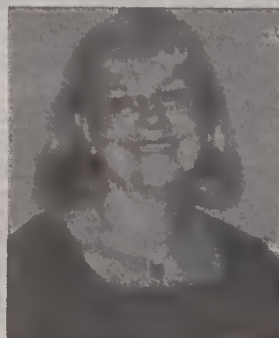
MARGARET YIM

This year has seen the beginning of many changes, and it seems next year will look the same as we bid adieu to two of our three deans. Tom Trocano, Dean of Science, and Jo Ann Lutz, Dean of Mathematics, will be leaving NCSSM at the end of this school year, each for reasons of their own.

Mr. Trocano, NCSSM Dean of Science for three years, will be moving to Philadelphia, where his wife has been offered many opportunities which Trocano believes will be "in the best interest of the family." He went on to say that he has relatives up in the area, and that he is a Northerner in the first place, so it is not too drastic of a change.

However, he did profess his love for the school, claiming "the only person who

could drag me out, did." He has loved the NCSSM experience, and praises the school for its unique environment for the growth of students. "I've taught at other places, and



Jo Ann Lutz

[NCSSM] is a different experience." He believes that at NCSSM, he has an opportunity to work with some of the best students in the state, if not the country. Here, instead of spending most of class time on class management, he can focus on teaching in a way that energizes the students, making the material come alive, and

answering questions that make him or her think.

Trocano also notes the great colleagues that he had the opportunity to work with. "Their expertise, dedication,



Tom Trocano

and knowledge are motivating. I wish that more kids had opportunities like this."

Speaking on the pros and cons to being a dean, Trocano says that he has enjoyed the opportunity to shape the department, even if it is a slow process. He once again acknowledged his colleagues as "21 of the most amazing

instructors." One of the few disadvantages to being a dean, in Trocano's case, is that the responsibility of being a dean impacts his ability to interact with the students, and he believes that it is the interaction that makes teaching and working in the field of education special.

Trocano says that he will miss NCSSM tremendously and that he hopes to maintain the relationships that he has here, with both students and staff. Looking at the changes that have occurred this year and at the future of NCSSM, he says that NCSSM has grown tremendously as an institution, and that all these adjustments are being made to better serve the students. He went on to proclaim that his decision to leave was in no way influenced by the trimester system or the other

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