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## Hudson to retire after 27 years supporting NCCSM students, Hackney to fill post

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The always-smiling woman that brought you the class chants “2-0-1-6, at Science and Math you’ll get your kicks!” and “2-0-1-7, S&M’s a bit of heaven!” is retiring from her position as Dean of Counseling Services after 27 years of supporting and helping unicorns achieve their dreams.

Gail Faulkner Hudson began her career in education in Durham Public Schools as an English teacher, and then as a counselor. She is the proud parent of an NCSSM alumna, and joined the school’s staff in 1989 as Dean of Counseling. Ever since then, she has been dedicated to the school and its students, helping lead the counseling department in taking care of NCSSM’s hundreds of students.

When she leaves her Royall Center office in June for the last time, Hudson plans to take life easy by spending long, “uninterrupted” periods of time relaxing at Kure Beach, reading books on her back porch beside a cooling fan, and playing with her grandchildren. The ever caring Hudson also plans to spend a chunk of time volunteering with a few nonprofits.

Since 1989, about 10 years before current students were even born, Hudson has been a strong supporter of students.

For about three decades she has aided Unicorns in choosing the perfect college, mentored them in the art of time management, counseled stressed Unicorns through anxieties and crises, helped them navigate through various conflicts, and hugged them when all they needed was someone to be there.

Stress at NCSSM has skyrocketed in the past few years. When a majority of students have “cliniced-out” of class at least once because of the pressure and stress placed upon them, there is definitely a problem. The pressure to get into a good college, maintain good relationships, get good grades, have fun, have enough extracurriculars, and much more drives students to give up their mental and physical health to work towards perfection.

“Our kids are striving to be perfect when really all they need to be is themselves,” says Hudson. She and her team of caring counselors have worked tirelessly to make sure that students know exactly that.

Hudson would like to stay and continue helping Unicorns; however, a health crisis three years ago made her realize it was time to retire. Facing a risky 10-hour surgery after being diagnosed with a brain tumor, Hudson was lying on a stretcher at UNC hospital. As the



Gail Hudson will retire this summer after nearly three decades of helping students.

photo courtesy of ncssm.edu

anesthesiologist entered the surgery room and looked at her patient, she was surprised to see her counselor from 20 years ago who had helped her reach the position she held currently.

However, the anesthesiologist was not the only NCSSM alumna to support Hudson, the audiologist checking the tumor and its effects on Hudson’s hearing was also an alumna, and so was the pediatric anesthesiologist that visited Hudson after seeing her name on the surgery schedule. After realizing that the students that matured on NCSSM’s campus under her guidance are now taking care of the world themselves, Hudson

realized that it was time for her to retire.

The newly opened position of Dean will be filled by Lori Hackney, who has been a counselor at NCSSM since 2005. Hackney has been working with the Strategic Planning Committee and is excited to have the opportunity to lead the school in some new and promising directions.

Hackney’s more than 20 years of experience working with children and adolescents, combined with her “natural ability to make you feel like you are the most important person in the world when you are talking to her” will make her the perfect

fit as dean, says Terry Lynch, Vice Chancellor for Student Life.

“NCSSM has a strong counseling department with a talented team of individuals who work hard to promote positive outcomes for students and the NCSSM community each day,” Hackney says. “My hope is to maintain current structures that support students, faculty, and staff, while also working with the counseling team, student life staff, and the greater NCSSM community to strengthen current practices, policies and processes.”

## Organization to offer Common App alternative

By AVRA JANZ  
STAFF WRITER

Developed in 1975 and supported by over 600 colleges, the Common Application has long dominated the college application process. As of this April, however, it may have met its match.

The Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success, a non-profit organization developed by 90 public and private universities to “improve the college application process for all students,” according to its website, released an alternative college application to students in April; the full version of the application will be available in July.

Featuring college planning tools and a space for seeking advice from teachers and counselors, the Coalition platform aims to make higher education more accessible to first-generation and low-income students, though all students are able to use the

application.

Starting in the ninth grade, students can input essays, artwork and videos into the Coalition’s digital locker; students can later opt to send files from their locker to colleges and to share files with teachers or mentors for review.

The application also features a required essay and fields for listing extracurricular activities and interests, but unlike the Common App, the Coalition application allows students to list eight activities, not 10, and it requires that applicants list the number of students with whom they share each of their leadership positions.

The Coalition was formed not only to make the college application process more accessible, but to “make applications more reflective and in tune with how students organize and express themselves,” according to

Laura Pappano of the New York Times.

A number of admissions deans have criticized the Common App for its impersonality, noting that the format of the application can make it difficult to differentiate between candidates; by allowing students to submit a number of media supplements alongside their essays and test scores, the Coalition application humanizes the admissions process.

The Coalition’s member schools, which include every Ivy League school and a number of leading public universities (including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), pledge to support a “college exploration and application process that encourages reflection and self-discovery,” according to the Coalition website, and to meet the “full, demonstrated financial need of every domestic student they admit.”

But the Coalition application

has its critics. Counselors worry that its 2016 release will put additional pressure on students already grappling with a new SAT. And, to some, it seems counterintuitive that a platform targeted primarily at low-income students relies so heavily on Internet access.

Though the Coalition application aims to make financial aid more accessible, it does not waive school application fees (except for students awarded fee waivers), and though it allows students to view the names of the 90 colleges to which they can apply through the platform, it does not offer a comprehensive college exploration or search tool (informational resources are provided in reference to only some universities).

After registering for a Coalition account myself, I was disappointed to find that the application platform featured typographical errors, broken links and malfunctioning

fields – though students are only allowed to list eight extracurricular activities on the application, for example, the platform allowed me to add over 15. Additionally, a number of its tools were not yet available for use, defeating the organization’s early engagement efforts for the class of 2017.

The goal of the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success – to make higher education more accessible – is a noble one, and a growing body of research has documented the need for a more supportive college application process.

But the current iteration of the Coalition application could benefit from revision, and though the Coalition’s website notes that “competition is a positive force for change,” it may take years before the Coalition application is able to truly rival the Common App.