

Student Government Ambitious for '08-'09

By DEVIKA CHAWLA

A new year always brings change to the fast-paced NCSSM campus. For Student Government, however, this new year brings in more change than ever before.

With the new Judicial Branch, a recent acceptance into the UNC Association of Student Governments, and new leadership, SG has plans for the 2008-2009 school year that are both numerous and grand.

The Judicial Branch, headed by senior Kevin Kimball, is the latest addition to SG. This branch serves the purpose of resolving disputes within SG and ensuring that all members of SG are doing their job. "The Judicial branch is composed of a panel of five students and meets at least once every month," explains Kimball. On other university campuses, the Judicial Branch offers the role of reviewing student cases. At NCSSM, however, Honor Council is responsible for this job. Hopes are high for this new section of SG: Kimball states, "I hope that the new branch will allow SG to run smoothly and accomplish its number one goal, helping students."

NCSSM became a constituent of the UNC System on July 1, 2007. Though this made them a part of the UNC Association of Student Governments, NCSSM's own Student Government hopes to seriously increase their involvement with this multi-university organization. "We're the only high school, so we have to earn the respect to be there, by participating as much as we can,"

explained SG President Ashwin Peres-da-Silva. By attending monthly meetings, SG can benefit greatly from the UNC Association of Student Governments, according to Peres-da-Silva. NCSSM can benefit from this organization both financially and through the experience and idea of other university's governments.

Some other projects SG hopes to tackle this year include discount agreements with local restaurants for NCSSM students and improvements on SG's communication with the NCSSM community.

Soon, NCSSM students may be able to receive discounts at local businesses and restaurants by simply showing their NCSSM I.D. card. SG is currently negotiating these discounts with business such as Cinelli's, George's Garage, Joe Van Gogh, Randy's Pizza, and possibly a few more. This plan will hopefully benefit the businesses by bring in more student customers, while easing up a bit on the already-stretched wallets of many NCSSM students.

Last year, many students often felt out of touch with the proceedings of SG. This is something that SG is determined to change this year. "We want to see more

people at our meetings this year. We really feel like we, as 20 people, can't represent the whole school's interests," states Peres-da-Silva. By sending weekly e-mail updates to the NCSSM community and by encouraging participation in regular SG meetings, SG is hoping to keep students informed and involved in SG.

Finally, for juniors interested in taking lead in SG this year, several specific leadership positions are available: four Junior Senator positions, and one Junior Dorm Senator for each of Bryan, Beall, Reynolds, Royall, East Hunt, West Hunt, and Hill. Elections are to occur in September.

Change is not just about new plans or new set-ups of government; change is also about a new attitude. "This

year, we are going to take a more aggressive stance on things, and really try to get all the students involved," promises Ashwin Peres-da-Silva, this year's Student Government President.

Major changes are planned, and plans are in place. The course of the year will prove whether or not SG delivers on the promises that it has made.

Note to the juniors: Don't feel intimidated by the seniors or by SG as a whole. Like any other campus organization, it is completely student-run. Your input, ideas, and skills are vital to Student Government. Don't be shy – run for a position, come to the meetings, or get involved with an SG project.

Citizens Respond to Rising Prices in the U.S.

By DAIXI XU

As many have noticed on trips to the pump and grocery stores, prices in the U.S. are steadily climbing. At the same time, the dollar is weakening, stock markets are failing, and unemployment is rising. As a result, The US deficit is expected to reach a record high of \$490 billion in 2009. Although there is debate about whether we are in a recession or not, there is a general consensus that our economy is not currently healthy.

The cost of bread per pound has risen from \$1.05 in 2006 to \$1.28 today. Although a few cents may not seem much, and people throw pennies away every day, the added price gains of all the essential food items combined with the number of trips to the grocery store create a noticeable dent in the average budget. These prices are predicted to continue rising at a rate of 7.5% per year for the next five years. Unfortunately, it's difficult to cut back on how much food a household consumes, meaning that there is a fast-approaching bottom line in cost-cutting measures for many American families.

Most attempts to save money on food, which accounts for approximately thirteen percent of a typical household's spending, have been focused on eliminating the numerous small conveniences (and the accompanying price increases) offered in grocery stores. Large stores have noticed a decrease in

the amount of fresh produce purchased, as consumers try to purchase locally produced foods without added costs from transportation. An investigative report by the Boston Globe also noted an increase in backyard gardens that allow some to eliminate bought produce entirely. The groceries that are purchased tend to be lower on the 'food chain'—flour sales replacing bread, raw foods instead of canned or premixed products.

Rising consumer prices are most universally affected by record-high oil prices. The price of crude oil is currently over \$126 per barrel, bumping

gas prices on average to \$3.96, over a dollar more than a year ago. However, the prices have dropped since the 4th of July weekend as some Americans are beginning to drive less. This 4th of July weekend, 1.3% fewer Americans traveled compared to last year's. If Americans continue on this trend, gas prices may be forced to go down as rising prices begin to be unable to compensate for lost business.

Drivers have also become much more fuel conscious, resulting in both slower (driving 55mph can result in 21% better mileage than driving at 65mph) and less driving overall. Most drivers indicate that they have cut back on superfluous trips, and use of mass transit has been rising steadily since last year.

Without any resolution of the U.S.'s national financial situation imminent, it appears that most citizens are preparing for protracted bout of reduced spending.



Source: www.termilimits.com

The value of the U.S. dollar since 1992, taking the 1992 value as a baseline of 100%.



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