

NORTH CROSS

Magazine | Spring 2024



Passages & Passports

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NORTH CROSS

Magazine | Spring 2024

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WHO WE ARE:

North Cross School is an independent, nonsectarian school serving students in early childhood through 12th grade from across the Roanoke Valley, the region, and the world.

OUR MISSION:

Our mission is to inspire a community of intellectually curious learners to think critically, act with integrity, and lead with courage.

FRONT COVER PHOTO

North Cross international students Denzel Marufu '23 and Flavia Daniels '23 are crowned Homecoming King and Queen (page 13-14).

BACK COVER PHOTO

Kaya performs in the Lower School's Spanish Festival.

A WORLD *of* DISTINCTION



PHOTO

*Annabelle Coles '27 soars on
a zip line through a Costa
Rican forest.*

**NORTH CROSS IS NOT JUST A SCHOOL; IT IS A PASSPORT TO BECOMING
A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD *of* SCHOOL



Armistead Lemon '95
Head of School

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of our new *North Cross* magazine. We are delighted to launch this annual publication as a way of sharing highlights of the current North Cross student experience and inviting you to celebrate with us the exemplary ways that our students, faculty, and alumni are engaged in extending learning within and beyond the classroom. Each issue will feature a different theme, exploring the people and programs that contribute to North Cross's tradition of educational excellence.

As you peruse the stories in our first edition, it will become evident that learning through exploration remains integral to our community, as it has for generations of North Cross students. North Cross has always been a globally-minded school, with opportunities for international exchange and travel that have developed in more recent years into our distinguished Global Studies program, our expanded world language offerings, our international boarding program, and our campus in Shanghai. Each of these areas is featured in

this issue — *Passages and Passports*.

Reading through these stories, I find myself bursting with pride in our students as they take academic risks and lead with courage. Their journeys may be different from the ones my classmates and I took back in the 90s, but the essential tools in their backpacks remain the same — strong faculty-student relationships, an education based on honor, and opportunities to be fearless in their learning with an entire community behind them. North Cross has always been about the work of helping its students grow into open-hearted and open-minded individuals who have the skills to thrive in a complex world. Across the pages of *North Cross* magazine are the stories of such excellence in education in action. Enjoy!

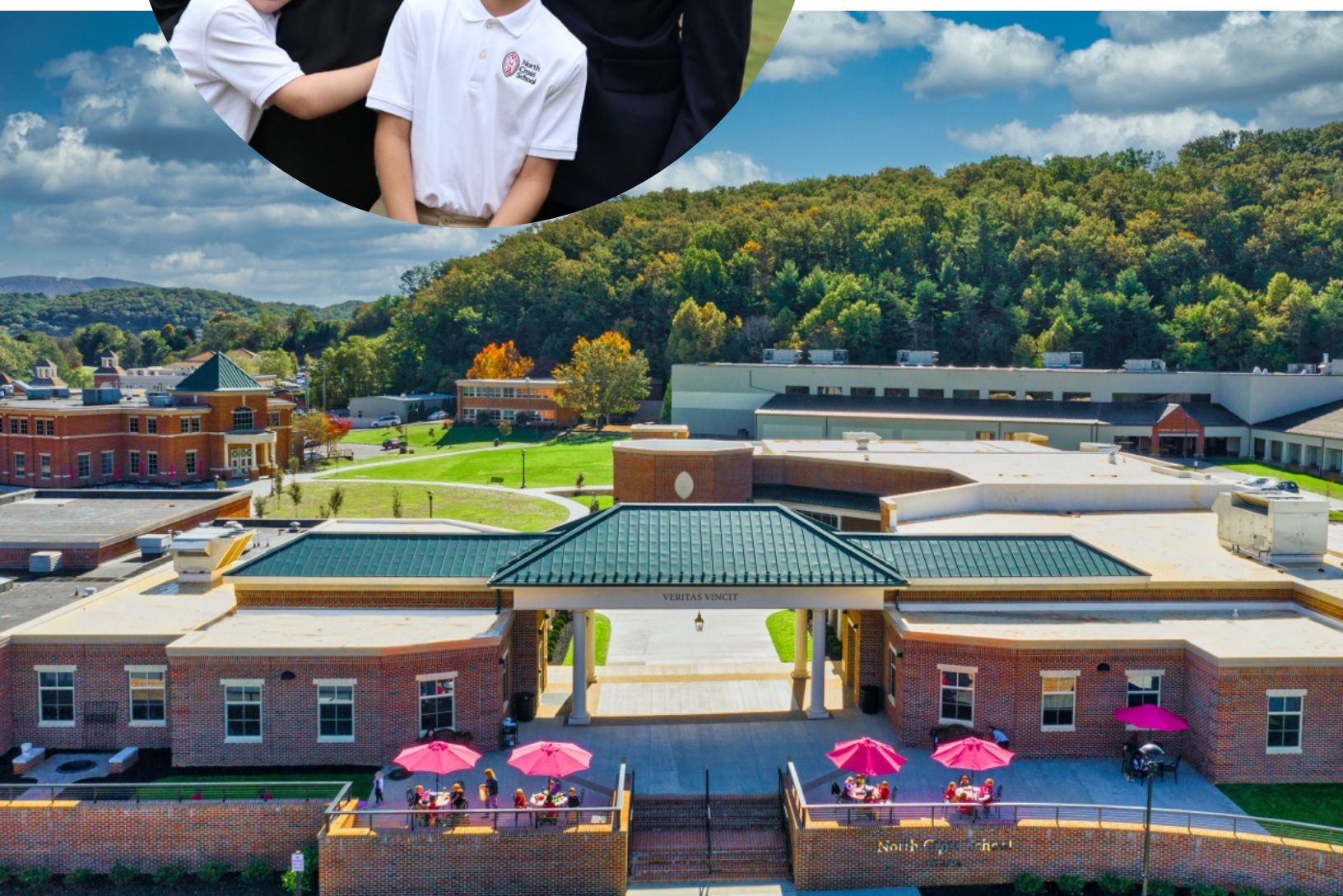
Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Armistead Lemon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Armistead Lemon '95

PHOTOS

RIGHT: The North Cross campus underwent a major redesign when most of the campus facilities were renovated in 2020. BELOW: Head of School Armistead Lemon '95 with her husband, Calvin Stewart, and their children, James '34 and Henry '32. BOTTOM: The new main entrance to the school.



FOSTERING GLOBAL CITIZENS

At the heart of North Cross lies a vibrant community that prides itself on fostering global perspectives from the very beginning. **Academic excellence at North Cross includes shaping students into global citizens who are well-prepared to contribute positively to the world.**

It all begins in the Junior Kindergarten classes, where children take their first steps into the world of global understanding. Here, they embark on a journey to master the Spanish language, knowing that this linguistic proficiency will open doors to a broader world. While one of the goals is to master a language, it is also about delving into the Spanish culture through captivating avenues such as dance, plays, and the delights of its cuisine. The children are introduced to the rich tapestry of countries and cultures through classroom studies and exciting events like the Spanish Festival in which the entire Lower School participates in song, dance, and skits.

At North Cross, the transformation into global citizens is more than a classroom exercise. It is an authentic way of life. Our international student population, a tapestry woven from diverse backgrounds and experiences, adds depth to this cultural journey. Their presence turns everyday interactions into global experiences, making every day a lesson in understanding and embracing differences. North Cross is a community where varied perspectives are cherished, and uniqueness is celebrated.

The concept of a global community extends beyond our campus. North Cross takes its students on tangible journeys across the world. With short-term exchange programs with our partner school in Argentina and school-led trips to countries such as France and Iceland, students get firsthand experiences of a different culture. They are able to see new places while also hearing the stories of their peers with fascinating life experiences. These experiences forge bonds that transcend borders.

North Cross goes a step further in its quest to prepare students for the global stage. With a campus in Shanghai, China, and a sister school in Argentina, the school fosters international collaboration. These connections allow students to exchange ideas with their counterparts on another continent, broadening their horizons even further. We are excited to welcome a group of Chinese students for a summer camp in July 2024, where our American students will have further opportunities to engage with and learn from their international peers.

The pinnacle of this journey is the Horace G. Fralin Program for Global Studies. The program encourages both intellectual and personal growth through international travel, enlightening guest lectures, and a carefully curated curriculum designed to deepen students' understanding of the world. Those who complete this program during their Upper School years are awarded a coveted Global Studies distinction in addition to their North Cross diploma, a testament to their commitment to becoming true global citizens.

In the end, North Cross is not just an institution of learning; it is a place where young minds embark on a lifelong journey of embracing the world. It is a community where students are not just taught about global citizenship but are given the tools, experiences, and perspectives needed to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. North Cross is not just a school; it is a passport to becoming a citizen of the world.

PHOTO

Upon arriving in Costa Rica, North Cross Middle School students gather to learn about the service project they will be working on while visiting the country.



AN ARGENTINE EXPERIENCE



In 2018, North Cross established an important and mutually-beneficial partnership with Escuela Italiana, a tri-lingual school nestled in the picturesque landscapes of Mendoza, Argentina. This partnership is far more than just an academic alliance; it is a bridge between two cultures, a connection between young minds across continents.

Every year, groups of North Cross students venture across the globe to spend a couple of weeks at Escuela Italiana. In return, the Argentinian students travel to North Cross for a week during the spring. **Both institutions share a common mission, one that resonates deeply with their respective educational philosophies—the belief in the transformative power of global studies.**

Victor Lamas, the Assistant Head of School for Academics at North Cross and a driving force behind this cross-cultural exchange program, believed in the profound impact of exposing young minds to another country. He envisioned more than just a trip; he saw it as a gateway to a full cultural immersion. “By traveling to Argentina,” he explained, “our students have the chance to meet teens in another part of the world, which helps broaden their minds and allows them to improve the Spanish language skills they begin learning at North Cross as

very young children.”

One North Cross graduate, Chase Daniel '23, embarked on this transformative journey in December 2022. A passionate enthusiast of the Spanish language, Daniel seized the opportunity to hone his linguistic prowess and enhance his fluency. His words came alive as he described his Argentinian host family — welcoming and warm-hearted. Among them, he found a kindred spirit in their 13-year-old son, forming a bond over games of cards and playing with the family dog.

To make the experience even more unforgettable, Daniel and his Argentinian hosts found themselves in Argentina during the World Cup semi- and quarter-finals. The passion and fervor of the Argentinian people for soccer were palpable. “It was so much fun watching the soccer matches together and experiencing this important sporting event from the Argentinian perspective,” Daniel recounted with a smile.

In the end, Daniel summed it up perfectly: “It’s good to see a different culture, especially while you’re young and have more flexibility to travel.” For the North Cross students, it was a journey of growth, connection, and an exploration of a world beyond their own. The partnership between the two schools has truly created a bridge that spans continents and cultures, leaving indelible impressions on young hearts and minds.

PHOTOS

LEFT: North Cross students visit a classroom of elementary-age students at Escuela Italiana in Mendoza, Argentina. RIGHT: North Cross and Argentinian students pause to take in the striking scenery of Mendoza.



PHOTOS

LEFT: Selden Burns '24 and Cate Cook '24 in front of Luxembourg Palace in Paris on a North Cross trip to France.

RIGHT: Upper School students convene at a Russian Club meeting, exploring the country's vibrant cultural and social fabric, the intricacies of its politics, and the rhythms of its economic landscape.



GLOBALLY MINDED

“

Being able to participate in the Global Studies Program has greatly enriched the perspectives I have about the politics, society, and culture of different places around the world, and I've found analyzing and enjoying these differences to be one of the most rewarding experiences.”

Aashee Nanda '24

North Cross is proud to offer a unique educational experience known as the Horace G. Fralin Global Studies Program. Led by Ryan DeMarco, director of Global Studies and history department chair, this program is not just about earning an advanced diploma or enhancing college applications; it is about nurturing global citizens. It challenges students to look beyond borders and embrace a broader perspective on the world. "Our goal is to show the students that the world is bigger than Roanoke," explained DeMarco. "The world is full of thousands of cultures. Each one can offer a gem or nugget of knowledge to us and thereby grow our world view."

Faculty members conceived the Global Studies distinction as a portal to endless possibilities. Wanting it to be about more than meeting requirements, it is about aspiring to become a global citizen. Still, a structured approach is needed to articulate the school's expectations. The program seamlessly blends academic scholarship and experiential learning, forming the pillars of its foundation.

The journey begins with a clear roadmap. To become a Global Studies scholar, Upper School students need to dive headfirst into a world of coursework and group discussions centered on the complex blend of global issues and policy. Academic excellence is a cornerstone. Core classes like Introduction to Global Studies, AP World History, AP Comparative Government, AP Human Geography, Environmental Studies, and world language courses offer students the chance to accumulate crucial points toward their goal, while electives also play a vital role in shaping the scholars.

The program demands an understanding of the local community as well. Roanoke, once considered a distant outpost, has become a melting pot of global cultures, while nearby cities such as Blacksburg and Lexington offer students and faculty access to additional academic, research, and cultural resources. Students are required to attend off-campus events to immerse themselves in these communities. Whether through attending lectures, cultural festivals, tutoring refugee students, or participating in model United Nations conferences, students gather insights and capture moments through written reflections and photos.

Reading is a fundamental part of the journey. Every year, the Global Studies faculty select a common book for all scholars

to read, focusing their minds on a chosen theme. One seminar each year is dedicated to discussing this shared reading. Students also have the freedom to explore additional global studies readings, handpicked by specific faculty members. Themes like cosmopolitanism, water, war, and women become gateways to deeper understanding.

The Senior Project, renamed in honor of retired English teacher Gates DeHart, stands as a cherished tradition. This capstone project represents the culmination of a North Cross senior's education. Global Studies students delve into focused academic research related to their studies, which might include fieldwork and expert interactions. The result is a meticulously crafted research paper, a testament to their academic journey, which is ultimately delivered as a speech in front of the entire Upper School (page 28).

North Cross students also benefit from having several international students in their classrooms who bring unique perspectives and insight to the global studies conversation. "Our American students are being exposed to teens from around the world, and both groups of students are learning from each other," said DeMarco. "At the end of the day, we are all human. We face many of the same challenges despite differences in language, religion, etc. The 'other' is not so different from yourself," he concluded.

Perhaps one of the most exciting part of this adventure is international travel. Students are encouraged to embark on Global Studies-approved trips that often include homestays, a strong emphasis on service, and language immersion. Upon returning, students stand before their peers in the Upper School morning assembly, sharing cultural lessons through presentations and in-depth essays, filled with rich contrasts and comparisons.

In the end, the Global Studies Program at North Cross is a transformative expedition. **It carves global citizens out of curious minds, unveiling the world's intricate web of cultures, politics, and experiences. These scholars become North Cross graduates, but they also become ambassadors of a world waiting to be explored.**



PHOTOS

Ava Dalaski '25, Henry Lugar '25, Boaz Atia '25 (LEFT), and Mohammed '33 (BELOW) spend a day helping prepare thousands of dried meals for remote, global communities with significant hunger pockets.



A WORLD *of* GOOD

By Allie Kier
Director of Middle School

With a mission to eradicate hunger in the world, the non-profit organization **Rise Against Hunger seeks to provide balanced meals for those communities overseas that are hard to reach, in addition to helping support sustainable food efforts in those countries.**

Our students have participated in a Rise Against Hunger meal packing event each April for the past two years, packing cumulatively over 22,000 meals to be sent overseas to those in need. Those meals have gone to the Orphan Network in Nicaragua and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Madagascar. Students in grades 1-12 worked together this past spring to prepare dried meals of soy,

vegetables, rice, and vitamin packs, then pack the boxes ready for distribution. In order to make the experience collaborative amongst students in our community, students from Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools were mixed together to pack the meals, and learned how their efforts could make a lasting impact on the life of a child somewhere else in the world.

William Beck '29 said of the day-long activity, "Rise Against Hunger is a great project that provides food for people who need it. It is a fun event to complete together and when North Cross does it, it gives Rise Against Hunger lots of meals to send out. It also gives you a sense of accomplishment knowing you helped other people."

“

Rise Against Hunger was an excellent opportunity to help save lives and get to know others. The process made things super easy and allowed everyone to play a role.”

Blake Shaner '24

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

Flavia Daniels '23 comes from Germany, and Denzel Marufu '23 is from Zimbabwe. They both embarked on an extraordinary journey, spanning continents to pursue their junior and senior years of education in the United States. Their destination: North Cross School, a place that not only offered a rich array of academic, athletic, and extracurricular experiences, but also a vibrant cultural exchange.

In their pursuit of North Cross's offerings, Daniels and Marufu did not merely adapt to American culture, they thrived in it. Daniels carved her niche in track and field, clinching the title of state champion during her senior year and even participated in nationals, which marked a high point of her North Cross experience. But it wasn't just the sports arena where she shone; she looked forward to classes like Graphic Design and AP French where she and her fellow American classmates endeavored to master another language that was

neither German nor English.

Beyond the classroom, she delighted in adventures, whether it was a boarding students' group trip to D.C., engaging in adrenaline-pumping paintball battles, or the cherished memory of handpicking her prom dress during a trip to Charlotte with an American friend. Her family's visit to the North Cross campus during her graduation was also a moment of immense pride and joy.

Reflecting on her transformative journey, Daniels remarked, "I love the warmth and welcoming nature of everyone here. **The moment I interviewed with North Cross, I could feel the family atmosphere.**" She continued, "Studying abroad has been an incredible experience. Learning a new language and immersing



PHOTO

ABOVE: In recognition of her senior year as an NCS Track and Field participant, Flavia Daniels '23 (second from left) is joined by Lauren Horner, Assistant Coach of co-ed Middle School and Varsity Cross Country and Track and Field; Mistie Dickenson, Upper School Biology Teacher; Gabe Dickenson '30; and Ed Dickenson, Head Coach of co-ed Middle School and Varsity Cross Country and Track and Field.



PHOTO

ABOVE: NCS Boys' Varsity Soccer player Denzel Marufu '23 celebrates successfully deflecting a shot on the goal.



myself in a different culture has taught me so much about myself and life. I've grown much more independent and confident." With an enthusiastic smile, she emphasized the importance of seizing opportunities, saying, "Take the chance to try something new whenever it arises. It may seem daunting, but North Cross provides a nurturing environment for exploration."

Marufu echoed Daniels' sentiments about the challenges of adapting to a foreign culture, recalling the initial shock of rapid, unfamiliar speech. "Everyone was speaking so fast when I first arrived here, and they were hard to understand!" he exclaimed. "My accent was a puzzle for people too," he added with a grin and a shrug. Yet, Marufu, who had never set foot in the United States before enrolling at North Cross, marveled at how his English proficiency soared during his two-year stint. The soccer field became his language laboratory, and he reveled in favorite classes like U.S. History and the senior class trip to Busch Gardens Theme Park in Williamsburg.

Living in North Cross's downtown dormitory, surrounded by a diverse mix of international and domestic boarding students, Marufu discovered a newfound level of independence (page 15).

He observed, "It's different when your parents are thousands of miles away. You're on your own." But he found comfort in the local support system provided by North Cross, from Director of Dormitory Residential Life Annie Elwell '15 to caring coaches and teachers who were always there when he needed them.

For Marufu, a defining moment arrived when North Cross's varsity boys' soccer team secured the state championship during his junior year. The thrill of victory remains etched in his memory, and today, he continues to pursue his passion for soccer at Roanoke College. As for Daniels, her dream of studying in the United States evolved into reality when she was accepted to Monmouth University in New Jersey. Their journeys, filled with challenges and triumphs, are a testament to the transformative power of education and cultural exchange.

PHOTO

TOP: Flavia Daniels '23 and Denzel Marufu '23 join the rest of their senior class for a group photo at Commencement in June, 2023. BELOW: Marufu gives the benediction during the graduation ceremony.



HOME AWAY *from* HOME

“

This is a community of ten different countries. The world meets here. I would be sitting in a room and hear six different languages being spoken. It's so much fun to see and experience."

Josh Kier

Former English Teacher and former Executive Director of the North Cross dormitory



PHOTOS

TOP: North Cross boarding students enjoy down time after school in the commons area of the dorm.

BELOW: The exterior of the historic Boxley building.



Within the walls of downtown Roanoke's Boxley Building, a vibrant energy pulses through the corridors of North Cross School's dormitory. This energy, Josh Kier, the former Executive Director of the school's boarding facility for international and regional domestic students, would tell you, is what made his life truly extraordinary.

For two years, Josh worked at the epicenter of bustling teenage life. Living with 38 teens from ten different countries can be an ever-evolving adventure. "There was never a dull moment," he proclaimed.

Since 2016, North Cross has offered a unique five- and seven-day boarding experience for Upper School-age students. The beautifully renovated Boxley Building has become their second home, a place where dreams are nurtured and friendships forged. Living so close to the school has its advantages, as does being immersed in the lively downtown atmosphere.

While overseeing the comings and goings of so many students comes with hurdles to overcome—from communication challenges and homesickness to coordinating academic, athletic, and social schedules—Kier said that he could not imagine North Cross without them. "These students are leaders and high achievers in all that they do, and they truly transform the school for the better. They bring a whole new perspective to the classroom and enrich the learning experience for everyone."

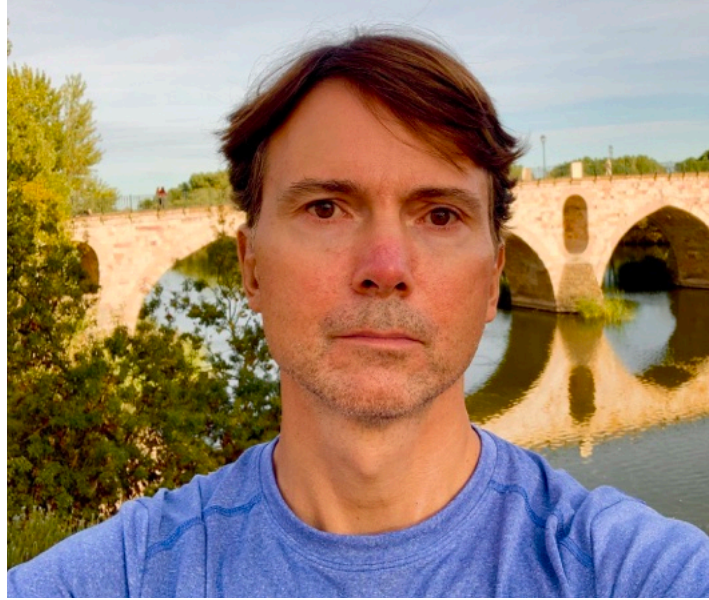
Kier was particularly moved by the humility and courage these students display daily. Living far from home, immersed in a language not their own, they show unwavering determination. "I loved seeing them grow," he confessed, "responding to leadership opportunities, and just thriving in our community." For Kier, who is also a North Cross parent with his wife and Middle School Director Allie Kier, every day was an adventure, a chance to witness young minds expand and embrace the world.

A WORLD AWAY



Come visit Spain, or whatever country interests you, for a month, or maybe two, and see if life in that country suits you. Even if your path ultimately leads you back to the U.S., your time away will, for certain, enrich your life's journey."

Gordon Winn '89



PHOTOS

ABOVE: North Cross alumnus Gordon Winn '89 beside the medieval bridge in Zamora, Spain in 2023.
RIGHT (page 17): Winn on the soccer field in a 1988 yearbook photo.

Gordon Winn '89 is both a graduate of North Cross and former Spanish Teacher at the school. He now lives in Spain, and the following is an interview with him from August 2023.

When did you teach at North Cross?

I taught Spanish at North Cross from 1993-1995 and from 1996-1999. I taught at all levels, and in my very first year I remember that on Fridays, I would begin my day with students in JK in the morning and finish my day with Seniors in Spanish IV the last period of the day in Willis Hall. It pushed me, and was exhausting at times but I was up for the challenge. At the age of 23, right out of college, I was thankful for the opportunity to teach at my alma mater.

How old were you when you first traveled to Spain? Is that when you caught the travel "bug"?

I first traveled to Spain in the summer of 1987 after just turning 17. Andy Austin, a good friend and a member of the NCS class of 1987, had just hosted Elena Garcia, a Spanish exchange student, in his home for the academic year, and Elena invited us to stay in her town of Cuacos de Yuste for the summer. It worked out well because at the time, my mother's brother was teaching

English in Madrid. Andy and I spent ten days in Madrid with my uncle, and then we went out to Extremadura to live in Cuacos for forty days. That trip was the beginning of my love affair with Spain. Just last week, I had a nice chat with Elena Garcia, this many years later. She has worked as an expert interpreter and translator in London for her entire career, and her perfect English began to take shape at North Cross during her year abroad in Roanoke. That is special.

When did you relocate to Spain?

I applied for my visa at the Spanish Embassy in Washington, DC, in early 2019, and on July 24, 2019, I touched down in Madrid and began this adventure. Little did I know that just six months later, the Covid pandemic would severely alter my plans, and I found myself locked down in an apartment in Madrid for two and a half months in the spring of 2020. Thankfully, now, those difficult days have passed, and I can freely move around the country without a mask!

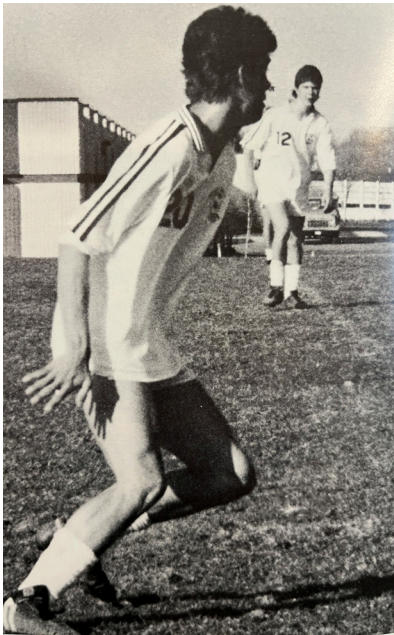
In what city/town do you currently live?

I currently live in Sevilla, the heart of Andalucía.

What inspired you to live abroad?

After teaching for 13 years and leading my music band for another 12 years, I really just wanted to relocate to Spain to dive into a

life here. A life that appeals to me. And if the truth be told, I am just really relishing my experiences, traveling all over the country and parts of Europe, writing a good bit, consulting with clients about trips to Spain and trying to live somewhat of a carefree existence! In one more year, though, my visa will become a work visa, and that will open many more opportunities to work within Spain. My current visa is a non-lucrative visa, which many expats seek in order to retire in Spain full-time and not just for the restrictive 90 days your U.S. passport allows you to stay in-country.



What appeals to you about living in a foreign country?

When I add up all of the days of my life that I have lived in Spain, it surpasses six years. Since 1999, I have returned to Spain every year for different lengths of time. After so much time living here, I believe that Spain is just a part of me. Culturally, I feel very integrated here. On a daily basis, I speak exclusively in Spanish and my level of fluency is very high for a non-native speaker. Living in Sevilla for the past

two years has taken my language skill to a higher level because the Andalusian accent is, by far, the fastest, laziest, and most challenging accent in Spain. Because I am a lifelong Spanish learner, I am fascinated with the different dialects of Spanish, and on a personal level, my brain is constantly being pushed in the same way an athlete would train to reach higher levels of excellence on the field of play. Other reasons? The food! I love all Spanish cuisine, and these past four years, I have learned how to prepare a number of Spanish culinary staples. Also, the geographical diversity of Spain fascinates me. The dry, hot south, contrasted with the damp, green north and the high plain that separates the two extremes.

Do you think your time as a student or teacher at North Cross influenced your decision to live in Spain at all?

There is no doubt that my four years of Spanish under Bill Maisch at NCS had a profound effect upon my decision to dedicate my life to the language. I majored in Spanish in college and continued my study of the language in graduate school attaining a Master's degree in Spanish language. All of that academic success was built upon the solid foundation of Spanish I had formed during my years as a student at North Cross under the guidance of the excellent teachers I was blessed to have.

Tell us a little bit about your travel website/services you offer.

I launched a website to consult with clients about trips to Spain, and I also offer my services as a guide. It has been enjoyable but has mainly served as a fun thing to do when people contact me seeking expert advice. Numerous friends from my youth, many of whom I have not seen in

well over ten years, have reached out to me for guidance about planning a trip to Spain, and on a few occasions, I have reconnected with them while they are visiting Spain and I have served as a private chaperone for their trip to show them some hidden spots that, perhaps, they may not have seen on a big tour group.

What advice would you offer someone who is considering traveling to, or living abroad? What would you say some of the greatest benefits are to international travel/living?

We live in a very connected world now. The Spain I first encountered in 1987 was a very different country from the modern country in which we live now. The "culture shock" of moving abroad, at least to Europe, has all but vanished which actually saddens me a bit. In the Western world, our similarities now far surpass our differences, and transitioning into Spain, I believe, is not that difficult. Nevertheless, you will still find communities, especially outside of the major cities, where there is not much English. Those smaller towns are some of my favorite places to go precisely because I can feel like I am in a Spain from a bygone era. Whether you are a recent college graduate or a person with retirement on the approaching horizon, come visit Spain, or whatever country interests you, for a month, or maybe two, and see if life in that country suits you. Even if your path ultimately leads you back to the U.S., your time away will, for certain, enrich your life's journey.

GLOBE TROTTERS

“

Going to Iceland was such an amazing experience, especially with all of the natural beauty. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I am so glad that I got to go.”

Henry Lugar '25

PHOTO

Isabella Onufer '24 on a ten-day North Cross-led trip to France in July 2022.



As part of North Cross’s unwavering commitment to nurturing globally-minded citizens, the school embarks on exciting journeys abroad each year, inviting students to become part of these enriching experiences. For Middle and Upper School students, the biennial Costa Rica trip opens the door to adventure for several rising eighth, ninth, and tenth graders (pages 30-31). Meanwhile, Upper School students have recently ventured to captivating destinations such as France and Iceland. These trips are not limited to Global Studies scholars (pages 10-11) but welcome all students seeking an international experience.

Isabella Onufer '24 found herself in the midst of a memorable trek when she joined a group of nearly 30 students and chaperones on a trip to France in the summer of 2022. This marked her inaugural voyage to Europe, and her decision was influenced by her mother’s love of all things European. The trip also contributed to her Global Studies distinction, an accolade she’ll receive upon graduation.

Initially apprehensive about the language barrier, given

her lack of French proficiency, Onufer discovered that some French citizens were more than willing to accommodate American students by conversing in English or employing simple French phrases. She also relied on her fellow classmates who were able to speak and/or understand some words in the language.

Amid scorching temperatures during a relentless heatwave (reaching a staggering 104°F), Onufer found great joy in the endless assortment of pastries, while being somewhat surprised by the laid-back ambiance that pervaded the country and its people.

One of the highlights of Onufer’s adventure was the exploration of majestic castles and cathedrals. “You could just see the layers of history in the architecture,” she enthused. “Construction on some structures began in one century and was completed in the next. It was incredible to see!” Her journey also led her to Normandy, where the memorials honoring World War II soldiers left a profound impact. “The meticulous placement of crosses in the cemetery was symbolic and powerful,” she reflected.



Jamey Davis, another member of the Class of '24 on the France trip, was drawn to the journey by the promise of adventure and fun. Although it was his first time venturing beyond the United States, he had three years of French language study under his belt, allowing him to grasp snippets of conversation in everyday settings, like restaurants. Deciphering French menus often proved to be an entertaining challenge, making the act of ordering a delightful mystery. "We would place our order and then say, 'Oh boy, I can't wait to see what I get!'" Davis laughed. Ultimately, though, he found immense satisfaction in applying what he had learned in his French class.

In June 2023, a group of 29 Upper School students and their chaperones embarked on an unforgettable expedition to Iceland. Their itinerary encompassed visits to museums, iconic landmarks, awe-inspiring waterfalls, glaciers, and an in-depth study of volcanoes, earthquakes, geysers, and other geological phenomena. The trip was punctuated by memorable

moments such as an "epic" glacier hike, exploration of the Lava Tunnel—a formation shaped by a volcanic eruption 5,200 years ago—soaking in the Blue Lagoon, and savoring rye bread baked in the volcanic vents of a geothermal bakery.

A delightful cultural exchange occurred when North Cross students crossed paths with a group of United Kingdom students who shared the same itinerary. Remarkably, two North Cross students even celebrated their birthdays on the final day of the trip with a U.K. student who happened to share their birthday.

After indulging in hearty dinners each night, often featuring the ever-popular Icelandic butter, students would unwind by playing pool and engaging in games in a sprawling recreation room, while chaperones engaged in lively conversations. These shared moments fostered lasting bonds and unforgettable memories, making the trip an extraordinary chapter in the students' educational journey.

As the demand for travel abroad opportunities continues to grow at North Cross, the school has responded by offering a trip to China and another trip to France in 2025.

“

Travel abroad is full of 'ah-ha!' moments for our students. Their studies of cultures, languages, and histories become real and tangible for them. Our students begin to understand themselves as part of a larger, global community. Plus, it's super fun!"

Chris Brandon

*World Languages Department Chair,
Upper School French Teacher, and Dean
of Academics*

PHOTO

A group of North Cross students and their chaperones pause while hiking a glacier in Skogarfoss, Iceland in June 2023. The day also included a visit to a black sand beach and a search for puffins.

“

Languages (whether ancient or modern, currently spoken or not) are gateways to other cultures and ways of thinking.”

Wanda Finney

*Middle and Upper School
Latin Teacher*

FACULTY FEATURE *Wanda Finney*

By Wanda Finney

Middle and Upper School Latin Teacher

When, how and why did I become a language teacher? I will respond in reverse order. The “why” goes back to my high school Latin teacher. She was a young, dynamic, enthusiastic and tough-but-fair teacher. Her family had come to America from Naples. Her Latin class was my favorite class. Because of her, I decided to major in classics (Latin and Greek) in college.

The “how” of becoming a Latin teacher happened during my undergraduate years at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (now Randolph College) and in graduate school at the University of Cincinnati. The program at Cincinnati was interdisciplinary in the languages, ancient history, and archaeology. That training has been immensely helpful to me in the classroom, where I introduce students to the ancient Mediterranean

NON SCHOLAE SED VITAE DISCIMUS.

(WE DO NOT LEARN FOR SCHOOL, BUT FOR LIFE.)

world, a place that is sometimes very similar and sometimes very different from our own.

The “when” I became a teacher stretches back to the mid 1980s when I taught in Indiana as a professor for seven years. Later, I had a part-time gig at Virginia Episcopal School (don’t worry—I don’t root for them anymore!) the year before I was hired at North Cross in the fall of 2011. (I had a second career in between those dates when I worked in libraries and archives.)

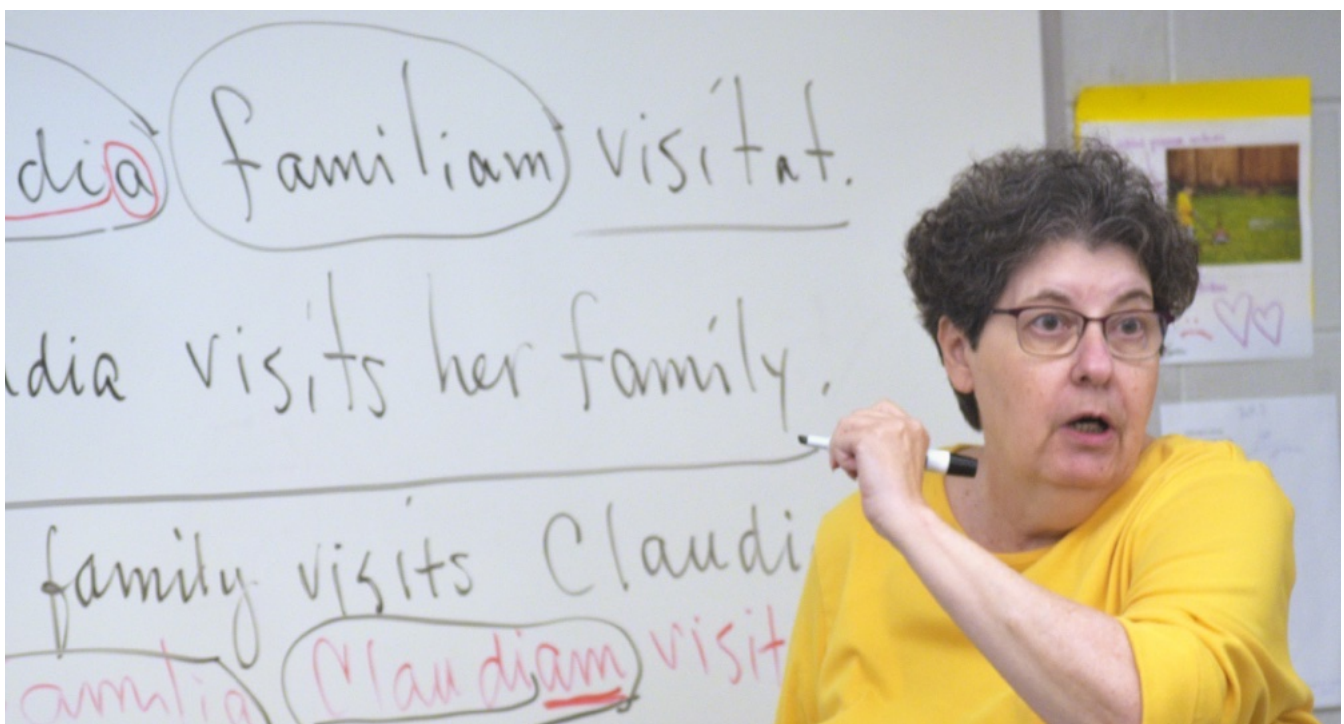
In the Department at North Cross, my colleagues and I are sometimes asked to respond to the question about why students should study a language other than English. My best and most concise answer is that languages (whether ancient or modern, currently spoken or not) are gateways to other cultures and ways of thinking. **Learning a language makes us compare and contrast our own language and culture with the ones we study.** That “compare-contrast” task happens to be one of the major standards of the American Council on the Teaching of

Foreign Languages. My World Language colleagues and I often find that it is in our classes where students first learn to think deeply about and analyze the structure of English in order to succeed in whatever target language they are learning. Those analytical skills are applicable across disciplines.

Over the course of my career, I have always been grateful for my students’ willingness to engage with literature that, frankly, was not written for teenagers: the texts they translate and comprehend in my Latin classes are as challenging as those they read in their Upper School English classes. My students will tell you that I value honest effort over end results, because it is effort, sometimes coupled with failure and resilience, that represents the lifelong lesson. I have learned valuable lessons from students, too—how to be more patient, how to present material in different ways, how to support them beyond the classroom. As the Romans said: dum docent, discunt: while they teach, they learn.

PHOTO

A popular teacher at North Cross, Latin Teacher Wanda Finney has taught at the school for 13 years. She recently stepped down from her position as World Languages Department Chair to concentrate her time on expanding the Latin curriculum into the Middle School.



MILES AWAY AND MILES AHEAD

Hailing from Beijing, China, Eason Zhou '24 finds himself in a unique and compelling situation. As of April 2, 2024, he has not set foot in his hometown or seen his family for a staggering 885 days, yet he firmly believes that every moment spent as a student at North Cross School has been worth the sacrifice.

Zhou's journey to North Cross was marked by an incredible passion for American football, a sport he only started playing two years ago in China. In a country where high school football leagues are nonexistent, he joined forces with adults in his community to fuel his newfound love for the game.

Recognizing his natural talent and genuine enthusiasm for football, Zhou set his sights on American high schools as a potential gateway to pursuing college in the United States. Upon gaining admission to North Cross, he embarked on a remarkable transformation, adding an impressive 35 pounds of muscle to his frame and embracing the role of a defensive end. His dedication paid off in both 2022 and 2023 when he had the exciting opportunity to play in the State Championship games, which ended in victories for North Cross.

However, Zhou's ambitions stretch far beyond the football field. With a remarkable sense of purpose, he firmly states, "The most important thing to me is having a strong moral character, then academics,

and then sports—in that order." He has his eyes set on college in the U.S.

During his time at North Cross, Zhou's talents have expanded beyond the gridiron. A newfound passion for photography emerged, and he even received a coveted photojournalism award from his teachers. His journey into photography began with the guidance of Robert Robillard, the advisor to the Upper School student newspaper, who entrusted Zhou with his camera. Recognizing Zhou's photographic prowess, his Media Club Advisor, Sarah Sledd '12, was excited when he came up with the idea of launching the popular North Cross Athletics Instagram account, which features much of his dynamic work. Beyond his lens, Zhou often steps into leadership roles, sharing his photography knowledge with other students in the Media Club and Yearbook class.

Leveraging his burgeoning talent, Zhou clinched a summer photography internship with the Salem Red Sox baseball team in 2022. Reflecting on the experience, he remarked, "It was a good opportunity to practice my photography, but I also learned important skills like how to work well with the crew and team." Eason Zhou's journey at North Cross School is marked by a willingness to try new things and explore the world around him, but it is also about excelling in every facet of life, and he's doing it with remarkable dedication and passion.

“

The most important thing to me is having a strong moral character. Then academics. Then sports—in that order.

Eason Zhou '24

PHOTO

Eason Zhou '24 came to North Cross during his sophomore year in school.





PHOTO

Viktoriiia larkova '25, a native of Siberia, Russia, is currently in her first year at North Cross and hopes to continue her education in the U.S. by attending college here.

Siberia, Russia may be a whopping 5,981 miles away from the mountains of Roanoke, Virginia, but for Viktoriiia larkova '25, the odyssey across continents brought her to a place that felt like a second home. Surrounded by a city of 100,000 people, (compared to her hometown's 20,000 citizens where "everyone knows each other"), larkova found herself at North Cross as a wide-eyed junior, a world apart from her Russian roots. What struck her most, though, was the unexpected warmth that enveloped her. "This school is so good. Everyone here is very kind and helpful. I feel good here and I am happy," she said with a smile.

Back in Russia, larkova began studying English in elementary school and worked on improving it by watching English-speaking movies and attending summer camp over four summers in the U.S. She admits she was nervous to take the English exam that North Cross required because she doubted the rigor of her classes in Siberia, but she found she had nothing to worry about. After war broke out in Russia last year, larkova and her grandmother set their sights on the United States and the promise it held. After being accepted to North Cross during an admissions process that she described as "positive and caring," the two came to Roanoke; larkova lives in the North Cross dorm while her grandmother lives separately in town.

larkova saw the opportunity to study abroad as a gateway to American higher education, and maybe even citizenship. She also craved a different kind of experience: an exploration of unfamiliar surroundings and the chance to connect with souls on the other side of the world. **"Studying in a foreign country is hard but it's better than the education I had back home.**

And it's really about the people [you meet] and your life experience here. It makes you stronger. You have to be willing to try something new and different. I am grateful to be here," larkova remarked.

larkova went on to say, "I enjoy every day here. My teachers are smart and kind. I loved learning how to play volleyball and even went white-water rafting for the first time. I'm still making new friends and struggling with language differences, but I'm working very hard. I'm doing this all by myself without help, but I know I can do this."

Despite her appreciation for the opportunities and freedoms she has found at North Cross, there is one aspect of larkova's new life that continues to challenge her. Difficult questions from her fellow classmates about her sentiments towards her home country catch her off guard. "Of course, I love Russia, but I don't like certain things about it," she explains. The government's restrictions on language use, particularly in referring to the conflict with Ukraine, add an extra layer of complexity to her feelings. "We're not even allowed by the government to use the term 'war'; it is supposed to be called a 'special operation.' We are not free to express ourselves. It is so hard. I don't think Americans realize how good things are here: the jobs, the food (but not fast food!), the schools...everything."

In the heart of the Roanoke Valley, larkova's trek from Siberia is not just a geographic leap; it's a merging of culture, dreams, and new-found independence for a girl who is both hardworking and resilient.

NORTH CROSS *in* SHANGHAI



PHOTO

North Cross Shanghai is in the process of moving back to the campus it originally occupied (shown here) after temporarily operating out of another facility.

By Nicki Dabney

Director of International Operations, Upper School English Teacher, and Chinese Language Teacher

North Cross Shanghai was established in 2015 with the goal of providing Chinese high school students the opportunity to pursue an American-style education—with North Cross’s commitment to academic excellence—that prepares them for admission to American and other Western universities. Initially, our program had fewer than 50 students, but as our reputation continued to grow over the past nine years, so did the school, which now includes over 300 students in grades 9-12.

North Cross Shanghai students consistently perform well in prestigious academic competitions, while our graduates have successfully gained admission to esteemed universities such as the University of Virginia, New York University, the University of California-Berkeley, Mount Holyoke, Bard College, Boston College, Purdue, and Case Western.

Much like North Cross in Roanoke, the Shanghai program offers a comprehensive curriculum that includes both the rigorous Advanced Placement course sequence and the A Level track for

students interested in pursuing education in the United Kingdom. Additionally, our students benefit from, and frequently thrive in, a more vibrant athletic and extracurricular life compared to traditional Chinese schools. The opportunities they have outside of the classroom are an excellent way to develop important soft skills such as communication, leadership, and interpersonal skills, which can lead to improved college acceptance rates, important global network connections, and even jobs in the future.

Another unique aspect of our program is the opportunity for students to interact with foreign teachers and peers, both virtually and in person, throughout their high school education. These relationships help them quickly adapt to life in the U.S. and facilitate a seamless transition to college life.

In a reciprocal arrangement, our students in Roanoke also have the chance to engage in cross-cultural exchange. They serve as camp counselors when students from Shanghai visit Roanoke for an intensive three-week academic and cultural program in July. The exchange provides significant benefits to both the Chinese and American students, as they typically discover that they have much in common and share similar interests, concerns, and joys that most teens face.



PHOTOS

TOP: NCS Head of School Armistead Lemon '95 (fourth from left) and NCS Director of International Operations Nicki Dabney (sixth from left) attend North Cross Shanghai's commencement ceremony in June. The students dress in formal wear because their prom is held on the same day as graduation. BOTTOM: The colorful entrance to the North Cross Shanghai facility.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD



Spanish, a language both vibrant and vital, holds a unique place in the curriculum at North Cross School. As the second most spoken language in both the United States and the world, its significance is undeniable. Here at North Cross, the journey into the realm of Spanish begins at a very young age, as early as three years old. In the Lower School, young scholars eagerly embark on their daily odyssey of Spanish language and global studies instruction. Remarkably, this education often continues through Middle and Upper School, as students elect to deepen their understanding of this rich language.

This linguistic voyage is guided by two extraordinary mentors: Sra. Mariana Hermosilla, Lower School Spanish Teacher and Director of Lower School Global Studies, and Sra. Jennifer Boush, Lower School Spanish Teacher. **Together, they have created an engaging world of learning that not only imparts the language but also fosters a deep appreciation for Hispanic/Latino culture.** Their primary goal is ambitious: to nurture proficiency in the language, an endeavor that encompasses both fluency and precision. Within their classrooms, the young scholars often find themselves engaged in the

PHOTO

Members of the class of 2032 look forward to Spanish class five days a week in Sra. Mariana Hermosilla's vibrant classroom.

art of public speaking in a second language, a challenge that can be both intimidating and empowering.

Hermosilla, who is from northeast Argentina, is a passionate advocate for her craft. She and Boush approach teaching as a fluid and all-encompassing art form. “We tailor our lessons to the unique needs and moods of each class,” Hermosilla explained, her eyes alight with enthusiasm. Their classroom is a space of flexibility, designed to inspire exploration and critical thinking. What sets the Lower School environment apart is the refreshing lack of self-consciousness among the students. Here, they are unafraid to be a little silly, to stumble as they learn, and even, charmingly, to adopt their teachers’ accents, adding authenticity to their pronunciation.

Their education transcends language. Language, as Hermosilla eloquently elucidated, is the gateway to understanding cultural, social, and religious traditions and perspectives. “We are nurturing global students at an even earlier stage now,” she noted. “At

North Cross, we are shaping well-rounded, enriched learners.” Hermosilla’s eyes sparkle as she speaks of her students, encouraging them to delve not only into their own heritage but also into the many facets of their classmates’ backgrounds. “I challenge them to walk in the shoes of others, to explore the intricacies of their families, interests, histories, and beliefs. It’s an ongoing, evolving conversation.”



PHOTOS

ABOVE: At the Lower School Spanish Festival, students wear colors representing the flags of different Spanish-speaking countries as they dance to Latin music. ABOVE, RIGHT: Cara '31, Stella '31, and Leyton '31 get ready to perform at the Local Colors annual Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in downtown, Roanoke. RIGHT: The Lower School Spanish Festival is a much-anticipated celebration of Latino and Hispanic cultures.

Studies have consistently shown that learning a second language at a young age can help children develop skills like attention control and cognitive flexibility, as well as the ability to effectively perform several tasks at the same time and make more connections between different concepts.

SO *to* SPEAK

The Senior Project at North Cross School, renamed in 2013 to honor retired English teacher, Gates DeHart, stands as a cherished tradition that has endured for over four decades. The DeHart Project, which represents the culmination of a student's journey through the school and serves as a testament to their growth and development, is an undertaking that combines the principles of public speaking and writing. Each senior is tasked with delivering a speech at Morning Assembly that is rooted in extensive academic research and engagement with experts in their chosen field, and is the result of a written research paper with a minimum of ten pages.

When tasked with his DeHart project assignment, Didintle "Didi" Dibetle '24 knew immediately that he would like to explore the complex history of



PHOTO

Didintle "Didi" Dibetle '24 is a native of Pretoria, South Africa and has been a student at North Cross since 2022.

EXCERPT FROM DIDINTLE DIBETLE'S DEHART PROJECT ON SOUTH AFRICA

Apartheid was the ideology supported by the National Party government and was introduced in South Africa in 1948. Apartheid called for the separate development of the different racial groups in South Africa. On paper it appeared to call for equal development and freedom of cultural expression, but the way it was implemented made this impossible. Apartheid made laws and forced the different racial groups to live separately, develop separately, and grossly unequally. It tried to stop all inter-marriage and social integration between racial groups.

This time in history left a huge impact on the current country state leading to today's description of poverty being lack of shelter, food insecurity, lack of access to health care, government corruption, poor infrastructure, and limited natural resources. Some places still have mixed households in the same area where people have livable houses and below-poverty houses. An example I have experienced is a township called Atteridgeville. This is an area where I still have friends and family living under the following conditions. This is an area where I attended middle school, lived a period of my life, and is a place I currently still visit due to having a number of my family members and friends who are based in this township.

Residents say victims are on their own as their township is riddled with crime. They're accusing the police and the justice system of failing them, in particular with cases of gender-based violence. A number of strikes or protests take place affecting the country. "Since the right to strike was recognised in the South African Constitution, strike actions have been a common phenomenon in the country. Causes of strikes in South Africa are multifaceted and their effects are catastrophic."

It was established that the main causes of strike actions are from poverty, inequality, and unemployment to union rivalry and the undemocratic nature of the labor relations. Such actions would be reasons why I would sometimes have to skip school due to the danger and unsafe actions that occurred in the streets of the areas I was based in. Fortunately my mother was able to come up and provide for my sister and I and was able to move us to the suburbs mid-2022.

South Africa, his homeland, and how it has shaped the modern nation that now exists. He also hoped to dispel misconceptions many of his classmates had about the country.

"I had been getting lots of questions about South Africa, about things that don't even exist or are not true. So, I wanted to put the truth out there so people could better understand my country," explained Dibetle.

An important resource Dibetle drew on to complete his paper was his own grandfather, who spoke with him about his experiences living in apartheid-era South Africa and how the nation has changed since its abolishment in the early 1990s.

As we celebrate the enduring legacy of the DeHart Project, we recognize that it not only marks the apex of a student's academic experience, but also fosters a deeper connection with the diverse narratives that shape our global community.

“WHEN FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD, WE CAN UNDERSTAND, APPRECIATE, AND CELEBRATE OUR DIFFERENCES, WHILE BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THAT LESSEN THE CHANCE OF NEW CONFLICTS.” – PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

GLOBAL POSITIONING

By Hannah Ewing
Upper School History Teacher

Model United Nations is a simulation experience that teaches invaluable lessons about global politics and the international community. North Cross students intensively research topics that represent pressing global issues and debate solutions with their peers. These simulations reflect the organization of the United Nations and encourages skills such as public speaking, background research, and debate etiquette. This promotes academic growth and helps our students become the future leaders of our community.

For the last three years, our school has attended the National High School Model United Nations (NHSMUN) in New York City, which attracts delegates from more than 130 countries. Our students are not only exposed to experts from around the world, but also

like-minded peers, and have made lasting international friendships.

At Model United Nations, students are exposed to speakers from all over the world, and from many different organizations and backgrounds. For example, in 2021, the students were privileged to hear Former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Rand Beers speak on his experience working for the United States government.

Since re-starting Model United Nations in 2021, approximately 30 students have attended each year. These students work diligently from September to March preparing for this conference, debating their peers, researching their topics, and crafting sophisticated research papers on specific global issues. Their dedication and professionalism are a shining testament of their own ability and to the community that has been built at North Cross School.

PHOTOS

LEFT: In 2022, Hania Raza '24 and Helen Hertz '24, represent Germany in the United Nations Environmental Assembly. RIGHT: Matt Landry '23 and Attilio Ciccozzi '24 are representatives for Mexico in the United Nations Human Rights Council and take part in an unmoderated caucus. The students discuss solutions to human rights in the textile industry and the promotion and protection of human rights on the internet.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

When Mac Byrd '27 first heard about a trip that North Cross had planned to Costa Rica in the summer of 2022 from his Middle School Spanish teacher Carrie Greer, he jumped at the chance to travel to a country he had never been to before. Unlike North Cross's annual trip to Argentina (page 9), this trip was less about language immersion and more about science. **The brainchild of Greer and former Middle School Science Teacher Sandy Patterson, the two envisioned a week-long international experience for 20 rising eighth, ninth, and tenth graders that would involve a science-based service project to teach the trip-goers about biology and environmental responsibility.**

Upon arrival, the students were immediately put to work clearing a beach of debris to make a safe pathway for nesting sea turtles. After laboring most of the day, the weary group would then patrol the beach late at night in the pitch dark looking for turtles laying their eggs. When a turtle was spotted with a special, turtle-safe red light, the students, chaperones, and group guides would collect the ping-pong-ball like eggs in a bucket and carry them to a location safe from predators. Once the eggs hatched, the baby turtles were then released back onto the beach where they would make their way to the ocean.

Byrd recalled seeing some of the hatchlings on his last two nights in Costa Rica, and how frustrating it was to see the slow-moving reptiles constantly repelled by the massive waves. It was worth it, however, when some finally successfully entered the ocean.

PHOTO

In Costa Rica, Cole Hoff '27 and fellow North Cross students kayak to an island for snorkeling and to view many varieties of fish and other sea creatures.

Greer admitted that the trip was not always easy. The work was physically challenging, there was not much time for sleep, and they happened to be there in the middle of rainy season. "It was intense and exhausting," recounted Greer, "but watching the students work hard for a good purpose was very rewarding." Greer went on to say that she was impressed with the students' flexibility. "We were wet and uncomfortable, but there was no complaining. They realized we had a job to do. They were resilient and amazing to travel with, even when we missed our connecting flight on the way home and had to spend the night in Miami. They taught me so much."

Sophia Camp '27 was also on the trip and reported that it was an excellent opportunity to experience new things. "How many times can you collect turtle eggs in your life?" she asked. "It felt good doing something for the environment, because we always talk about it, but this trip gave us a chance to act on it."

Amidst the demanding conservation work, the group discovered moments of pure enjoyment that added an exciting respite from their service-filled days. While the team remained actively dedicated to their mission, they also seized opportunities to dive headfirst into thrilling adventures: they surfed through the forest on zip lines,



embarked on a kayaking journey to a secluded island, explored vibrant underwater realms through snorkeling, and even tried rappelling—not just any rappelling, but a face-down descent that sent pulses racing! To balance the adrenaline surges, they immersed themselves in the local culture by trying their hand at salsa dancing, indulging in friendly volleyball matches with the locals, and savoring the diverse flavors of the native cuisine.

Speaking of cuisine, Camp was clearly impressed by it. Describing the food as nothing short of “amazing,” she was particularly captivated by the fresh fruit juices and the staple of beans and rice served with nearly every meal.

Greer, with a thoughtful perspective, emphasized the significance of exposing Middle Schoolers to international travel. She believes that travel opens minds,

as it is not just about witnessing new landscapes but also about forging connections with diverse people. It’s about immersing oneself in local cultures and, perhaps, even attempting to speak the local language. While some students initially hesitated to converse in Spanish, Greer encouraged them to take the plunge, reassuring them that making mistakes was part of the learning process. In her eyes, what truly mattered was the sincere effort to communicate and connect. In an anecdote she recounted, Greer spoke of how one student took on the role of a translator for a non-Spanish-speaking chaperone, facilitating a successful exchange with a local Costa Rican. “It was so exciting to witness!” Greer exclaimed, exemplifying the transformative power of travel and connection.



PHOTOS

ABOVE, RIGHT: The students use a red light while interacting with nesting sea turtles because it helps prevent turtle disorientations. ABOVE: On a beach where sea turtles frequently lay their eggs, students clean up heavy limbs and logs that are deposited on the shore from a nearby river.

“

It felt good doing something for the environment, because we always talk about it, but this trip gave us a chance to act on it.”

Sophia Camp '27

FACULTY FEATURE

Nicki Dabney

Before Nicki Dabney took on the role of North Cross's Director of International Operations four years ago, she had embarked on a unique journey teaching English in China for two rewarding years. This experience not only enriched her own perspective, but it later informed her approach to her responsibilities at North Cross. As the director of international operations, she supports mission-aligned curriculum and hiring for North Cross Shanghai, an extension of the school established in 2015 (page 24). Beyond her administrative role, Dabney also teaches Upper School English and Mandarin Chinese.

Dabney used to travel regularly to Shanghai before the pandemic. These trips were crucial for maintaining strong ties between the two campuses, facilitating collaboration among the administration, faculty, and students. However, the emergence of COVID-19 brought

international travel to an abrupt halt, presenting unforeseen challenges. Despite the pandemic-induced travel restrictions, Dabney eagerly awaited her return, and it finally materialized in June 2023 when she attended the North Cross Shanghai commencement ceremony alongside North Cross Head of School Armistead Lemon '95. Although the campuses remained linked virtually during the pandemic, this visit marked a significant in-person reconnection between the schools.

During their visit, Dabney and Lemon highlighted the importance of North Cross's mission in both Shanghai and Roanoke, emphasizing the schools' commitment to academic excellence and the development of critical thinkers and community leaders.

They noted that the ultimate goal for the two schools remains the same: preparing students to not only succeed, but to

thrive in college and in life beyond the classroom. Beyond administrative duties, Dabney has found special joy in assisting students in Shanghai with their college essays. She recognizes that this often marks their first foray into self-expression and finding their voice within a largely homogenous society that places less emphasis on individualism.

Dabney shares the vision of North Cross's board and administration to extend beyond the physical boundaries of their campuses. She expressed excitement about expanding programming to facilitate more frequent virtual learning exchanges between the Roanoke and Shanghai campuses. This expansion aims to enrich the educational experience for all students involved.

Recognizing potential reservations some might hold about building relationships in a country as complex as China, Dabney offers a perspective that encourages openness. She reminds us that a nation's government often does not reflect the true character of its people. This perspective underlines the importance of expanding our networks and learning from diverse perspectives.

In her unique way, Nicki Dabney is bridging cultural gaps and fostering understanding, one student at a time, through her work at North Cross and her personal commitment to enhancing international educational connections.

PHOTO

As our Chinese Language Teacher, Nicki Dabney helps facilitate the school's school-wide Lunar New Year celebration (page 33).



“

We wanted it to be like it is in China: people eating together and enjoying each other's company.”

Eason Zhou '24



CELEBRATING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR

North Cross unveiled its inaugural school-wide Lunar New Year Celebration in February 2023, a vibrant event that owed its inception and orchestration to the vision of Eason Zhou '24 (page 22) and the tireless efforts of the school's Chinese class and its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion club members. **This event, which was enjoyed again in**

2024, transcended age boundaries, drawing students and their families into a fun-filled journey through diverse cultural experiences, ranging from tantalizing food tastings to intricate paper cutting and spirited ping-pong matches.

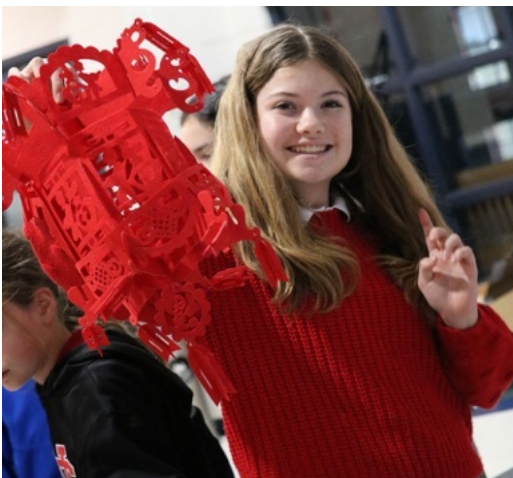
wide with substantial overseas Chinese populations.

Nicki Dabney, a dedicated Chinese teacher (page 32), marveled at the meticulous planning and dedication exhibited by the student organizers. “The reception exceeded our wildest expectations. The sheer turnout left us astounded!” Dabney exclaimed, her face alight with enthusiasm. “Witnessing the palpable interest, the fearless forays into new culinary delights by the students, and the harmonious gatherings of families was nothing short of exhilarating,” she enthused.

Eason Zhou, the creative force behind this jubilant celebration, shared his aspirations for the event, one that was not just fun but also richly educational. “The sight of everyone gathered around, enjoying good food while engaged in heartfelt conversations, was just great,” Zhou reflected. “Everyone is so busy these days, so it's nice to slow down and connect.”

PHOTOS

ABOVE: Izzy Snyder '26, Brianne Pollock, and Anna Ciccozzi '26 enjoy trying out hot pot cuisine at the Lunar New Year Festival. BOTTOM LEFT: Mille Chopski '26 shows off a traditional Chinese paper lantern. BOTTOM RIGHT: Harriet '34 gets a helping hand with her chopsticks from her father.



ALL in THE FAMILY

By Ekta Bansal and Ritesh Kohli
Parents of Purab '32 and Mohan Kohli '36

My husband and I are of Indian origin and while navigating our early medical careers, we landed in Roanoke in 2011 as budding physicians. Slowly we realized the value of Roanoke as a “hidden gem” nested in nature’s lap and a perfect place for raising our family after we gave birth to our older son in 2014 and second son in 2018.

As young parents, we aim to raise our kids with a good education, inculcate values of patience, respect, integrity, honesty and compassion, while also appreciating diversity, practicing open mindset, and inclusion towards building a stronger community. As a family with a different cultural background, making decisions for our kids’ school came with a great amount of diligence.

We joined NCS in 2017 after we toured it and fell in love with its multicultural environment, academic structure, and friendly staff with years of experience. Both our kids joined NCS as young as three years old in their first Early Childhood Program (ECP) class and they/we have loved every single day at the school.

learning about and celebrating the Spanish Festival, FIFA World Cup, participation in Local Colors events, learning and celebrating African culture, also International Day celebrations displaying several countries’ colorful culture and food, learning about festivals around the world, and the list goes on.

One of the common struggles for any international family at any given place is the challenge to try to teach the kids their inherited cultural values and festivals. And it is from NCS that I learned it is much easier for kids to recognize and appreciate their own roots as a part of the multicultural learning at the school.

I specifically remember an incidence when I casually mentioned our special festival called Diwali to my older son’s then ECP teacher. To our pleasant surprise, his teacher made an effort to teach her class kids about Diwali and my son came home excited one day to celebrate this festival at home. Since then, every year, I have been welcomed by the school to educate kids about Diwali and share this special festival with them.

NCS has made us feel everyday a special part of the school community and for us it’s like a home away from our “back home.”

Being a part of NCS has been one of the best decisions of our life.

We feel the appreciation for diversity at school, from learning international musical instruments to

PHOTO

Purab Kohli '32 (with Fuzzy the dog), Ekta Bansal, Mohan '36, and Ritesh have been a proud North Cross family for six years.



YOUNG EXPLORERS

By Annie Robertson
First Grade Teacher

The goal of our first grade end-of-year program, "Welcome to Roanoke, Flat Stanley!" is for students to become knowledgeable about the landmarks, geographical features, and civil works that make the Roanoke Valley a thriving, vibrant place to live and contribute to. Prior to their social studies unit on community each year, the first grade teachers observed a strong connection between pictures of Roanoke landmarks and student engagement. "The first year we did a virtual tour around Roanoke, we could hardly get through the presentation because the students were so excited to share their personal experiences at each landmark. It was one of those moments where all the hands on the rug were raised and jumping in the air. We quickly realized that students already had a strong sense of ownership in their local community, and we wanted to run with that idea and expand upon it!"

We took our community unit and linked it with a series of books we read in first grade, *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown. One of the extraordinary things about Flat Stanley is that he can travel easily through the mail and explore new places. In our program, Flat Stanley is delivered to Roanoke, where the first grade students at North Cross are awaiting his arrival and

ready to show him around their city! Our student "tour guides" take a family field trip earlier in the school year to a chosen Roanoke landmark, whether it relates to entertainment, food, community services, or nature. After taking pictures, doing a little research, and writing about their destination, they submit their work to their teachers. Their personal experiences are showcased during small group and individual speaking portions of the program, as Flat Stanley hops from restaurants, to outdoor activities, museums and businesses around the city. Songs for the program, other than *Brilla, Brilla Estrelita* led by Sra. Boush, were written by Mrs. Gamble and Mrs. Robertson during the summer of 2017, along with musical accompaniment and guidance from Mr. Rudolph. They include Roanoke relevant titles such as *Star City Stomp*, *From Train to Brain*, and *Have You Been to North Cross School?*

As an extension activity, students are asked to send their Flat Stanleys to a family member or friend outside of the Roanoke Valley and take a picture with Flat Stanley in a new location. This past year, the first graders proudly displayed over 70 pictures of Flat Stanley domestically and abroad, submitted by friends and family members from all over the world! Memorable pictures collected over the past few years include Flat Stanley in front

of the Eiffel Tower, in the Middle East alongside a sibling in the U.S. military, at Camp Nou in Barcelona with Lionel Messi playing in the background, Flat Stanley sailing away with a cousin in the Virgin Islands, admiring the lobby at Caesar's Palace, hanging out in the French Quarter district of New Orleans, the pyramids in Egypt, and even attending class at our North Cross campus in Shanghai, China!



"SOME GRASP OF GEOGRAPHY IS ESSENTIAL AS
PEOPLE SEEK TO MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD
AND UNDERSTAND THEIR PLACE IN IT."
– NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

PHOTOS

TOP: Flat Stanley made it all the way to the pyramids in Cairo, Egypt last year! BOTTOM: First graders present what they have learned about Roanoke and the world in a year-end performance for family and friends.

LIFELONG LEARNING

We often celebrate the incredible community that constitutes the essence of North Cross School. Outstanding students, dedicated faculty, supportive families, and cherished friends come together to create what we fondly refer to as the 'Magic of North Cross.' We firmly believe that our beautiful 79-acre campus and the individuals who teach, learn, and work here are truly exceptional.

At North Cross, our foremost objective is to equip our students with the tools they need to thrive at the next level, whether it be in college or the wider world.

Beginning with our Early Childhood Program (ECP), our educational approach is deliberately designed to foster competence, independence, and accountability. These qualities are instrumental in nurturing self-assured individuals.

In our Lower School, we provide students with a strong foundation in subjects like Singapore Math and Spanish, and ensure they engage in physical education daily. Our approach to literacy, which starts in the ECP and continues through second grade, is structured and comprehensive. Beyond this stage, our approach pivots toward 'read-to-learn,' emphasizing comprehension skills and encouraging students to explore a multitude of books. Consequently, our Lower School students typically develop reading skills at an earlier stage than their counterparts in public schools.

We also place a high premium on the ability to speak confidently in public, teaching our students the art of making eye contact and shaking hands when interacting with adults. These 'soft skills' are integral to personal growth.

As students transition to the Middle School, they encounter more responsibilities, opportunities, and, in turn, a greater need for time-management skills. Our faculty is unwavering in their commitment to nurturing academic, social, and emotional development during this crucial phase of growth. We encourage the acquisition of aca-

demical and interpersonal skills, including establishing boundaries, honing study techniques, fostering personal independence, and nurturing leadership abilities.



In our pursuit of preparing students for college, we offer Upper School students a diverse range of college-level (AP) courses and present three diploma distinction programs for students to demonstrate their commitment to achieve. Smaller class sizes across all grades and an abundance of community engagement opportunities are the hallmarks of our educational approach. Being an independent school grants us the autonomy and flexibility to adapt and inspire our faculty to challenge students to realize their full potential.

Recognizing that each student is unique and learns differently, we established the CrossWalk Program in 2012. This initiative provides over two dozen students with specialized daily instruction using the Orton-Gillingham approach, widely regarded as the 'gold standard' for addressing language-based learning differences such as dyslexia. This highly individualized, small-group instruction is integrated seamlessly into a student's daily schedule, enriching our educational landscape.

We understand at North Cross that education is the foundation of promise and progress, and it is the accelerator and amplifier of human potential. From innovative curriculum and experiential programming to enriching co-curricular activities and community engagement, our school allows each student to grow not only as an individual but also as an effective team member and community leader.

PHOTO

Students take part in a hands-on engineering experience where they can explore the world of design and innovation. It is offered as part of our Lower School after-school program called Opening Doors.

QUICK FACTS

Founded - **1944**

Total Enrollment - 590

STUDENT-TO-FACULTY RATIO - **8:1**

Average Class Size - **14**

HONOR CODE - I will not lie. I will not cheat.
I will not steal.

AP Courses Offered - 21

**TOTAL COURSES OFFERED IN THE UPPER
SCHOOL - 76**

Countries Represented By Our International Students Over the
Past 20 Years - **28**

International Students - 17% of Enrollment

**AVERAGE GRADUATING CLASS
SIZE - 44**

**3 Additional Diploma Distinctions: Global
Studies | STEM | Fine Arts**

PURSUING A PASSION



As an independent school, North Cross offers a broad educational experience and encourages students to follow their passions and perhaps develop new interests by participating in a variety of activities, including athletics and the arts. We encourage our students to sign up, show up, have new experiences, develop new friendships as they develop new skills, and perhaps step out of their comfort zones as they display their talents on a court or field, or in a gallery or auditorium. We're a facility-rich school with a broad array of extracurricular programs to try.

With 35 varsity teams representing 13 different sports, North Cross has a robust athletic program with many opportunities for our students to participate. We are proud of the fact that the program has quite an impressive history: 175 conference titles and 27 state championships, with 20 percent of the class of 2023 committed to playing sports at the collegiate level. Our student athletes learn teamwork, personal responsibility, and achievement, and they also learn through

disappointment. Being on a team is important - after all, most people will be on some sort of team in their future, so working together is a life skill they will need. And even if a student does not make the starting lineup, they learn they can and will contribute.

At North Cross, we also understand that education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-being. Experiences in the arts—in theatre, band, chorus, and visual arts—play a valuable role in helping

students to achieve their potential as learners and to participate fully in their community and in society as a whole. The arts provide a natural vehicle through which students can explore and express themselves and through which they can discover and interpret the world around them. Participation in the arts contributes in important ways to students' lives and learning—it involves intense engagement, development of motivation and confidence, and the use of creative and dynamic ways of thinking and knowing. And because art is integrated into—and required at—every grade level at North Cross, students learn to appreciate the many ways in which they can express their creativity.

Beyond athletics and arts, students have many other areas in which to express and develop their interests. From robotics and skiing to coding and chess clubs, students are encouraged to explore new experiences and develop new skills. Additionally, grade 8-12 students take part in a

day-long Symposium where local artists, scientists, and everyone in between are brought to present “mini-courses” in their field of expertise. To further students' exposure to diverse career opportunities, Upper Schoolers may apply to one of many summer internships at local businesses or organizations. Past opportunities have included work at The Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, Mill Mountain Theatre, and Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black Law Firm.



PHOTOS

ABOVE, LEFT: Aashna Patel '30, Sidney Yardley '30, Belle McNamara '30, Sarah Cline '30, and other Lower School students delight audiences with their performance of the Wizard of Oz in 2022. ABOVE: Charlie Zhao '26 moves the ball down the field for the junior varsity soccer team.

LEADING THE WAY

SAVE THE DATE!

**North Cross School
Third-Annual
Alumni Reunion Weekend
April 4-5, 2025**

- Athletic Hall of Fame Induction
- Home Athletic Events & Tailgate
- Head of School Brunch
- Campus Tours
- Class Dinners

North Cross aspires to be the finest independent school in the region while keeping tuition affordable.

The majority of our school's revenue comes from tuition and philanthropy from our school community and businesses in our region. North Cross relies on fundraising each year to fill the gap between tuition revenues and operating costs and to support the significant amount of financial aid we award to families each year.

You, too, can make a big impact at North Cross School with a contribution to the Annual Fund or even a future gift. Generosity comes in many forms, and it is often the best way for you to support important causes that matter the most in your life. When you give to North Cross, you help us make a difference. We understand how satisfying it is to be part of a greater good.

Giving is not one-size-fits all at North

Cross. There are a number of affordable and convenient ways for you to make an impact. The most important thing to know is that we will work with you to find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and support the school.

We encourage you to join with other members of our community to make a difference. Visit the North Cross School website at northcross.org/online-giving.html to learn more about giving options available to you, including gifts by will or trust, naming us in your assets, and charitable lead trusts.

If you have questions at any time or would like to speak to someone in the Advancement Office at North Cross, please reach out to:

William Greer
Assistant Head of School for Advancement
Phone: 540.676.7477
Email: wgreer@northcross.org



PHOTO

Alani '36 and Wyatt '35 lead the pack in the Take the Hill Kids Fun Run organized by the North Cross School Parents' Association every September.



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