

# Chabotar breathes new life into Guilford

**Matt Goldman**

Staff Writer

While being interviewed for the position of Guilford College's eighth president, Kent Chabotar arrived in Greensboro by plane and was driven to the college campus. In summer 2002, he made his first solo car trip to Greensboro and, unfamiliar with the area and driving through Greensboro on his own for the first time, he could not figure out where the campus was.

"The signs marking the college were so bad that I couldn't find it," he said. "I was at the Friendly Shopping Center before I decided to call Joyce (Eaton) to direct me to school."

The incident inspired Chabotar to add more prominent Guilford College markers on the outskirts of campus.

Making Guilford more noticeable has apparently been Chabotar's plan from the get-go.

Since October of his first year, Chabotar and the Strategic Long

Range Planning (SLRP) committee have been devising a plan to bring prominence to Guilford College. They are striving to make Guilford a well-known liberal arts school strong in specific academic areas. The second draft of the plan was e-mailed to the community on April 1.

"Right now I feel like we're too thinly spread," said Chabotar. "Guilford needs direction. It needs to know what it's good at. People should come here because Guilford has a reputation for strength in some area whether its forensic biology or social activism."

Chabotar knew he had his work cut out for him when he accepted the position and he says that he is up to the challenge.

"People were not reluctant to level with me," he said. "They showed me both the problems of the school and the opportunity that it offered. You've got to remember that I'm a finance and fact guy - I like data collecting. I knew I was investing in a potential winner."

Chabotar intends to address certain

campus-wide problems such as the school's ongoing retention difficulties. Currently, retention rates are average but, according to Chabotar, not good enough. He compares the image of the school to a Rorschach inkblot test.

"Sometimes it's unclear as to what exactly the image of Guilford is. A lot of students come to this school expecting something completely different than what it actually is."

He sees admissions literature showing the diversity of the student body as a possible solution.

"I want to see an athlete, a scholar, a kid with blue hair, a homecoming king or queen, and a social activist," he said. "That's what the real world is like."

In addition, the president would like to increase the school's size to 3,000, as he believes that Guilford will have more room for academic growth with a larger student body.

"Right now we have 90 programs," he said. "That's too many for our cur-

rent size. A larger amount of students and faculty will give us 90 programs that really mean something."

Guilford is Chabotar's first experience with a Quaker school, and he has no intention of eliminating Guilford's religious affiliation.

"My plan for this school is to fix the things that need fixing without wrecking the things that are OK," he said. "Our Quaker heritage is one aspect of the school that we need to make sure we maintain."

It's been almost two years since Chabotar became president. He has come to appreciate many aspects of the school, from its uniquely diverse student body to the way campus looks in the spring.

But he knows that there are still changes that need to be made.

"This is a college that needs to believe in itself. It needs to be tolerant of differences. Guilford needs to decide what it's going to be and uphold that image."

## Two leave Women's Studies Dept.

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Even though the retirement celebration had an air of joyous commemoration, the loss to the department - and college - was evident.

"We are losing a lot of knowledge of Guilford's past," said junior Sara Kate Kneidel, a Women's Studies major. "It isn't necessarily bad; it just means we have to move forward. It does affect our understanding of the present."

Gibson and Stoneburner have left lasting impressions in their time at Guilford, as can be seen in the excitement in both themselves and their students.

"I loved teaching classes outdoors," said Gibson. "[One time] we were under a tree and everybody was speaking golden words and the tree was shedding golden leaves. It was one of those rare classes where everybody was on track."

"[Gibson] really listens to students," said Gwen Madill, senior Women's Studies major. "The fact she's writing down stuff we say in class - it shows she's learning from us."

"[Stoneburner] has [also] been a big part of my Guilford experience," Madill continued. "There's something about Carol's investment in Women's Studies that I'm worried it might lose after she's gone."

"[Stoneburner] pushed me to think about parts of myself I probably wouldn't have thought about," said Kneidel.

Due to the theme of the event - that of celebration - the two speakers did not reflect on their internal grief to the audience.

"[Stoneburner] was mourning too," said Gibson. "I have mourned a lot over the semester ... I've been in school since I've been five. What the hell is the world outside like? It's scary to me - I feel like I need to go find out."

"I intentionally asked for [the celebration to be held on] April Fools' Day," said Stoneburner. "I needed to try to be true to my feminist convictions."

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's Studies program at Guilford. Since its inception in 1974, over 180 students have majored or concentrated in women's studies.

## Founders renovations

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mailboxes. The roof of the addition will feature skylights, emphasizing natural lighting even in the basement level.

Renovation plans also include overhauling Sternberger, the Underground, and non-public areas, such as offices, health services and career planning. The plans also anticipate moving the Theater department to Dana Auditorium, which would then become a performing arts center.

This will not happen anytime soon, Zerbe said. "For the next five years we're in Sternberger, unless someone walks up and plunks down five to ten million dollars."

Some students and faculty voiced concerns about the ecological soundness of the new Founders, both during construction and operation. The class of '04 has elected to donate a sum towards making the New Founders environmentally friendly in multiple ways, including the use of solar power panels.

Geology Professor Angela Moore is enthusiastic about the renovations, recalling that when she arrived at

Guilford she filled out a survey that asked what she would improve about the campus.

Moore says her response was instantaneous. "Founders. It's terrible. As far as environmentalism is concerned, Guilford has a long way to go, but this is a start," referring to environmentalism's priority in the renovations.

Student reactions were generally supportive, mainly concerned with cost.

"It's a good idea," said first-year Sarah Meyer. "I don't know if I'd spend five million dollars, but I think there need to be a space for students to hang out that's separate from where the administration's offices are."

Sophomore Hope Forester was less enthusiastic, saying "I'd rather have a mediocre Founders hall than a ton of student loans."

But first-year Tristan Wilson took the long view. "Schools that have newer buildings and higher tuition rates tend to be perceived as more selective ... That's why they always take prospectives through Frank. I'm not thrilled about the cost, but I feel it will make my degree worth more."