

## SMOKING

## Smoking policy changes discussed by Community Senate

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on community relations.

Patchouli Oerther, vice president of student senate, said that she understands eliminating cigarette smoke and the inevitable litter that incurs in these central parts of campus.

She stated her advice to students would be to give smokers spaces large enough where they can still sit down and feel comfortable.

"Rifts in the community are not necessary," said Oerther. "Creating a circle is always a good thing. It makes it more possible for people to socialize."

Many students believe that bringing back gazebos comparable in size to the ones that were removed would solve a lot of problems.

"I think it is really silly that the general smoking areas are in obscure, inaccessible locations," said senior Marcus Edghill.

Many prospective changes have been brought up, such as an additional smoking area near Founders and a smoking shelter near the lake. Discussion of revising the policy in regards to the North apartments is also underway.

While there is still room for change and discussion in the policy,

the prospect of moving towards a completely smoke-free campus is "still on the table," according to Fetrow.

Community Senate held a follow-up meeting with Fetrow in attendance Sept. 8 to discuss practical solutions to student concerns about the smoking policy.

Senate discussed problems and possible solutions with the proposed smoking areas.

Sarah-Janna Nodell, a resident advisor, put forth the idea of North apartment and Hodgins residents signing porch agreements similar to the roommate agreement forms that are signed upon move-in. These would allow individual apartments to determine their own smoking policy.

Senate plans to continue the discussion at next weeks community senate meeting.

Nodell wishes more students would come to the meetings with their concerns. Nodell also states that the policy is, "still very much a work in progress."

"All we want is a little bitty spot where we can smoke a cigarette on our break," said Lois Conrad, a member of the Guilford dining staff for 25 years.

The policy was set in motion by the board of trustees and senior staff

members in response to complaints from students, visitors, and faculty.

Last year a campus-wide Healthy Minds survey was conducted. Of the 700 respondents, 60 percent requested a stricter tobacco policy.

Guilford's restricted smoking policy is also in line with local trends. In May 2009, N.C. passed a smoking ban which makes smoking in restaurants and bars illegal.

Local colleges such as Elon University, Bennett College, and UNCG have also tightened up on smoking regulations.

The smoking policy will be implemented through verbal and written warnings, which will culminate in a Level 1 Sanction if students do not comply. A likely consequence would be picking up cigarette butts or other forms of community service.

It is still unclear how the college will negotiate the divide the revised smoking policy has caused among some students.

"It's sort of like this," said Edghill. "I'm paying \$40 thousand a year to go here. How dare you tell me what to do?"

"It's a much nicer place to be now," said Chaimaa Azizbi, a sophomore and Business major. "I think we look better, too."



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## Community Senate Update

Community Senate has established goals for 2010-11. These include building community by empowering students and ensuring that students feel that Senate represents their voice and interests, working to help students formulate and then support ideas for policy changes and additions, ensure that numerous perspectives and voices are heard, and coming to consensus by listening and collaborating.

Senate hopes to serve students by increasing our accessibility, inclusiveness, visibility, transparency, communication, accountability, and student involvement on campus.

Over the summer, we increased the library hours, improved our Web page, helped implement wireless coverage (co-sponsored by Senate), established short-term parking spots for students near Founders, and worked on sustainability efforts. We had our first open reception on Wednesday, Aug. 25, to listen to students. Ideas included creating a multipurpose room, reforming conferences and events policies, increasing the blue emergency lights, housing policies, the add-drop period, and more student involvement in newly enforced policies such as the smoking policy. This past Wednesday's meeting focused on the second strategic long range plan, and student input on designated smoking areas to accommodate the smoking policy.

We want to gain your trust and we will work to earn your confidence. Please visit our Web page for more information about this year's mission, vision, and goals: [www.guilford.edu/senate](http://www.guilford.edu/senate). Community Senate meetings are held every Wednesday in Boren Lounge (Founders Hall) from 7:00-8:00 p.m. We want to hear from you.

Dana Hamdan  
President of Community Senate

## Guilford helps first-years find home away from home

By Robert Bell  
STAFF WRITER

Ruth deButts sat in her Binford Hall dorm room on a recent Wednesday evening with a decision to make: study at the library or hang out with her fellow floormates for a night of gossip and games.

Turns out it was an easy call – deButts stayed home. No books, no research – just friends dishing over Dominos and Connect Four.

"School never came up once," said deButts, a first-year from Lincoln, Va. "We had a good time just talking about ourselves, (our) lives, each other."

Now here is the rub: School officials could not have been more delighted with deButts' decision.

DeButts and her friends were taking advantage of a Guilford-sponsored game night, one of several activities for first-year students participating in the college's Living and Learning Communities.

The communities — 130 students living side by side in various wings throughout Binford Hall — are Guilford's latest effort to ease students into their first year of college.

"It's a stressful time, to say the least," said Clay Harshaw, coordinator of Guilford's first-year program. "It's not just academically, but socially that some students have a hard time adjusting to. We want to make that first year as smooth as possible."

Guilford's Living and Learning Communities surround first-year students with students who are taking the same FYE class.

When Lia Clark, a first-year hailing from Greensboro, did not feel like studying for her Poverty in America class recently, she got some prodding from her floormates, who like Clark, are taking the class and share rooms on the second floor of Binford.

"We're like a support group for each other," Clark said. "If I'm feeling lazy someone will tell me, 'Do your work.' Everyone looks after everyone."

"I really like my hallmates," said first-year Adam Faust, "but I sometimes feel like I am missing out on meeting other people since I am surrounded by the same group all the time."

Guilford's efforts are hardly unique. Universities and colleges across the country are struggling to prevent first-year students from dropping out after their first academic year.

The percentage of college freshmen who did not return to the same college for their second year has reached a record high, according to a 2009 survey conducted by Iowa-based American College Testing, a non-profit educational think-tank.

Forty-four percent of first-year college students failed to return to that same college as sophomores in the 2008-2009 academic year, according to the most recent available data. That is the highest dropout percentage since the organization began gathering data in 1983.

Universities and colleges have long chalked up rising drop-out rates as a fact of life or a testament to the school's rigorous academics. But a sagging economy that has chipped away at schools' financial coffers has forced many schools to take an even closer look at how to keep students and their tuition from heading home for good.

"True, schools don't like being in the position of losing tuition," Harshaw said. "But it's more than that. I think a lot of schools are realizing that while they are doing a lot to help their students, there's so much more they can be doing — should be doing."

Harshaw said Guilford's most recently recorded dropout rate was 20 percent in 2008 — an improvement from 32 percent in 2007. "That may be better than other schools, but we're still not happy knowing we're losing a significant number of students."

"Everyone is away from their families for the first time, so we're like our own family now," said deButts. "It's nice to have that close community to turn to."