

'Family Guy' Vanke leaving Guilford

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W&N Editor

Jeff Vanke has senior-itis. This is his last semester at Guilford, as he's stepping down from his position as assistant professor of history to spend time with his family.

Vanke came to Guilford in 1999, and has become a thriving member of the Guilford community. He submitted his letter of resignation last May. Vanke admits rumors about his leaving have been circulating around campus, though these rumors are not the reason for his leaving.

"Some people have different impressions about why I'm really leaving; some of them are completely false," said Vanke. "There are three main reasons: I live in Chapel Hill ... more than an hour away; I've been doing that commute for five years and it's just no fun.

"Paired with that is the fact (my wife) had a child in the summer of 2002 ... I am interested in spending more time with my son," he said.

Additionally, Vanke has found it difficult to balance raising a family and being a full-time professor: "The third reason I am leaving Guilford

is because faculty are required to spend a lot of time in meetings and in administrative tasks. (As a full-time father) that's a lot of work."

Vanke has taught many First Year Experience (FYE) and Modern Europe-focused history classes. In the five years he's been at Guilford he has already seen one set of incoming first-years graduate. This year's seniors will be the second group.

"I already feel emotional about leaving the teaching and especially since spring break. Every day multiple students come to me and tell me how sorry they are that I'm

leaving," said Vanke.

"He is among the best teachers I've had at Guilford," said senior Keenan Miller. "The thing about (Vanke) is that he plays an essential role at Guilford; basically, he forces students to think."

"He had an obvious enthusiasm for what he was teaching ... which made him very appealing. (He taught you) if you're going to have an opinion, explain it and support it. It's an essential portion of an undergraduate education - to produce people who know how to think," said Miller.

"Guilford has lost a professor who really was involved in

student affairs," said sophomore Phil Newell, who helped campaign for Vanke when he ran for mayor of Carrboro last year. "He's committed to helping people ... he's involved in a great many things."

Newell also noted that at ratemyprofessor.com, Vanke rates among the highest.

Vanke graduated from Duke as an undergrad and received his Ph.D. from Harvard.

"I view my job here about overwhelmingly teaching the students and that's been the big draw for me to keep commuting for three years, it's the thing I'm going to miss the most," said Vanke.

Students question personnel decisions

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dents regarding Saunders' absence. When the rumor first broke out the evening of April 12, it ignited a flurry of diverse responses from students, faculty and staff.

Student reactions were broad. Some students were concerned with Saunders' overall job performance.

For others, first-hand encounters of Saunders' leaving and rumors of her treatment were enough to spawn concern.

"In a forum (Monday night) on the history of racism at Guilford ... administration, staff, and students were talking about how the way Rebecca was fired relates to Guilford's history of racism," said sophomore Sarah Green, president-elect of Union. "In discussion ... I found out that the way she was treated - escorted off campus, blocked from reentering Founders and being forced to stand outside holding personal possessions - was not typical of Guilford policy. (There was concern) about this being related to race and not just (job) performance."

"I saw her leaving Founders and I saw her carrying her boxes out," said junior Abdul-Qawiy Abdul-Karim, president-elect of Senate. "Students have stated that they saw her physically

blocked from her office and physically blocked from Founders."

With the turbulence of reactions growing, Doss sent a community-wide e-mail on April 13. The e-mail acknowledged that developing information regarding "a recent personnel decision" led to "inquiries and comments" from the campus community. Accordingly, the e-mail noted the administrative obligation to respect "the law and privacy rights" of the unidentified Guilford employee.

In an interview with *The Guilfordian*, Doss further responded to the controversy surrounding Saunders' absence, and the controversial reactions from students.

"Rebecca Saunders is no longer employed by Guilford College," said Doss. "Federal law prohibits employers from commenting on personal matters (regarding firing procedures). The frustrating thing is at we literally cannot say anything in respect for the individual."

"I can say that all employees are judged on their job descriptions and the ability, initiative, and success of completing the expectations of their job description," said Doss.

In addition to Doss' e-mail, the administration acted fast to quell the responses to action that were already

in motion. President Kent Chabator e-mailed the community addressing personnel confidentiality. Chabator's e-mail also conveyed the parable of "The Blind Men and the Elephant" to assure that administrative personnel decisions are inclusive of the whole picture when issuing personnel changes.

Through student initiative, a massive e-mail campaign Monday night called for student action to discuss issues of racism on campus, the absence of students in personnel decisions, and the treatment of faculty and staff.

An organized forum on April 13 drew over a hundred students. The discussion gave students an opportunity to sort rumor from fact.

"Students ... (are more concerned about) the manner in which (Saunders) was treated in leaving campus, than her actually leaving campus because no one really knows why she left," said Abdul-Karim.

The forum was also an opportunity to address Guilford's anti-racism policy, the myths and facts of the incident, and how to pursue student involvement in future personnel decisions.

Although Lundquist's office hours were cancelled that week, she responded to the controversies that arose from Saunders' absence through e-mails distributed to information desk student employees.

Lundquist will be handling the affairs of the Student Involvement and Leadership position for the remainder of the academic year.

The Campus Life administration is pursuing an immediate replacement.

Saunders was not available for comment.

THE GUILFORDIAN Corrections

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