

Registration troublesome for students

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STAFF WRITER

For some students, registration for the current semester was fraught with problems largely due to poor communication or a lack of communication.

Senior Kirsten Larson cleared her holds a week before registration to ensure that she would be able to register the day it started. A few days before registration an administrative hold was placed on her account because the Financial Aid office had not received a scholarship check from a third party.

"Since the writing of the check for the scholarship was out of my control, I don't see why such a hold was placed on my account," Larson said.

Interim Student Financial Aid Services Director Paul Coscia said that the hold was placed on Larson's account because the check was from a private scholarship provider and it is the student's responsibility to keep in contact with their private scholarship providers.

Coscia continued, saying that students can't attend Guilford for free and the Financial Aid office has to place a hold on accounts if money needed for tuition isn't in yet.

Another hold placed on students' accounts dealt with thank you letters to scholarship providers. In October, students received an e-mail stating that if they didn't send a thank you letter to their scholarship provider, a hold would be placed on their account pending receipt of the letter, which would prevent them from registering.

"It turns out I was one of many, many students who did not get the original letter requesting that we write thank you notes to

scholarship donors," senior Ruth Lowe said. "Many students who got the second, more demanding letter disregarded it since they did not understand what it was referring to."

Lowe was able to register because she contacted Financial Aid and the Registrar to find out what the letter was referring to.

Other students, however, did have problems registering because they didn't contact financial aid to find out what the e-mail was referring to.

"This was something new this year, and basically, the Institutional Advancement had asked us to help them out with this process," Coscia said.

An initial e-mail was sent to students who were receiving scholarships from donors, then a check was run to see who hadn't turned the letter in yet and a second e-mail went out. On Nov. 9 a third check was run to determine who still hadn't turned in the letter and holds went up.

"It is important that we find out where the breakdown is. We're talking to Institutional Advancement because this was something we did for them and we know there were some folks that were affected at registration time," said Coscia. "It's not about passing the buck to any other department it's about starting the process with the award letters and I know that's in the plans."

Senior Sari Schutrum-Boward also had a problem with this hold, which then caused another problem at registration time. Schutrum-Boward is dyslexic and because she was unable to register on the first day of registration, she was subsequently unable to enroll in classes that are appropriate for students with learning differences like Real

World Chemistry and Biology 112.

"Because I couldn't register on time I was unable to get into a (science) class for a while and I e-mailed all these teachers who said, 'sorry, we're full,' because by the point I could do it, everything was completely full except the really hard ones," Schutrum-Boward said.

As a final-semester senior, Schutrum-Boward didn't have the option of taking a class at University of North Carolina-Greensboro since their semester ends later than ours.

She was able to communicate with the faculty and staff and managed to enroll in Biology 111; however, on the first day Assistant Professor of Biology Tom Tucker said that Biology 111 is recommended for science majors and that it will be difficult for those who are not science-minded, while 112 is tailored to non-science majors.

"We do not have priority registration (for students with learning differences) and it's my personal opinion that we shouldn't have priority registration except in a few very rare cases," Disability Services Coordinator Kim Garner said.

"The American Disabilities Administration is designed to level the playing field. It doesn't speak to preference, it doesn't speak to getting you things that other people wouldn't get."

Assistant Academic Dean for Advising and Academic Support Barbara Boyette said that about 400 students at Guilford have learning differences and it would be unfair to those without one to give a quarter of the population priority at registration.

Senior Raji Ward also had a problem with class scheduling. Ward's dilemma began in late summer when she was notified via e-mail that a necessary nutrition class had

been cancelled. The e-mail gave no reason or alternate class.

"I had it all worked out, I was going to have all my prerequisites done and then they threw this in my face," Ward said. "There was nothing, there wasn't anything like, 'We'll help you find another way to do it.' There was no helping out and I was really stressed out."

Ward enrolled in a class at UNC-G, but because she didn't receive guidance, she discovered that she had accidentally enrolled in a graduate-level class. By the time she figured out her mistake, the under-graduate class that she needed at UNC-G was full.

"In the four years I've been at Guilford, I've felt like I've been very supported by the Guilford faculty and staff," Ward said. "And I didn't feel very cared for during all this."

Guilford didn't offer another nutrition class this semester and like Schutrum-Boward, Ward was unable to utilize UNC-G this semester and will have to take the class after graduation.

They were not the only students who had scheduling issues.

"We know it was tight this semester, we know it was a tough scheduling, and so I think we're going to do things to address that," said Boyette, "but (if you have) any other creative ideas, we'd love to hear them."

Coscia emphasized the importance of constant and proactive communication on all parties involved.

"I would let all students know, whether it has to do with financial aid or anything else going on, pay attention to your e-mail, pay attention to the Beacon and Buzz because we use those tools to get information out," Coscia said. "Check your e-mail, check your e-mail."

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