

An Open Letter to NCSSM Administration
on the Subject of the Mishandling and Neglect of the Student Body

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Executive Summary

Grievances:

Our Main Concerns

- Handling of Sexual Assault reporting and Title IX process on campus
- Title IX policies catering to the accused party and not prioritizing victim safety
- Inconsistency of the disciplinary process
- Handling of suicide attempts
- Handling of the leveling process

As students, we feel that these are urgent concerns that must be immediately addressed to preserve our safety as minors whilst enrolled at NCSSM. We are asking that the concerns stated above be addressed now.

We as students have a right to feel safe on campus. Victims of sexual assault have the right to seek support and to feel safe in their living environment. Students have the right to be treated fairly in disciplinary matters. Prospective students and families as well as current students and families all have the right to be aware of mental health issues on campus.

Handling of Sexual Assault reporting and Title IX process on campus

When handling issues related to alcohol use, being in prohibited rooms, or being off campus after dark, the disciplinary process is swift, and can be prompted and fully investigated by anonymous claims without credible evidence. However, under current procedure, for any sexual misconduct allegation to be investigated, the claimant must file a formal Title IX report, which involves reporting their case to the school Title IX coordinator. By state law, this triggers mandatory reporting, in which the students' guardians and the police are immediately notified.

At NCSSM, one administrator is responsible for handling both disciplinary and Title IX complaints. This is an enormous power that should not be consolidated in a single individual who is given complete reign over the reporting process for all students attempting to report grievances that fall under Title IX jurisdiction. Many students have reported feeling dismissed and belittled when attempting to bring forward sexual assault violations, which has led them to not report. That students are aware of the difficulty of this process, its almost adversarial nature at times, discourages them from reporting.

Furthermore, even if a student has multiple allegations against them, their status on campus remains unaltered by the administration. Due to the size of our school, it is impossible to prevent victims from encountering their assailants on campus, or from worrying about such an encounter. No

action is taken against the respondent until a hearing occurs, which leaves victims living for long periods of time in an environment in which their assailant resides on campus. .

Please see the section below regarding student experiences with sexual assault on campus for specific examples.

Title IX policies catering to the accused party and not prioritizing victim safety

Another chief complaint regarding NCSSM's implementation of the Title IX process is how many specific policies cater to the "respondent", or person accused of sexual assault, at the expense of the victim, or "complainant". Currently, if a student decides to file a formal report, they are the one who must move out of any classes shared with the respondent. The respondent is allowed to remain on campus with no repercussions (loss of leadership positions, temporary suspension, etc) throughout the entire Title IX process. Students have been specifically told by our Title IX coordinator that this process usually takes at least 2 months, even though the Student Code of Conduct states that in regards to sexual assault, students are ensured a "prompt, equitable and thorough investigation, to discuss and implement appropriate interim measures, and to provide information to the students involved regarding available support and resources". In many situations, it is extremely unsafe to allow assaulters to remain on campus for this period of time. It is also extremely difficult for students who have been assaulted to cope with the emotional implications of their experience, and this is exacerbated when living in extremely close proximity to the assaulter.

Inconsistency of the disciplinary process

The current disciplinary policies and their implementation leave far too much discretion up to the individual in charge of school disciplinary issues, the Dean of Students. For example, both consensual sex and rape are given the same charge of a Level 3 in our current system.

In addition to the issues in the school's disciplinary policies, the inconsistency of how disciplinary issues are handled is both unfair and unsafe. If a student is anonymously reported for drinking, even with absolutely no proof, the incident will be immediately investigated. Students have been extracted from their rooms and taken to Bryan Lobby for questioning at 3 AM for baseless anonymous claims of alcohol consumption. The school will then conduct an investigation, searching for related witnesses, security camera footage, and text messages related to the incident. In contrast, if sexual assault is reported, an "investigation" is not initiated unless a student requests a meeting with the Title IX coordinator and submits a formal complaint of the incident (which alerts the respondent, along

with the student's parents). In this "investigation", it is the complainant's complete responsibility to collect evidence, coordinate witnesses, and identify any other aspects that might help their case. While much of this is Title IX policy, NCSSM has the right to shape many of our school specific Title IX rules and the ability to expedite the process. Alongside this, sexual misconduct is officially prohibited in the student handbook, and should be investigated with at least as much conviction as reports of substances.

There have been specific instances in which the Title IX and disciplinary coordinator has been inconsistent with addressing issues that are specifically outlined in the student handbook. For example, when a sexual assault case was reported at the beginning of this year, the complainant was told that there was "nothing the school could do" because her assault happened off campus and over the summer. However, the student handbook specifically states that the "acceptance of an offer of admission to NCSSM means accepting the responsibility to uphold the values embodied in our Honor Code and to live and learn with honor and integrity." Regardless of where sexual assault happens between NCSSM students while they are enrolled here, the assault should be investigated. We have offered more specific examples below, in the section of student experiences.

Please see the section regarding unfair disciplinary procedures for specific examples.

Handling of suicide attempts

Many students on campus feel that the mental state of students remains a crucial issue that is still not taken seriously. We've had multiple suicide attempts this year and nothing was done to try and remediate the impact of these attempts on the student body. Students feel a general lack of support regarding mental health.

On top of this, many students have noticed a lack of support for those who attempt, and those around a person who attempts. NCSSM advocates for "supporting the mental and emotional health of students," and yet students continue to feel unsupported. Whenever mental health concerns are raised, the response is "go to counseling", yet this is not an end all solution for these issues. Many mental health concerns stem from classes, room situations, social situations, and other factors beyond the control of counseling. In addition to seeking counseling, attention should be given to the factors contributing to these issues.

It has also been a common trend for NCSSM to not mention the mental health situation to upcoming classes/parents of those classes. We feel that it is extremely wrong for NCSSM to advertise itself to prospective students and families without mentioning these issues, as students should be aware of these issues in order to make an informed decision about attending NCSSM.

Handling of the leveling process

The inequities of the student disciplinary process are inexcusable. Students have stated that the administration has treated students as “guilty until innocent” and that they have “borderline dehumanized” people over reports. Others have stated that people who have harassed others have gotten nothing more than a “metaphorical slap on the wrist” and the accused was able to move onto campus without the victim being notified from administration at all. The Dean of Students is solely in charge of the entire leveling process, leaving this system completely unchecked in terms of consistency and fairness.

The appeal process has also been a point of controversy with the student body. During the appeal process, you may appeal with the same person who provided you with the original level. Many view this as an unfair appeal as the administrator who gave the level to begin with will have a preconceived notion about the individual appealing their case.

Statements

Prompted by a multitude of individual complaints towards the school's handling of sexual assault and mental health issues, we created a form to give students an avenue to share their personal experiences regarding feelings of maltreatment from NCSSM's administrators and disciplinary processes. This form gave students the option to anonymously report grievances they have had this year. The responses show that student experiences of being dismissed, gaslighted, left vulnerable and unprotected, and mistreated by the administration, especially in the context of sexual assault and suicide reporting, are prevalent amongst our student body. Names of all parties, including students, faculty members, and teachers, have been removed from this version.

Student Experiences Related to Physical/Sexual Assault at NCSSM:

"I was sexually assaulted by a classmate (who is currently an RLA) over the summer and went to admin about it in the beginning of the year. They were not willing to do anything about it since it happened off campus and said it wasn't their jurisdiction. They said the only steps I could take was reporting it to the police. He ended up assaulting two more girls on campus after I initially went to admin. The school has done their best to not take any action and have me (the victim who is a minor) go to the police only. I shouldn't have to live within a few feet of someone who assaulted me and two other girls on campus. Admin has taken more action against people who report drinking/sneaking on other halls than they ever have for reports of sexual assault"

"Last year, during cohort b, my friends and I made a stupid decision and drank on campus. It was within the first few days that we got here and everything was new and it was our first time away from home. We ended up not being able to reach one of our friends because we later learned their phone was dead, but we knew they had been drinking and were scared that they were in a bad/dangerous situation. One of us alerted Bryan desk and requested amnesty on all of our behalf's; Not only were we not given amnesty when it should have applied, but we were also sent home on interim separation. In the handbook, interim separation is described as something they do when a student or the community are in danger until the hearing can take place. Me, a teenager who just came to boarding school and left home for the first time was considered and danger to the ncsm community for making a stupid decision and then asking for help. I would like for that to be justified to me because I went to admin about being sexually assaulted TWICE and when I gave them a name my assaulter was not placed on interim separation immediately, and now that they are, they are allowed to come back to campus before the hearing, despite all of the victims wishes and safety. I got kicked out of this school last year and had my entire junior year experience taken from me for something so minuscule compared to what (name of assaulter) did to me and two other girls, yet I was presumed guilty until proven innocent and him innocent until proven guilty. The administration has only further victimized people who have come to them for help and reporting a danger to campus. I am disgusted with the way this school has treated me."

"I was sexually assaulted by a student who is still an RLA. This student sexually assaulted 2 other current ncsm students, but is allowed to remain on campus even after he has threatened the safety of ppl who are close to me and supporting me w physical violence. He has also threatened to slander my name to colleges that I have been accepted to, as well as ncsm

admin, if I report him. He “jokingly” threatened multiple times to break the windows in my car, jump me and my prom date W A KNIFE, and threatened to kill himself to get back at me for reporting him. Admin was aware of a SA allegation against him at the beginning of the year, but he was allowed to remain on campus as an RLA. Now, he has done this to myself and another girl. Yet he faces absolutely no immediate repercussions for his actions, even though all 3 of us are terrified walking around campus of what he might do to ruin our futures or cause physical harm to us. Admin is aware of these threats but claims there is “nothing they can do” as there is “no proof”, even though he has been reported for saying these things”

“Long story short I snuck a guy (who I thought was clear was only a FRIEND) into my room and he sexually assaulted me while I was asleep. I didn’t report it because I’ve seen what Title IX looks like and what it does to victims-- they always suffer more than the assaulter. From every single case I’ve heard of, nothing ends up happening, so why relive everything if I’m still going to have to see his face everyday anyways. Also there’s the aspect that he was indeed in my room, which is against the rules I know. Historically speaking, it looked like I would get in more trouble for having him in my room then he would for assaulting me. I have wanted to go to counseling to talk about it, cause this really fucked me up, but if I did they would have to report it, report me, and then I’d be force to go through that whole process only for nothing to happen. ALSO this man has assaulted and harassed multiple girls on campus and no one has come forward because they’re so scared of what will happen to them.”

“(names of multiple assaulters) have all been accused of at least one instance of sexual assault. However, these people this far have faced little to no repercussions, and most still maintain leadership positions on campus. The administration, (Title IX coordinator) in particular, does nothing to protect the children living on campus (because many of us are legally just that, children) from these people’s actions and those of others like them. Instead, they blame survivors, ignore their concerns, and gaslight students into doubting their own experiences. This experience of aggression, gaslighting, and ignoring student’s real experiences and requests extends across administration, from registrar to counseling. I have personally been ignored over email and then laughed at and yelled at in person by Registrar. I have been repeatedly misgendered by (name of counselor) in counseling, and he continues to forget everything about my mental health that I’ve told him despite me visiting his office many times over the span of about two months. In almost every exchange I’ve had with a person in administration, I have been spoken to in a manner that is condescending at best, and outright aggressive at worst. this cannot stand. I am far from the only one, and these are far from the worst examples I know of. It is to the point where this school, which was supposed to be a hopeful and safe place where I could learn and explore new topics, is now a place where I feel I am constantly unsupported, looked down upon, alone, and in concrete physical and mental danger. If this sentiment, which I know is shared by many on this campus, does not reach and inspire change in the hearts of the people in charge of the North Carolina School of Science and Math, I am not convinced that anything could.”

“I’m scared, terrified even, especially as an AFAB. Let’s not forget that one girl who went to the Title IX coordinator for help after a situation and her first question was “what were you wearing?” If I was SAed on campus, I would never turn to admin for help because I KNOW they wouldn’t do ANYTHING. I would be completely alone and have no support system. If I got pregnant from the SA? kicked out of the school”

“I met my assaulter , through mutual friends. We had a few mostly-consensual encounters, until my friend and I snuck him and his friend over for the night. We had been drinking. He wanted to do things I wasn’t willing to do, and he decided that just because I “didn’t want to do anything, didn’t mean [he] couldn’t.” He knew I had previous experience with sexual

assault. He also knew he had already gotten away with it from 2!!! girls who REPORTED it happening and he was still an RLA.

After I relayed my story to Title IX coordinator, she informed me that she had to make a police report and tell my parents. Despite me telling her I felt unsafe with my parents knowing, trying to explain again and again that they wouldn't be understanding, she made ME call my mom and she relayed the information in the middle of a school day. Admin encouraged me with words like "you did the right thing" "so proud of you for reporting" but their words were insincere in comparison to the action that has been taken.

I was told my "story" wouldn't be as "strong" because we were drinking. Because we had participated in consensual activities in the past. Because the wording I used wasn't strong enough (I'd like to think "I don't want to do anything." and "No." give the same message). Because I didn't push him away hard enough. Because I was intoxicated (Why does alcohol excuse his actions but condemn mine?). Because I eventually gave in. I was told my report probably wouldn't end in much. Admin seemed more concerned about the possibility of alcohol in the room than anyone's safety.

I decided to go through with the Title IX investigation, and reached out to a lawyer. I was told his role in the hearing was to prove me an unreliable source of information however he could. I'll have to go through everything I've done wrong that his lawyer can find while facing my assaulter. I was told he was allowed back on campus almost immediately (despite numerous violent threats from him) and spent all of spring break in a panic. I was then told on the day we came back that he was not going to be there.

My mental health has completely gone down the drain due to this process and constant meetings with admin and fear that he would find out. I was asked to tell my story over and over and again and "just this one last time", until the details were jumbled in my head and I was sick of complete strangers knowing more about me than my own sister. Nitpicking at one of the worst moments of my life. They need to know the time stamps and "what exactly did he say?", and if you forget anything you must be lying (so it's not okay to lie but it's okay to assault someone?), if you blocked it out, remember it, tell me while I look at you and judge you and write notes about what you think happened. Only for everyone to look at me and tell me they can do nothing. Why does he have protection from consequences when we were offered no protection from him? How can they sit there and treat us like we're lying when I'm the THIRD girl to come forward against him? All I want is to feel safe and I've honestly never felt more alone than when I realized my story was just another one swept aside in favor of keeping the peace; That I was just another girl who has been further endangered by coming forward. This is how they keep us silent and make sure we are ashamed. Anything that happens to us is not enough, we didn't try hard enough, it was really our fault for being under the influence, or breaking the rules, or dressing that way.

This cycle of sexual violence on campus is perpetuated by the school. They stay silent, and in doing so, put us in danger. We are told to report sexual assault but when we do, we are ignored and it happens again. Letting someone with three sexual assault reports against him not only return back to campus, but letting him remain in a position of power, is unacceptable and further goes to show how little survivors' stories mean. My consent was not something for him to play with, but the school gave him the opportunity to play with it by not stopping him and not taking action and not allowing people to be informed about the first two reports. By treating sexual assault reports so lightly, the administration here has made NCSSM a safer environment for predators than for victims."

"He also physically assaulted both of us- he choked me to the point i couldn't breathe, he slapped my roommate, he invaded our spaces constantly. we were afraid to be in our room. after a month, we reported it and it seemed like the school actually cared- he was moved off campus and out of classes we shared. however, it seems he received absolutely no punishment other than a metaphorical slap on the wrist and he was moved back onto campus (on to the floor above us) without any warning or even mention to us."

“It’s frustrating how obvious admin is about the disparities between investigations of SA and any other violation. When a group of students were accused of drinking, with no physical evidence just personal testimony, admin pulled in multiple people from the friend group to question privately and searched their rooms. In recent cases of SA on campus, admin, if they do anything at all, just questioned the accused person and the victim. Admin should keep the same energy they do for alcohol on campus. Question their friends, go through their phone, and go through their room. Doing just one of these things would show that the men on this campus that are SAing people talk about it openly and have no remorse. But admin doesn’t do that. They just tell girls that with no evidence all they can do is rearrange your schedule so you don’t have any classes with him. But how does that bring justice? How does that protect other girls from the same fate? It doesn’t. Admin’s claim that there’s nothing to be done without proof is baseless when you realize that no other campus violation requires evidence before a thorough investigation can even begin. Admin is just trying to silence survivors’ voices.”

“I know he’s (name of assaulter) SA at least two other girls on this campus and i’m appalled he would do something like that after hearing about my story. I think if anything happened to me I wouldn’t go to admin because of their lack of support, and constant shaming of the victim. There needs to be more support and resources for victims and assaulters need to face consequence”

“I had a very poor experience at the beginning of the year with my counselor, after sharing with her my SA story that had long been resolved externally. (name of counselor), My counselor seemed to not even try to empathize with me or what was going on in my life. A month or so into the year, she denied me a counsel out, when I was feeling physically ill due to my anxiety, and its caused me to stray from using the counseling department for anything until quite recently. I instead would clinic out, as I was truly feeling nausea of some kind due to my anxiety, but it is sad that I had to go about it that way, as opposed to actually having support on campus with my counselor.”

“As a survivor, the general lack of work to keep the campus safe is appalling. Even in my home high school I had teachers that were willing to help me find ways to avoid situations that made me uncomfortable and triggering, while here the administration continues to dismiss the events that occur. I survived my attack through talking to trusting adults, but the continual victim blaming not only makes it difficult to discuss on campus, but makes me feel unwelcome.”

“I was a victim of sexual assault by someone on this campus during the first week I was ever at NCSSM. I made it clear that I was uninterested in doing something and was coerced into doing it, while there were tears streaming down my face. I don’t necessarily have a grievance with admin per se, but i’m terrified if I ever came forward it would be brushed off and I don’t believe it’s even worth it anymore. I’ve been gaslit on facebook about how they did not believe it was “sexual assault” and how it was just good ole “teenage blueballery”. They were extremely rude. 0/10. I’ve confronted them and said my piece but I still hate it. Why does this happen? Truly it’s so upsetting to think it happens to so many people on this campus. I just wish there was a way to deal with this where I would actually feel heard. I’m so scared of just being brushed off like everyone else. Additionally, students on facebook were extremely rude regarding the situation and I even had a student who literally posted a continuation of the post and then privately messaged me and was like “srry this is hard for u, if u want i’ll take it down” but i was so annoyed because they literally j wanted drama and to be part of it, they didn’t even seem to care that i did NOT want people talking about it on facebook. Overall a toxic experience.”

Student Experiences Related to Inconsistencies with Disciplinary Procedures:

“I was falsely charged with a level without any video evidence presented of me being there at the time. They have no video proof that me or the other person involved were there at the time of the incident and only have circumstantial evidence to indict me and the other person. I now have a level II which makes it a level III for me because of said charges and I didn't even do anything.”

“Last year, during cohort b, my friends and I made a stupid decision and drank on campus. It was within the first few days that we got here and everything was new and it was our first time away from home. We ended up not being able to reach one of our friends because we later learned their phone was dead, but we knew they had been drinking and were scared that they were in a bad/dangerous situation. One of us alerted Bryan desk and requested amnesty on all of our behalves; Not only were we not given amnesty when it should have applied, but we were also sent home on interim separation. In the handbook, interim separation is described as something they do when a student or the community are in danger until the hearing can take place. Me, a teenager who just came to boarding school and left home for the first time was considered and danger to the ncsm community for making a stupid decision and then asking for help. I would like for that to be justified to me because I went to admin about being sexually assaulted TWICE and when I gave them a name my assaulter was not placed on interim separation immediately, and now that they are, they are allowed to come back to campus before the hearing, despite all of the victims wishes and safety. I got kicked out of this school last year and had my entire junior year experience taken from me for something so minuscule compared to what [name of assaulter] did to me and two other girls, yet I was presumed guilty until proven innocent and him innocent until proven guilty. The administration has only further victimized people who have come to them for help and reporting a danger to campus. I am disgusted with the way this school has treated me.”

“I was recently very loosely involved with an investigation and was interrogated by (name of CC). I was called into the office and before I even opened my laptop, because I had received a level for having people in my room, she very condescendingly said something along the lines of “you know how this works right” which I took great offense to because it seemed like she assumed that I frequently broke rules and by association was guilty of whatever she was trying to accuse me of. She proceeded to interrogate me for over half an hour even though my name was mentioned in a group chat that was involved with the case once. After about ten minutes of interrogation her questions strayed far from anything that seemed relevant to the situation at hand. She asked me things ranging from where I was when I received texts from a friend that was involved, what my relationship with a person that person was, why they reached out to me specifically, and why I did not question them during the interaction (even though I had stated at least ten times throughout the interview that it was very late at night and they were already at Bryan lobby so they were clearly occupied). In addition, she seemed extremely suspicious when I was able to identify the name of the group chat (as if this is some advanced skill or something) and asked me if I knew any of the members of the group chat that I was not in (like so what if I did?). Overall this CC was just unreasonably persistent and unpleasant, I just repeated the same information for like 20 minutes while I was getting absolutely berated by this woman for doing absolutely nothing. I even asked friends that were interviewed for the same situation and they said that their interviews were significantly shorter and they were only asked 5 or so questions as opposed to the 20+ I was asked.”

“during my leveling process they treated me as guilty until proven innocent and borderline dehumanized me over a false report that someone made out of pettiness.”

“ the handbook states: “If the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs or the Vice Chancellor for Student Life witnesses or is made aware of any serious violation(s) which may impact the health or safety of any member of the NCSSM community, including, but not limited to, possession, trafficking and/or use of drugs or alcohol; possession or use of a weapon; or behavior which threatens the safety of a student, staff member or property, the Vice Chancellor may immediately send the student home to his or her parent or legal guardian. If the misconduct involves alcohol use or possession, the Vice Chancellor will decide, depending on the circumstances, if such a separation is warranted. This interim separation measure is not a penalty, and is not proof of the student’s responsibility for the misconduct. The interim separation may occur prior to the issuance of a formal charge regarding the conduct.”

There is a specific case on campus regarding an assailant currently being investigated by the school is returning to campus and was not put on interim separation by the school. There are also multiple instances of students being caught drinking and being sent home as soon as their parents can get there, sometimes 2am-3am. This strongly contradicts the aforementioned quote. The question arises amongst the student body if NCSSM takes drinking as seriously as they do sexual assault? It appears that the safety of the campus is more at risk from a few students drinking compared to a chronic assaulter in the eyes of NCSSM. “

“Admin is too worried about leveling students drinking alcohol or breaking COVID guidelines (going into other rooms) than the fact there are students here getting sexually assaulted. Their focus is in the wrong place and more people need to know. I’m not condoning breaking the rules but when you look at it this way, something needs to be done. Admin needs to stop brushing off sexual assault. Drinking alcohol or doing drugs could be a coping mechanism for the people who got sexually assaulted and yet, that’s the only thing admin will focus on. Not the cause but the effect.”

“A ‘friend’ quite literally flashed a group of students, then when the students said how fucked up that is he started arguing with them. The group consensus ended up being not to report him because students were afraid he would snitch on them for breaking covid guidelines and other rules. Why do students have to decide between getting justice and not getting leveled? Amnesty does not apply in situations like this.”

“Admin claims to care for the well-being of students, but when there is an actual concern, they continuously fail to successfully address and resolve a situation, which in turn leads to many students not feeling comfortable sharing important issues on campus, or even worse, many students left with higher stress and anxiety. One event in particular that I would like to address is the way the site Advocate is used and how admin goes about responding to these reports. I was woken up at 1:30 in the morning on a Saturday night to my roommate telling me to get up out of bed and get dressed because a CC said we had to go to Bryan Lobby to be questioned for an anonymous report about us, and several other students in different rooms, drinking on hall. The report came out of nowhere as I had been asleep ever since check that night, and there was no suspicion or concern in our room that would make someone think we were drinking. I had heard in previous years, and from the handbook, that drinking on campus is not a light issue, it’s a major problem that the school has to investigate. I understand that admin has the authority to investigate these issues as they are technically our guardians as we are minors. However, my problem, and several other students agree, is that admin doesn’t take into consideration the causes and effects

that lead to a certain issue like this. For example, in the situation I described above, it was later found out that we had been reported because there was a concern for our safety. If safety was the issue, then why did 8+ people get called into questioning multiple times, and not once did an ounce of concern come from any authority figure. I, and everyone else involved, were scared that we would get serious repercussions thrown at us for a single anonymous report that wasn't even true. Is that really what admin wants? Not to mention how almost everyone involved has serious mental health issues, and this high anxiety inducing situation only made things worse. If admin actually cared for our safety, they would do a better job of investing and confronting potential serious issues/concerns, responding to reports, and just overall being open and honest with the student body and community. At the end of the day, we are kids, high school students. We make mistakes, and even though we're "NC's best and brightest", a lot of us act stupid. We are already stressed, tired, and anxious. We shouldn't live in a community where we feel like we have our mouths shut closed by the fears of admin only seeking punishment and not recovery. I'm tired of hearing horror stories from the way admin deals with situations, I'm tired of hearing people be conflicted over whether or not they should go to admin about a sexual assault incident because they're scared to get in trouble, I'm tired of seeing my friends anxious and stressed, and lastly, I'm tired. We are all so tired. I came to this school for a better future and I will achieve that, but if nothing changes about the way this school is ran, you won't get an ounce of my support in the future, because we never get that, support, from admin."

General Student Complaints Regarding Lack of Support:

"I have personally been ignored over email and then laughed at and yelled at in person by Registrar. I have been repeatedly misgendered by (name of counselor) in counseling, and he continues to forget everything about my mental health that I've told him despite me visiting his office many times over the span of about two months. In almost every exchange I've had with a person in administration, I have been spoken to in a manner that is condescending at best, and outright aggressive at worst. This cannot stand. I am far from the only one, and these are far from the worst examples I know of. It is to the point where this school, which was supposed to be a hopeful and safe place where I could learn and explore new topics, is now a place where I feel I am constantly unsupported, looked down upon, alone, and in concrete physical and mental danger. If this sentiment, which I know is shared by many on this campus, does not reach and inspire change in the hearts of the people in charge of the North Carolina School of Science and Math, I am not convinced that anything could."

"Despite me reaching out multiple times to my CC to even see if my roommate was alive, my CC refused to tell me anything (roommate didn't have her phone, either), and I didn't hear if my roommate was okay until late October/early November. When my roommate came back full time, during J-Term, she still needed support, and my CC had consistently not been there for her or I during the time she was re-entering living on campus."

"My roommate was kind of just left alone to figure out a lot of things for the first time, since she hadn't been living here for a while, without the support or advice of my CC. Other students on my hall feel the same. My CC has a significant lack of presence and communication on hall, and my other hallmates have hesitated to reach out to her because they know she won't do anything to help them."

"(name of administrator) was supposed to be in charge of helping get students connectivity options with bad wifi, which is not my parents fault. We live in a rural area and the connection is just normally bad and we have tried everything but the towers in our area just aren't great. One of my teachers told me to reach out to her since my zoom connection was bad last year during a virtual cohort and she literally was like "okay get better internet"

“I went on a j term trip with (name of administrator) and she literally ruined my entire experience because of how mean she was. She made me cry in the airport when she told me and another student that we should have never been accepted to ncsm and that we didn’t perform as well as students from years past and that were babies that blame everything on Covid. I was also screamed at for asking for clarification on one of her rules. My personal favorite, however, would have to be when she came in my hotel room and told me guys didn’t like girls with my body type because I was too tall and skinny (I’ve suffered with anorexia for the past 5 years btw)”

“The fact that (name of teacher) is still here is appalling. I was one of two girls in my team sports class and I ALWAYS felt his eyes on me and it made me feel incredibly uncomfortable. Almost a year later I was talking to a guy in my class and he pointed out how uncomfortable it had made him seeing (name of teacher) staring at me all the time. I know others who have brought him to admin and still nothing has been done.”

“Some of my close friends struggle with mental health and it falls on me and others because admin does not do a good job of creating any sort of security in this incredibly intense and fast moving environment. There should be more interaction between admin and faculty to better allow for recovery in academics.”

“In early September, my roommate attempted suicide on campus. This was before we got the chance to really get to know each other, we were still a little awkward and didn’t share too much of our personal information, so she didn’t tell me she was thinking about attempting. I had noticed a few weeks before that she had been struggling a little, staying up very late, missing classes, not speaking to me as much, etc., and reached out to an RLA for advice. My RLA told me that she would talk to my CC, but nothing ever happened. The night, or a couple of nights after she attempted, my CC emailed me to say that she wouldn’t be back for a while with no other details. I figured this was to do with her mental health, and didn’t want to push for details because of her privacy and confidentiality laws, and I thought that I would get more information about if she was okay/when she was coming back later, once things had calmed down. I didn’t. Despite me reaching out multiple times to my CC to even see if my roommate was alive, my CC refused to tell me anything (roommate didn’t have her phone, either), and I didn’t hear if my roommate was okay until late October/early November. When my roommate came back full time, during J-Term, she still needed support, and my CC had consistently not been there for her or I during the time she was re-entering living on campus. My roommate was kind of just left alone to figure out a lot of things for the first time, since she hadn’t been living here for a while, without the support or advice of my CC.

Other students on my hall feel the same. My CC has a significant lack of presence and communication on hall, and my other hallmates have hesitated to reach out to her because they know she won’t do anything to help them.”

“At my previous school, I was sexually harassed and assaulted. To the point that I was diagnosed with a variety of mental health disorders directly because of what happened to me. On my first day on campus, I had a pretty triggering event that led me to meet with my cap counselor. The meeting went well and they seemed really receptive and as though they would help me, but in the coming weeks it became pretty clear that there would be no additional resources for me to access. My family had asked to be given resources for local therapists and instead, I meet with a personal counselor who did not have the training to deal with what I was handling on a day-to-day bases. After my first meeting, I realized I would receive any more help. While at the beginning of the year, I was open to healing, I have stopped talking about what happened to me since. I think what also is so damaging to me is I came here to get a better education and to escape a place where I was

terrified all the time. Now, I relieve the trauma whenever I sit next to guys who I know have sexually assaulted girls. My grade started to slip in one of my classes, but I don't know if anyone will help if I reach out.

“I was in a P.E. class and the teacher kept making really inappropriate comments about girls. Honestly, I blocked most of it out, but I do remember quite vividly him saying that we were weaker and making us do extra reps. He will always stare at the girls while they're working out. He tried to touch me to like help me lift a weight which creeped me out and caused me to have a panic attack. I went to admin, but he still watches me whenever I work out. It's so creepy and to my knowledge, they never did anything about the comments he was making about the girls in class.”

“Counseling just listens to your problems, but there's barely any action taken unless you specifically say that you want to kill yourself. Regardless if I reach out or not, it's not just me that's struggling. Numerous friends have told me that they felt the same way. They just don't have the time for themselves to even take a breath due to all their academic work and extracurriculars. In addition, the school's decision is to increase our workload and add in an additional block for classes next year will do nothing but be more harmful to students.”

“Admin has refused to acknowledge the damage that (name of teacher) has caused to many AFAB people in his class. He has made inappropriate comments towards me and multiple people I know while working out.”

“This school makes it unbelievably difficult to ask for help and receive support. For many years, I've struggled to ask for help from adults in my life, which mostly stems from the flaws of the school system as a whole. This is something I have worked on in therapy recently, so I found myself utilizing some of the resources available at this school when I would usually try to just power through whatever I'm struggling with mentally. For example, at the beginning of the year I was placed into a class that I was not comfortable in, the way the class was formatted gave me a lot of anxiety and I had several panic attacks during class throughout the year. After about two weeks into the class I decided to reach out to the registrar to switch classes, and made my reasons known to both the registrar's office and the teacher of the class. Ultimately I was unable to switch because my grade in the class was satisfactory, despite the mental health issues it was causing me. I know that this sort of problem isn't very significant compared to the problems with the schools response to sexual assault, but I still wish that the school prioritized student well being over our grades. Having my good grades used as an example of why I'm doing ok is totally unfair.”

“It's easily understood that classes are very stressful but it feels like there's no place for students that don't enjoy a required class. I've never liked humanity classes and every time a major essay comes around I get sent into a downward spiral of depression and then my grades drop in every other class. I'm just told to keep pushing through and get the work done which just drains my mental health even more. There's no real help to give us a well needed mental break. Extended weekends are spent making up work or dealing with family and many times both. I'm not the only student that thinks this and I appreciate our councilors, but we need an actual mental break sometimes.”

“The fact that (name of teacher) is still here is appalling. I was one of two girls in my team sports class and I ALWAYS felt his eyes on me and it made me feel incredibly uncomfortable. Almost a year later I was talking to a guy in my class and he pointed out how uncomfortable it had made him seeing (name of teacher) staring at me all the time. I know others who have brought him to admin and still nothing has been done. Additionally, last year he NEVER wore a mask properly.”

Demands

- 1) Require that NCSSM hire a Title IX Coordinator as its own independent position; they should be someone who has a knowledgeable background and experience working with Title IX.
 - a) Require NCSSM to hire separate Title IX coordinators for each campus, as each campus has their own student body.
 - b) Require hired Title IX Coordinators to have extensive background and experience working with Title IX.
 - c) Require NCSSM to make Title IX Coordinators independent from other responsibilities on campus. Title IX Coordinators hired should not be in a conflict of interest, so they should not be: a member on the disciplinary hearing board, dean of student life, student life instructor, community coordinators, or academic instructor, or serve any other role on any campus .
- 2) Request that NCSSM make the contact information, credentials, and investigative procedures of all third-party investigators brought onto the Title IX process available and accessible, in order to provide a line of transparency to the community.
 - a) If NCSSM Title IX is unable to publish contact information and credentials for a consistent Title IX investigator, require that all Title IX investigators historically consulted by NCSSM have their contact information publicly available.
- 3) Request that NCSSM hire Harassment-Free to evaluate current policies and suggest revisions.
- 4) Require that NCSSM promote continuous Title IX education throughout the school year, beyond the beginning of the year orientation. Examples of continuous Title IX education include but are not limited to: consent education on residence halls and Title IX procedure educational sessions.
- 5) Require that NCSSM make edits to the Student Code of Conduct to fill in gaps left in System Title IX policies (i.e. cases that still constitute misconduct but do not fall within the specific guidelines set by Title IX).
 - a) In cases where the respondent is not guilty of Title IX violation.
- 6) Require that NCSSM provide sufficient (as determined by the student) and specific counseling targeted towards survivors of sexual assault, whether internally or externally, extending beyond general personal counseling.
- 7) Request that NCSSM take into consideration all aspects of the student's safety (including the safety of the student's home) before sending a student home due to mental health concerns (i.e. in the case that the student's home life is a contributing factor to their deteriorating mental health), to ensure the student's individual safety is at the same level of consideration as that of the community.

- 8) Require that NCSSM provide a hearing board (composed of one Community Coordinator, one senior student, and one faculty member) as an alternative option to a hearing officer in the case of a Level II violation.
- 9) Require that NCSSM publicly confirm the internal monitoring of statistics including but not limited to: number of student suicide attempts on campus, students sent home cited for reasons related to mental health, and Title IX allegations.