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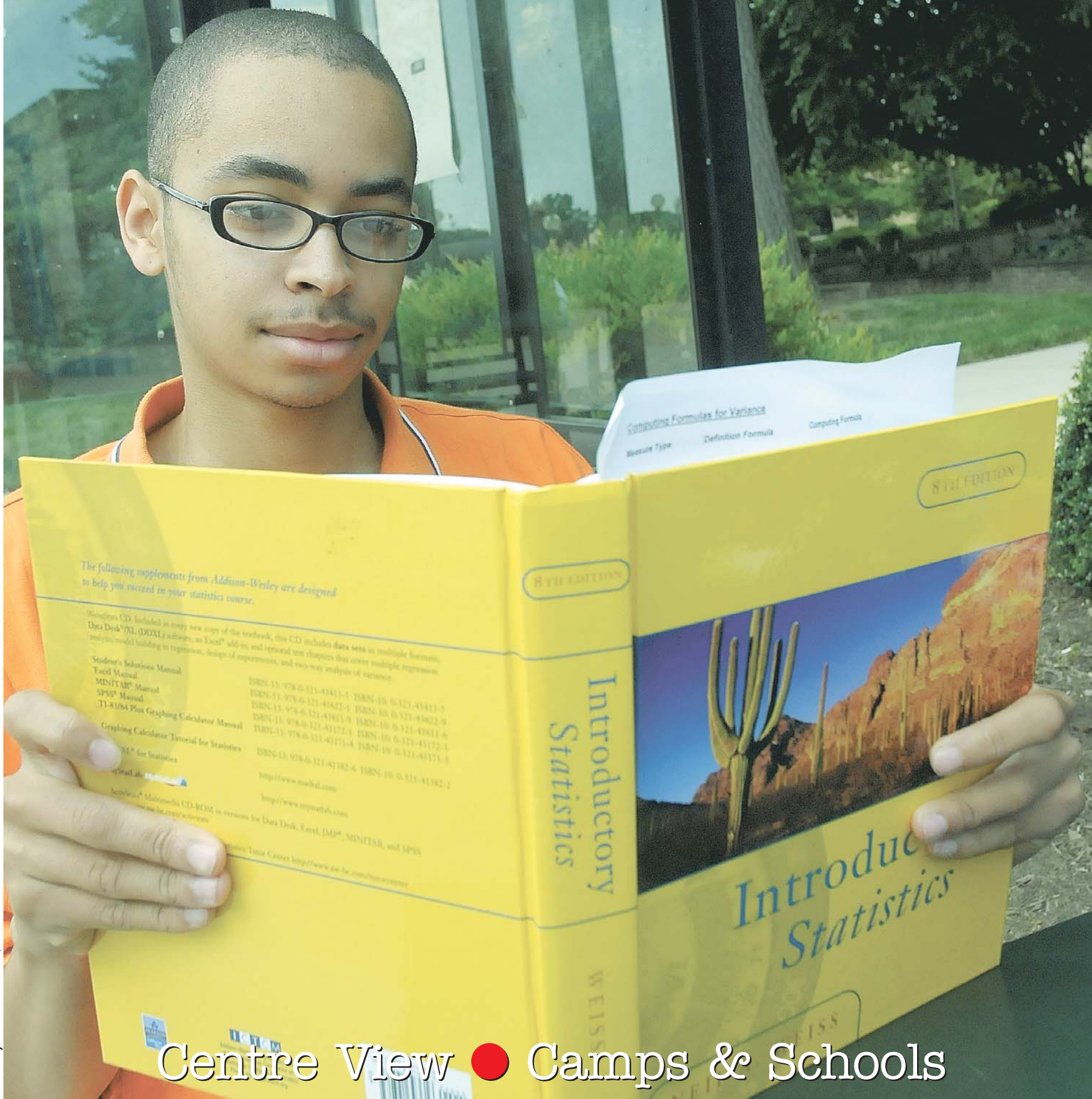


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Conductor Cheryl Cooley with her student musicians at Centreville High's May concert.

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Conductor Cheryl Cooley

Arisa Ishita and Jihyun Kim perform Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Violins at Centreville High School's May concert.

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● On The Cover

Photo by Louise Krafft/Connection
 Kyle Hollis looks over his statistics textbook in between classes at Northern Virginia Community College. Students who attend NVCC can achieve guaranteed admission to some of Virginia's top colleges and universities.

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NVCC

'Guarantees'

Community college graduates with certain GPA, courses, can win automatic acceptance.

By **Julia O'Donoghue**
The Connection

When Suzanne Spatz graduated from Woodson Secondary School in 2007, her family knew she wouldn't be able to attend a four-year college or university right away.

Even though she received excellent grades in high school, Spatz suffered from Lyme disease and was too sick to go away to college at the time. So the teenager opted to attend Northern Virginia Community College and live at home while her health stabilized.

"We never would have thought about it until she became ill," said Melody Spatz, about the decision to enroll her daughter, Suzanne, at a community college.

Both Melody Spatz and her husband had attended the University of Virginia and always assumed their children would enroll in traditional four-year undergraduate programs. Initially, Melody Spatz worried Suzanne would not be an attractive transfer applicant for selective four-year universities because she would be coming from a community college.

BUT Suzanne Spatz's time at Northern Virginia Community College helped, rather than hindered, her admission to one of the top public universities in the country.

The teenager was automatically accepted to the University of Virginia after meeting all the requirements laid out in a "guaranteed admissions" agreement between Northern Virginia Community College and the highly competitive state school in Charlottesville.

The arrangement allows the community college graduates to bypass the regular application process and ensure their transfer to the University of Virginia if they meet certain academic thresholds while earning their associate's degree.



Pre-med students Aisha Bashir and Rabia Aslam relax in the courtyard between classes on the Northern Virginia Community College Annandale campus.

Photo by Louise Krafft/Connection

Find Out More

For more information on Northern Virginia Community College's guaranteed admission program, see www.nvcc.edu/about-nova/directories-offices/administrative-offices/academic/guaranteed-adm/

Students like Spatz, who earn a grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.4 on a 4.0 scale, can be assured a slot at the University of Virginia through the arrangement.

In addition to the GPA cut off, the students must earn at least a "C" or higher in all of their community college classes and a "B" or higher in two required English courses. They also have to take a certain number of community college credit hours in foreign language, social science, humanities and historical studies. They must enroll in at least one "non-

Western perspective" course.

"I am very happy that I did it. It was kind of nice to know I could guarantee my admissions somewhere," said Spatz.

IN ADDITION to the University of Virginia, about 38 other colleges and universities have signed "guaranteed admissions" agreements with Northern Virginia Community College over the last two years.

Some of the schools participating are among the state's most prestigious – including the College of William & Mary, Virginia Tech, James Madison University, George Mason University, The George Washington University and Georgetown University.

See **NVCC**, Page 6

Transfer, Guaranteed

Northern Virginia Community College students earning an associate's degree can earn guaranteed admission to many four-year colleges, including UVA and William and Mary, if they meet certain course requirements and earn a certain grade point average (GPA.)

Those who use the community college's "guaranteed admissions" program transfer into undergraduate programs as juniors because the credits earned for their associate's degree count toward their freshman and sophomore years of school.

The exact GPA and extra course requirements needed for automatic admission vary, depending on the university or college the student wishes to attend.

Here is a list of schools that will automatically accept Northern Virginia Community College graduates if certain requirements are met, including the following GPA threshold:

| School | GPA Needed |
|--|-------------|
| Art Institute of Washington | None listed |
| Christopher Newport University | 3.5 |
| College of William & Mary | 3.6 |
| ECPI College of Technology | 2.5 |
| Emory & Henry College | 2.5 |
| Ferrum College | 2.0 |
| George Mason University | 2.75 |
| Georgetown University - Liberal Studies | 3.0 |
| The George Washington University - Pharmacogenomics | 3.0 |
| Hollins University | 2.5 |
| James Madison University | 3.0 |
| Liberty University | 2.0 |
| Longwood University | 2.5 |
| Lynchburg College | 2.0 * |
| Mary Baldwin College | 2.5 |
| Marymount University - Business Administration | 2.5 |
| Marymount University - Interior Design | None listed |
| National-Louis University | 2.5 |
| Norfolk State University | 2.0 |
| Nyack College | 2.0 |
| Old Dominion University | None listed |
| Park University | None listed |
| Radford University | 2.8 |
| Randolph College | 3.0 |
| Regent University | 2.0 |
| Regis University | 2.0 |
| Strayer University | 2.0 |
| Sweet Briar College | 2.5 |
| Trinity University (Washington D.C.) | 2.5 |
| Troy University | 2.0 |
| United States Sports Academy | 2.0 |
| University of Mary Washington | 3.25 |
| University of Virginia - College of Arts and Sciences | 3.4 |
| University of Virginia's College at Wise | 2.5 |
| Virginia Commonwealth University | 2.5 ** |
| Virginia State University | 2.0 |
| Virginia Tech | 3.4 |
| Virginia Tech - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences | 3.0 |
| Virginia Tech - College of Engineering | 3.0 |
| Virginia Union University | 2.0 |
| Virginia Wesleyan College | 2.5 |

*Community college students earning a 3.5 GPA or higher will automatically receive a \$10,000 scholarship to Lynchburg, students earning a 3.0 to 3.49 GPA will receive a \$7,500 scholarship to Lynchburg, students earning a 2.5 to 2.99 GPA will receive a \$5,000 scholarship to Lynchburg

**Community college students earning a 2.75 GPA or higher will be eligible to compete for a special scholarship at Virginia Commonwealth University

Scouts Update Their Status

Away-from-home experience at summer camp has changed with today's technology.

By Jason Mackey
The Connection

Katie Thompson and her Girl Scout troop had been in the middle of a 10-mile hike along the Massanutten Trail 19 months ago when they had to stop for a moment. It wasn't as if someone was tired or needed a drink of water. The view from one of the mountain's ridges, quite frankly, was too much. Once at a standstill, members of the group peered out over the ridge, which bisects the Shenandoah Valley and overlooks Luray, Va. This was a moment and a view unlike many the teenage girls from Fairfax Station and Lorton had ever seen and it had to be recorded for posterity. Bragging, as fingers started to make contact with buttons on the girls' cell phones, would be required.

"I really enjoyed being able to do that," said Thompson, who, along with her troop, started snapping pictures and calling friends to remember the moment. "Before, if you didn't have the technology to do that, it's

really hard to show other people how exciting girl scouting can be. Some people may think that it's really boring and lame, but really it's an awesome experience that helps you out later in life."

"In a time where we're always trying to encourage girls to stay in Girl Scouts and [we're trying to] recruit Girl Scouts, what greater publicity is there than having one girl call a friend and say, 'This is so cool ... look what I'm doing,'" said troop leader Barb Hunter.

Indeed, cutting-edge technology has been welcomed within Troop 5002. Hunter, who works for the Air Force during the day and is an admitted "geek at heart," wouldn't have it any other way. In fact, the group has embraced Facebook as a way to organize troop activities and even publishes a daily E-Newsletter to send to parents, recapping what happened that day at camp.

Well aware that beginning an over-dinner conversation with one's teenage daughter might rival a difficult mountain climb, Hunter started the Daily Prophet E-Newsletter program

as a way for parents to have a few talking points ahead of time. It's also a way for the girls to do something together at camp that might not involve glue sticks and crayons.

"I love embracing technology with the girls," said Hunter. In addition to working as her own troop's leader, Hunter is responsible for training a cadre of group leaders. Technology, as she eventually learned, has always been a point of contention among those in charge.

"It's interesting when we talk training, there are some old-school folks that say, 'I prohibit cell phones,'" Hunter said, "and I'll say, 'Let's talk about that.' Because these girls ... that's part of their very being.

"Some old-school folks say, 'I prohibit cell phones,' and I'll say, 'Let's talk about that.'"

— Barb Hunter,
Girl Scout Troop 5002

nectivity ... see you in a week.' I know some enjoy that quite well."

Like many, Hargreaves doesn't have a carved-in-stone rule when it comes to the use of cell phones; he does, however, recommend that his scouts leave them at home.

Hargreaves did say that sometimes it's the parents who have the toughest time adjusting. Often, there will be parents unable because of work to go a few days with checking e-mail or monitoring text messages, which will result in a scurry for the nearest cell phone signal or Wi-Fi access point — not a restroom.

Scott Romans, the leader for Springfield-based Troop 1518, said that as a leader, having a cell phone provides him with a bit of assurance, knowing that if something did happen, help would not be all that far away.

"When it's distracting to the main point of the activity, we'll suggest that [the cell phone] be put away," Romans said. "Having said that, let me tell you that as a leader, when you go out camping with scouts, the ability to use a cell phone is reassuring."

YET WHILE Hunter views technology as a vital part of the scouting experience, others have been holding out as long as possible. Stephen Hargreaves, the troop leader for Boy Scout Troop 893 in Centreville, views scouting expeditions as a way to get away from technology and a way to re-connect with nature.

"They get enough of it at home, and when they're here, we're trying to get them to do scout things," Hargreaves said. "We're away from it for a week where we can't be contacted. It's pretty much, 'Hey, I'm at scout camp in the middle of nowhere with no con-



Photo courtesy of Doug Donnell

At Marriott Ridge in Fauquier County, Ben Clark, right, and Jonathan Bocktler from Troop 1018 learn to build a fire. Doug Donnell, the troop's leader, started a blog three years ago to recount a trip to Switzerland for those back home, 'It was very well received,' he says.



Photo courtesy of Barb Hunter

Members of Barb Hunter's Girl Scout troop 5002 take a break during a recent whitewater rafting trip. They are, from left, Quinn Kratovil, Katie Ray, Amy McCormack, Jennie Allen and Kaylee Ahnberg.

THREE YEARS ago, Doug Donnell took his Troop 1018 to Switzerland for two weeks. With international cell phone restrictions, Donnell knew that his Boy Scouts likely wouldn't communicate all that much with those back home, so he decided to try a

rather innovative idea: He started a blog.

Troop member Dan Carew volunteered to write and blogged, posting daily updates and photos, from Switzerland. It was a hit. Parents logged on to read about what the children

from Reston, Herndon and Great Falls were doing and how the trip was going.

"It was very well received," Donnell said.

This year, troop member Harry White will carry on the tradition as Donnell and Co. will travel to Switzerland again July 16-29.

Members of Donnell's troop have also been some of the first to earn merit badges based on computer literacy. When his son William Donnell earned his merit badge for the program, he had to draw a map of the scout camp in Goshen, Va.

William Donnell, meanwhile, took things a step farther, drawing a three-dimensional, interactive map of his surroundings with a video game called Operation Flashpoint. A former computer science major at Virginia Tech, the project wasn't all that hard for someone like Donnell.

"I was just having fun with it, and I like computer stuff so it was pretty easy for me to get carried away," he said. "I had more fun with the map than I did with the game. It was definitely above and beyond using a computer to draw a

map."

MIKE DONAGHUE remembers the days when he used to have to travel more than 5 miles from the Goshen Scout Reservation to the community's public library just to check his e-mail. Every third day, Goshen said, he'd power on a computer and flip through his messages.

Now, Goshen is one of the few, if not the only, scout sites that houses its own computer lab. Twelve Dell desktops were installed four years ago so Goshen could offer the merit badge program that William Donnell breezed through.

After breakfast every morning the computer lab fills to capacity, Donaghue said. Scouts are permitted to access the computers, whether it's researching material for another badge or completing the computer-oriented badge program. It's a scenario that Donaghue envisioned when the computers were donated by McLean-based Booz Allen Hamilton.

"We wouldn't have built it if we didn't think it would be an attractor," Donaghue said. "We're not aware of any other camp that's outfitted like we are, especially with this particular technology center. I guess we're maybe a little more advanced."



Photo courtesy of Barb Hunter

Quinn Kratovil, from left, Kaylee Ahnberg and Amy McCormack light a ceremonial candle. In Troop 5002, leader Barb Hunter has tried to integrate technology into the scouting experience. 'I love embracing technology with the girls,' says Hunter.



Photo courtesy of Doug Donnell

During Boy Scout Troop 1018's hike through the Shenandoah National Park to prepare for an upcoming trip to Switzerland, Joseph White looks over a map, as his son, Harry White looks on.

NVCC 'Guarantees'

From Page 3

“The arrangement covers some private and virtually all the public institutions in Virginia, except for [Virginia Military Institute],” said Bob Templin, president of Northern Virginia Community College.

Required coursework and GPA cut offs for automatic acceptance vary, depending on which four-year college or university a student would like to attend. But all students are obligated to earn an associate’s degree before taking advantage of the “guaranteed admissions” arrangement.

Students who take some community college classes but do not earn their associate’s degree are not eligible for “guaranteed admissions” and have to use the traditional application process at all colleges and universities who participate in the program.

According to Templin, students who earn an associate’s degree tend to perform better academically at four-year institutions.

“When you complete the degree program, your chances of doing well at the university are much better than if you come in and sample a few courses before transferring,” said Templin.

AS THE PUBLIC hears more about the “guaranteed admissions” arrangements, Northern Virginia Community College will become more popular among students who have always intended to earn a bachelor’s degree, said officials.

Competition to get into Virginia’s top-tier state colleges and universities has grown so fierce among Northern Virginia high school students that even one of the South County Secondary School’s recent valedictorians was not able to get into the University of Virginia.

“For students who are interested in going to some of the more selective universities in the state, this is a huge opportunity. For a lot of students, they find it difficult to get into these institutions from Northern Virginia,” said Greg Schuckman, president of the Northern Virginia Community College’s Board of Trustees.

Despite being a good student, Spatz said she is unsure she would have been accepted to the University of Virginia directly out of high school.

“If I had applied to UVA out of high school, I honestly probably wouldn’t have gotten in. My grades were pretty good but my SAT scores were not very

good and I couldn’t take as many [Advanced Placement] courses as I normally would have because of my health,” said Spatz, who graduated from Northern Virginia Community College’s honors program with almost a perfect 4.0 GPA.

STUDENTS WHO are accepted to four-year undergraduate programs could also save a lot of money by attending community college for two years and transferring to a four-year school for the second half of their undergraduate program.

Community college graduates who use the “guaranteed admissions” program are given the same academic standing as a regular junior when they transfer to their new school. They could graduate in the same amount of time as students who attended the four-year institution for their entire undergraduate career, thereby saving a lot of money.

“[Northern Virginia Community College] is cheaper than any other school in our area and it can save our students a ton of money. ... They pay less in tuition. They can stay at home and not pay room and board costs. And they can maintain their current job,” said Joan Zanders, Northern Virginia Community College’s director of financial aid.

“I am very happy that I did it. It was nice to know I could guarantee my admissions somewhere.”

— Suzanne Spatz

The two-year school’s tuition is approximately \$105 per credit hour compared to approximately \$573 per credit hour at George Mason, \$282 per credit hour at Virginia Tech and \$790 per credit hour at the University of Virginia, according to those school’s Web sites.

“We are a good option for lots of folks who would normally go to a four-year school directly but are having a difficult time because of the economic crisis. ... You can still get the degree of your choice but, for two years, you will have much lower tuition.” said George Gabriel, vice president for college

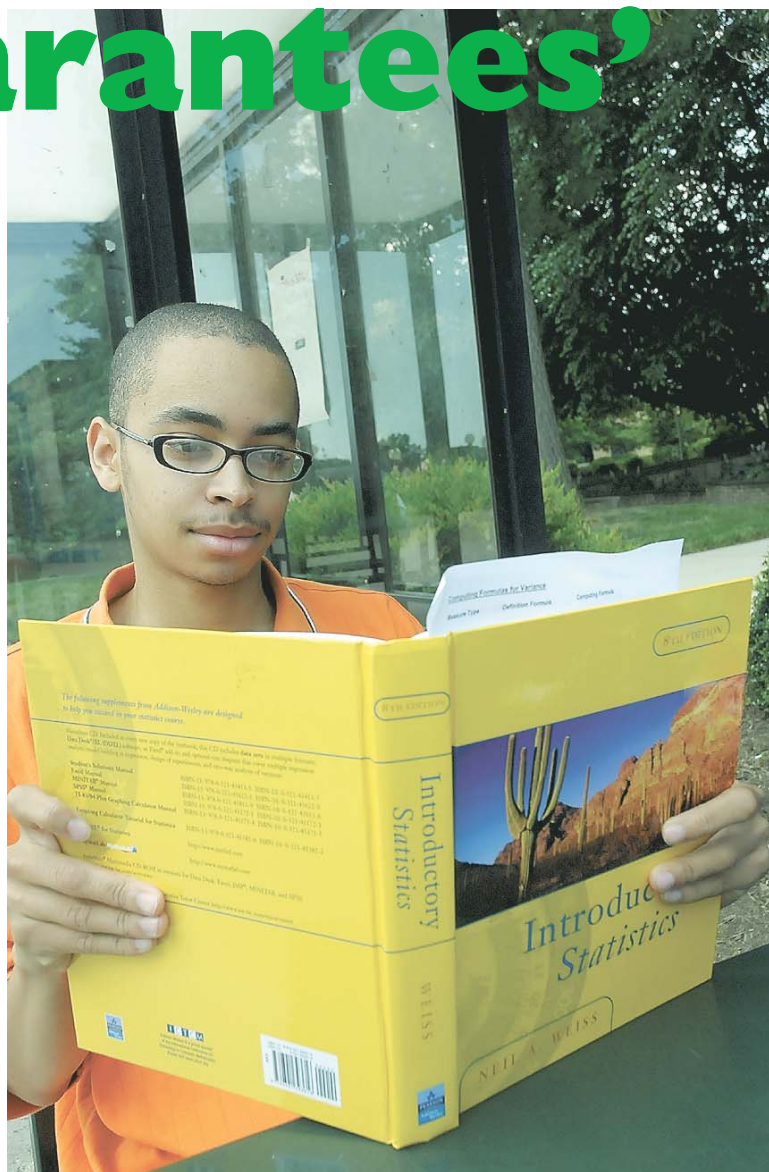


Photo by Louise Krafft/Connection

Kyle Hollis looks over his statistics textbook in between classes at Northern Virginia Community College.

advancement at Northern Virginia Community College.

NOT ONLY is it more affordable but students who perform well at Northern Virginia Community College tend to be very good pupils at four-year schools.

The University of Virginia found Northern Virginia Community College graduates who transferred to their programs achieved as much or more than those who came to the school directly from high school, said Schuckman.

George Mason University found similar results when it compared community college transfers to its other undergraduates, said Andrew Flagel, Mason’s director of admissions.

“There is a pretty strong correlation between a student’s GPA at a community college and a student’s GPA at a four-year college. Actually, the indicators we have for student success from high school – their GPA and test scores – are very weak predictors of how they will do in college,” said Flagel.

THERE IS some fine print to read as students navigate the guaranteed admissions program.

The guaranteed admissions arrangements do not always apply to specialized or highly competitive programs at a

particular college or university.

For example, McLean resident William Law was interested in using the guaranteed admissions arrangement at the University of Virginia, until he discovered it did not apply to the school’s business program, the McIntire School of Commerce.

“Since I had my heart set on getting into McIntire, I did not want to make a binding agreement with any other college/program,” said Law, who will attend the business school next fall, in an e-mail. “I think the [guaranteed admissions] are an excellent tool and certainly a major selling point for those considering NVCC. When I talk to people about NVCC, that is generally one of the first things I mention.”

But Melody Spatz said it can often be very difficult to keep up with all the

requirements and deadlines associated with the guaranteed admissions agreements. For example, students have to send a letter of intent to many schools – declaring that they will definitely attend that school if admitted by a certain deadline. If they are deciding between more than one school, students also must keep on top of the various course requirements that each college wants students using the guaranteed admissions arrangements to have completed.

“I think it is a good program but you have to be really well informed. We made flow charts with all of the deadlines on them. ... It is not an easy process. There are a lot of things you have to keep up with,” said Spatz.

STILL, Northern Virginia Community College’s enrollment numbers are up 15 percent from last year, when the total student population was approximately 67,000. Officials said there has been a surge particularly among younger students.

Northern Virginia high schools collectively graduated the largest class of seniors in the history of the region this year, said Schuckman, president of the NVCC’s Board of Trustees. Among Fairfax County Public School students, Northern Virginia Community College is the most popular destination, he said.

Private School Search Timeline

AUGUST

- Finalize list of schools that you plan to inquire about.

SEPTEMBER

- Request admissions and financial aid material by phone or online.
- Review admissions materials to determine which schools to visit.
- Develop a calendar of pertinent deadlines for admission and financial aid and procedures, such as when schools start taking reservations for individual tours and interviews.
- Register for standardized tests—the SSAT or ISEE (for middle school and high school).
- Review the test websites to learn procedures and see sample questions; consider whether you want to buy a test-preparation book.
- Call to schedule individual tours, interviews, class visits, and “shadow days.” Ask elementary schools about their test schedules and how to make an appointment.

OCTOBER

- Visit open houses.
- Call to schedule tours, interviews, class visits, and school-based tests if you haven't

already.

- Attend information sessions and take tours.
- Finalize school(s) to which you will make application.
- Take standardized test.

NOVEMBER

- Follow through on activities you may not have completed, such as scheduling tours, interviews, class visits, and standardized or school-based tests.
- Continue to watch for open houses you may want to attend.
- Start lining up teacher recommendations.
- Start working on applications, financial aid forms, student questionnaires, essays, etc.

DECEMBER

- Complete any remaining applications, questionnaires, etc. Most application materials are due in January or early February.

Adapted from the National Association of Independent Schools. For more, see the Parents' Guide from the National Association of Independent Schools at www.nais.org/go/parents.

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