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Anti-racism initiative approved

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"Racism is destructive to the health and well-being of everyone, everywhere, and Guilford College is not immune."

So says the new Guilford College Anti-Racism Initiative, which was endorsed by the Board of Trustees in February and which the faculty and staff approved last week. The initiative, which will formally begin next fall, is designed to analyze and dismantle institutional racism at Guilford in a process that could take 20 years.

In order to develop the initiative, college administrators, faculty, and staff, have been working with members of the Crossroads Ministry, an organization that describes itself as "an inter-faith ministry for racial justice that provides education and training to dismantle racism and build anti-racist multicultural diversity." Over the next two years, Crossroads members will train a diverse cross-section of the Guilford community to analyze institutional racism at the college.

"The team will focus on looking at the way racism perpetuates itself in institutions," said Judy Harvey, Director of Internships and Service Learning and the self-described glue who will hold the program together. "[We need] to learn how racism functions and perpetuates itself in an institution as well-meaning as Guilford."

Next year will serve as a team building, training, and strategic planning period for the anti-racism team. Training will occur in August and over fall and spring breaks, as well as throughout the academic year. The team will consist of trustees, senior administrators, alums, faculty, staff, main campus students, CCE students, and several members of the Greensboro community. Ideally, according to Harvey, the team will include people of all colors, several queer people, and several Quakers.



JUSTIN BETSON

Katherine Gardner and Summer Starling toil in the hot sun. The permaculture garden is between the Pines and the President's house.

"We want to encourage wide application, wide interest, and wide participation," said psychology professor Claire Morse, who has also taken on a leadership role in planning the Initiative.

The team will develop anti-racism strategies that are suited to Guilford's particular background, situation, and needs. Over the next several years, they will work to implement these plans to make all aspects of the Guilford community actively anti-racist. This is a lofty goal; everyone involved acknowledges that the process will take at least 20 years.

James Shields, Coordinator of Volunteer Training, believes that the initiative will benefit all those who work on it, even before the goals are accomplished. "[Racism] is not only in the usual places that we think about it," Shields said. "but it's in our institutions. When we go out into the community, I don't want to be a hypocrite."

Shields pointed out that although the college claims to be non-discriminatory, "there are still systems in place that create a situation where you only have a few people of color in the faculty, but then look at the housekeeping department. There are lots of people of color."

This is the difference between institutional racism and the other forms Crossroads Ministry iden-

tifies - individual and cultural. If an institution is racist, and certain elements of its structure perpetuate that racism, even the best intentions of individuals involved in the institution may not be productive. This is why Crossroads designs programs to be implemented over several decades.

"Institutional change is designed to be slow, and hard, and to not disrupt the institution," said philosophy professor Lisa McLeod, who helped to write the proposal that was approved by the Board, faculty, and staff. Because the programs do take so long, it is difficult to imagine what the end result will be. "Nobody in our culture has any idea exactly what an anti-racist institution would look like," she said.

The faculty, staff, and trustees, however, seem to be looking forward to finding out. Although the Initiative has not yet been formally presented to students, several students have been working with the faculty in the planning stages. Member of the White Perspectives on Racial Issues group

will host a meeting next week for interested students.

"The only thing we're missing, really, is money," said McLeod. Although the college has pledged approximately \$30,000 to fund the first two years, the total cost will reach at least \$90,000. In theory, the difference will be made up by foundational grants.

But "it's more important than how much it's going to cost," said Shields. "This goes a long way to helping us say, this is what Guilford is about."

With the college in a state of transition, the organizers of the initiative hope that it will become an integral part of Guilford's mission and identity. As an institution that "seeks to cultivate respect for all individuals," the college needs to directly address, in actions as well as in words, issues of discrimination and prejudice.

Anyone who wants to apply for a position on the anti-racism team should attend the meeting next Wednesday night at 7:30 (location to be announced), or contact Judy Harvey.

