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Students react to changes to financial aid

Lisa Meagher

Staff Writer

“We're being punished for having good grades," said junior Heidi Kessler.

On March 29 eight students opposed to the merit-based financial cut for next semester met in the lobby of Founders hall. They discussed ideas for a fair and just agreement on the issue.

Of the eight students who attended the meeting, there were off and on campus students, all of whom shared suggestions and information as to how they can propose either a meeting or panel discussion to explain the policy.

"The language (of the policy) was unclear, as it was reported in *The Guilfordian*," said off-campus junior Julie Sloane.

In an e-mail, Vice President for Enrollment and Campus Life Randy Doss attempted to clarify any confusion due to language or other logistical concerns after getting student responses and concerns.

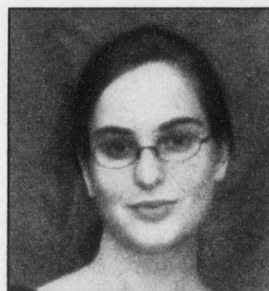
"Since there were student questions, we needed to clarify changes approved by the Budget Committee" said Doss. "So in one sense, it was a response to student questions, although no additional changes have been made."

The policy gives a brief overview of the financial aid awarded to students, how the policy affects current on and off-campus students, and the "myths and facts" of any rumors or gossip circulating in terms of the financial aid change.

The revised policy states, "Currently enrolled off-campus students will not be affected."

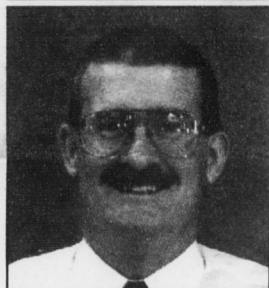
The policy also states, "Currently enrolled on-campus students who want to move off campus will be affected."

"It's the only aid (the administration) can



control" said sophomore Leah Vandenberg, on the issue of cutting the merit-based scholarships 25 percent to live off campus.

When the fall 2005 semester begins, merit-based scholarship aid will be cut 25 percent to those students wishing to live off campus. The new policy, implemented by the Office of



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Above: Sloane

Below: Doss (L) and Gurley (R)

Enrollment and Campus Life, will not affect Bonner or need-based scholarships.

Sloane, who announced and organized the meeting, shared ideas as to who and how they could change the policy and make their statement heard.

"Although I'm not affected by this new policy, I know it's just completely chance," said Sloane. "Had I moved off campus one semester later than I did, I would no longer be able to attend Guilford."

Some students find it is cheaper to live off campus. A letter sent to the students' home addresses notifying raised tuition for 2005 increased concern about the affordability of living on campus as opposed to off.

"I'm sure there are a lot of other people in the same situation as me who can't afford to live on campus anymore, but as a result of this aid cut can probably not afford to live off campus either" said Sloane.

"I feel like they are using our scholarships as leverage to manipulate students to do whatever they want since they know we depend on that money" said Vandenberg, who receives the merit-based honors scholarship.

"You can't halfway sneak it in" said Vandenberg. "This residence requirement was not an original stipulation on our scholarships."

When asked about the prospective students and the underclassmen who still plan to move off campus, Associate Dean of Enrollment Anthony Gurley said via e-mail, "I don't think this is (or) will be a major issue."

"As a matter of practice, when the issue of merit scholarships has been discussed during pre-enrollment conversations, their renewal based on specific academic requirements was covered without any mention of residential expectations," Gurley said.

Although the off-campus students are grandfathered into the new policy, there is concern for the on-campus students who are now subject to a different policy as to which they were not before.

"Now that we have codified a policy regarding this, admission and financial aid will have to be sure to cover this aspect of the merit awards when they are discussed for future students ... In this case what we had was a practice that had never been codified into a policy. Upon review of the practice, we made the decision to codify a new policy," Gurley said.

For the on-campus, merit-based students who chose Guilford due to the financial aid, the new policy can pose a problem paying for tuition next semester. The new policy can also affect incoming freshman making a decision to attend Guilford.

"The administration needs to take into consideration that this may force good students into dropping out or transferring because they can't afford to pay that extra 25 percent," Sloane said.

"I hope there will be minimal impact here," Gurley said via e-mail. "I don't think the policy will have any effect on need-based aid recipients' making the decision to come to Guilford or not."

"Need base doesn't cover everyone who needs it" said Kessler, who also lives off-campus.

"This puts students who are high achievers in a really unfair position, especially since many students work hard to receive

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