

Writer Misunderstands Senate Consensus Process

Vance Ricks and Guy Vitaglione
Guest Writers

The error that placed Wayne Nash's letter in the April Fool's Day side of *The Guilfordian* was an apt one, yet we would like to respond to the letter anyway.

Ironically, Nash fails to mention that all of the points and objections he raises apply with even greater force to Senate's decision last year to approve the current policy (which he helped to create). Both then and now, some students questioned the legitimacy of the decision and denied that consensus had been achieved. Both then and now, some students claimed that they lost interest in the debate and felt that the issue was no longer worth discussing. Both then and now, some students felt that their opinions would inevitably be ignored,

and decided to remain silent rather than express their disagreement.

When Nash says that "a majority... won," he is revealing a profound, and disturbing, ignorance of consensus decision-making. In consensus, the sense of the group is what determines the decision; concepts such as "majority," "factions," "battle" and "fighting" express an adversarial, confrontational mentality that could partially explain why it took Senate so long to resolve the drug policy issue.

Nash is correct when he says that the new drug policy was not supported by every senator. It is a truism that no drug policy will be supported by every single student. But with his years of experience in Senate and at Guilford, Nash should have learned the difference between unanimity and consensus. The decision to

revise the drug policy may not have been unanimous, but the fact that there was disagreement does not mean that a consensus was not reached by the group. Thus, Nash's claim that "complete consensus" was not reached is simply incoherent.

The crucial error in Nash's thinking is indicated with his statement: "Admittedly, we accepted the policy changes when Ricks asked for approval by saying nothing, but we did not approve of the new policy." Wrong. He not only accepted, but he approved the policy changes by saying nothing. Consensus relies on members of a group to express their views. Since no one (not even the Senate president) can read minds, it is vital that participants in a discussion express their opinions verbally. If people in the group do indeed feel that a "stalemate" has been reached, it is their

responsibility to help resolve the matter, not sit passively and complain later.

Nash says that in the "group, of whom [sic] he is a member, it was felt "that the current policy would inevitably be changed, with or without their [sic] input." This view is disappointing. Senate has striven to be an open forum, and during the debate (which began last September) has repeatedly sought input, especially from students who support the current policy. But if, as Nash claims, "the battle was no longer worth fighting," then it was certainly not worth writing about, either. We hope that his letter was more a product of sour grapes than of reflective thought.

The writers are the current Community Senate president and future Community Senate president, respectively

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come before the faculty sometime at the beginning of the fall 1991 semester. If passed, the freshmen entering Guilford as early as the fall of 1992 would have to meet the new requirement.

The proposal offers five ways to meet the requirement. They are:

- complete a semester or year on an overseas program
- complete a semester or year on an off-campus domestic program which offers a different setting from Guilford's
- complete an internship which places the student in an environment different

from the student's original home environment

- complete a combination of four seminars completed during school breaks
- complete a summer program, either overseas or domestic, which offers an experience in a different cultural setting

"I feel fairly optimistic," said Cooley of the proposal's chances of being approved by the faculty.

Some have expressed objections to the plan, however. Physics professor Rex Adelberger has taken four groups to Germany since 1978 and he said he plans to oppose the proposal.

"There are people who find it hard to live at Guilford after coming from West Virginia or New Jersey or wherever," said Adelberger, speaking about the possibility

of sending students abroad who wouldn't have gone before the mandatory program. "That's a minor change compared to living in a rural countryside in Europe."

Adelberger sees two reasons for the drive for mandatory study off-campus.

"Some folks at Guilford are into 'global perspective,' and they see this as one way to [promote it]," he said. "Also, it makes Guilford sound interesting."

"[The proposal would] distract from the main thrust of the college—to provide an education."

A memorandum written by Cooley on behalf of the Curriculum Task Force said that to make this proposal possible, Guilford would need to add as many as three more professors to compensate for the extra faculty members spending semesters

abroad. In addition, the memo said, the Off Campus Education Office would need "reorganization," defined as "additional clerical or administrative assistance or a full-time director."

"We will have to phase [the program] in over time [if passed]," said Jim Newlin, vice president for finance and development. "There are two questions here: 1. Is there the funding for this proposal, and 2. how high is it on our list of priorities?"

He said that if passed by the faculty, the proposal would have to go to the Strategic Long-Range Planning Committee and possibly the Board of Trustees before being enacted.

"We're being very careful in moving," said Cooley, "But the support and interest is here."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Make Serendipity '91 Safe and Memorable

To the Editor:

This is an open letter to the Student Body.

Serendipity '91 is just around the corner. This annual event, planned and organized by the Union, has become a popular student tradition. The enthusiasm expressed and shared by the student body and Guilford alumni is one to be marveled at and enjoyed, as it is indeed a "fun weekend."

For the most part, the tradition of having a "fun weekend" is alive and well during Serendipity; however, there is another side which detracts from this positive spirit. Some students perceive this event as a traditional time to "let loose" in a way which often results in the destruction of campus property, disrespect for others and difficulties with substance and alcohol abuse.

We now find that there are students leaving campus during Serendipity weekend because they no longer enjoy what should be an all-campus celebration for everyone. In order to ensure that this annual festivity

can continue in the future, we, as a community need to reassess how we can assure that Serendipity be a more enjoyable and safe event.

Your elected Union representatives have worked hard this year to establish new guidelines, policies and procedures to enhance the enjoyment, safety and management of Serendipity '91. The bands and "happenings" will be great but only if each Serendipity participant shares in the desire to uphold community standards for the respect of persons and property. Talk it over with your roommate, your friends and ask, "What is your personal commitment to make Serendipity '91 a safe and memorable event for everyone?"

Bill Rogers, president; Barton Parks, clerk of the faculty; Charlie Beery, Union president; Steve Lubber, facilities manager

Tradition Lives On

To the Editor:

We would like to thank the members of the Guilford community who supported the 1991 Student Loan Fund Auction on March 23. As a result of this year's auction,

\$14,000 has been added to the fund. This money is available through the Financial Aid Office to students in need.

We hope that student, faculty, administration and staff will continue to realize the importance of this Guilford tradition.

Cari Boram, Amy Fox, Doug Griffith, Kady Judge, Michael Kopcsak, Beth Offenber, Cronin Warmack and Ellyn Wells
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