



Tragedy at Tech causes ripples at Guilford

NASI EASTON | SENIOR WRITER

One week after a 23-year-old Hokie's rampage left 33 dead and 29 wounded, students at Virginia Tech, as well as campuses around the nation, are beginning to move on.

Classes resumed at Tech (whose mascot is "the Hokie") today, following a ceremony commemorating the 32 people the gunman, Seung-Hui Cho, killed before turning the gun on himself. Students who'd rather take the rest of the semester off have the option of either accepting their current grade in a course or dropping it entirely without penalty.

The tragedy has affected people far beyond the campus's community in Blacksburg, Va. Last Friday, the governor of North Carolina requested a moment of silence at noon in honor of the victims. Over the past week, colleges nationwide have shown their support through vigils, memorials, and, at least on Quaker campuses, silence.

"What do you do to respond to something like this?" said Campus Ministry Coordinator Max Carter. "The Quaker default is always silent meeting for worship."

Guilford held a 4:30 p.m. vigil the day of the shootings. Students organized one later that evening and another the following day. These services provided the atmosphere

some students needed to reflect on the event.

"This time of year is so hectic that it's easy to forget what's happening outside of Guilford," said junior Alison Holt. "It was really good for me to stop and think about the people at Virginia Tech and what happened there."

"The vigil was really nice. I got to talk a little bit, and everyone was really supportive. I appreciated it," said junior Dan Miller, a resident of Blacksburg.

Support has not been as plentiful for some at Virginia Tech as it has for Miller. The school's administration has come under public scrutiny for not responding quickly enough to the events. The first shooting, which was in a dorm, occurred at 7:15 a.m., but students were not notified of it until over two hours later.

Still, some feel the administration did their best.

"They locked down where there was a crime; they locked down the building where there was a shooting," said Dean for Campus Life Aaron Fetrow. "Had they demanded the entire campus be shut down, would it have made any difference? I don't know. How do you shut down a city?"

"At such a large facility, with the intelligence they had after the first shooting, there was nothing they could do," said Director of Public Safety Sam Hawley. "There's no

stopping something like that."

To others, it's not who is or isn't at fault that should be the focus right now.

"When something bad happens, everyone wants somebody to blame," said junior Jordan Spoon. "In every situation, something could have been done better. It's not productive to point fingers."

"There are underlying factors that caused this, and I'd rather there be more investigation into those than what we're seeing," said sophomore Rachael Jeffers.

"What we're seeing" is another issue of debate. Virginia Tech students have openly criticized the press for crowding their campus and not being sensitive to their grieving process, a complaint with which some Guilford students agree.

"When I went back to visit, there were cameras all around (the victims' memorial), filming the mourners," Miller said. "I think everyone understands that aspect of it, but what angers the students is when the cameramen intrude upon their grieving."

"What bothers me most about the media is how they go through cycles," Holt said. "They have one big thing, drill it into the ground with 24-hour news coverage then, suddenly, it's gone. I think there's a lack of compassion or follow-through in our media."

Compassion at Virginia Tech isn't restricted to only the victims. On Monday, mourn-

ers added a 33rd stone, representing Cho's life, to the memorial on the school's drill field. To some, this is an important message.

"Of course, my first reaction was to the level of carnage — and that was shocking — but my secondary reaction was how tortured this person must have been," said first-year Isaac McAlister. "I think that (the shootings) are evil acts, but I have the utmost sympathy for the torment he must have felt for a long, long time."

Cho himself alluded to this torment in a package of written documents, images and videos he sent to NBC News between the two shootings. In the videos, Cho blamed his peers for his actions, saying they "vandalized (his) heart" and "raped (his) soul."

"When the time came," he said in one video, "I did it. I had to."

Cho's actions left a mark on Virginia Tech's campus that will take both a lot of time and support to erase. As some remind us, showing support doesn't only help those directly affected — it can help other communities, as well.

"The support they don't know about, the notes we put up from students and faculty, that's what we can do to help," Fetrow said. "And selfishly, too, it helps us heal. Wearing colors and taking part in vigils helps us make sense of something that's, quite frankly, not sensible."

Images from
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 BY DAN MILLER

