

TASC force jeopardizes student privacy



By Catherine Schurz
STAFF WRITER

Someone's watching you. Staff and faculty members of our community have combined forces to create the equivalent of a spy organization with the purpose of analyzing students' behavior and deciphering who poses a "threat" to our safety.

The newly established Threat Assessment and Students Concerns team, or TASC force, consists of Campus Life, Residence Life, Public Safety, Counseling Center, CCE, and Academic Dean's Office members.

Once a week, the force meets to discuss each student who has been displaying suspicious behavior or excessive distress. In addition to talking about the student's demeanor, the group will assess the best treatment for

that individual. A typical approach, according to Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Aaron Fetrow, might be to send an RA to the student's room to personally inquire about their feelings.

"It sounds like an invasion of my privacy," said Sophomore Danielle Cayne. "If I'm having a bad day, that doesn't mean I need counseling or to be talked about by the adults on campus."

A common perception among college administrations is that violent attacks by students could be prevented with a proactive approach.

"In all these cases that you've heard about — Virginia Tech, Arizona — somebody said, 'Yeah, we had this suspicion about that guy and we didn't know who to tell.' He acted crazy in class or his behavior really shifted," said Fetrow. "So if a faculty member or a staff member or somebody working in Facilities has contact with a student and things are strange or behaviors changed, they can call this group, too."

But what is the TASC

force's criteria for acting "crazy" and what constitutes a "shift in behavior"? The faculty and staff do not necessarily have the training to determine if we pose a threat to ourselves or others. There are moments when we, as human beings, experience shifts in mood and behavior in reaction to life events.

Director of the Counseling Center Gaither Terrell is key member of the force.

"My main role as a member of the committee is to bring the mental health professional's perspective and to listen and advise the committee about possible next steps, such as arranging to make help available for someone in distress," Terrell said via an email interview.

But that raises another concern — could this initiative even be effective?

"I think that a large percentage of us freshman probably would not respond in a way this group hopes for when confronted about personal issues," said First Year Matthew Carter. "I just don't think it would work ... there are too many variables among students and situations."

The TASC force's aforementioned rationales for assessing and approaching a student do not seem to merit an infringement on my privacy, nor an invasion of my personal life. Additionally, they seem to violate the basic concept of open communication that Guilford College professes to embody.

It seems to me that the Guilford way of expressing concern for a student would be to simply approach them as they leave your class in a kind way. If a professor asked me how I was doing or noted I seemed to be acting differently in class, I'd be more inclined to respond honestly than I would if I were bombarded with questions in my bedroom by an RA that I barely know.

The disconnect lies between the TASC force's back door judgments and the students' real need for support. The more pertinent danger here is not the threat posed by distressed students, but rather the potential for distrust in the Guilford staff and faculty who are here to help us most.

CAMPAIGN CHRONICLES

By Sarah Welch
STAFF WRITER

The economy. Immigration. Health care. Social Security. War. Abortion. Marriage. As Americans, we want to know the presidential candidates' stance on these topics. Running through all of these topics is a common thread: what level of involvement should the government have?

Presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party, R. Lee Wrights, believes in a less is more approach when it comes to government. Wrights supports both individual freedom and corporate freedom.

Individual freedom is a comforting thought; corporate freedom often spurs anxiety. Of course, if you hold stereotypical Republican opinions, these thoughts would be reversed. Here lies another voter commonality.

As Associate Professor of Political Science Kyle Dell said, "Americans hold inconsistent views."

We do not want everyone, either individuals or groups, to have freedom to make decisions. Nor do we want everyone to be regulated.

This is the reason that the Libertarians' views often make us uncomfortable: their views are consistent. Wrights's consistency on issues is confirmed by his slogan, "Stop all wars." According to www.2012.presidential-candidates.org, this includes the wars against drugs, civil rights, guns, alternative lifestyles, and our involvement in wars abroad.

Wright, a native North Carolinian, believes in promoting peace by taking a "foreign policy of non-intervention," according to his official website, wrights2012.com. He believes we need to transform from being the "world's nosy neighbor" into being "the world's good neighbor." However, Wrights does not state how a policy of non-intervention will make America the "good neighbor."

My interpretation is that by ending our entanglement with wars abroad we will become the "good neighbor." Most support bringing our military back to the U.S. and improving our relations with other countries. However, I believe that Wrights wants us to be the removed neighbor because he also wants to end our support of other countries. I'm not condemning this viewpoint, but, as globalization expands, I find this an unrealistic ideology.

By stopping "all wars" Wrights believes we can boost the economy. Wars are costly and Wrights believes they are ineffective. America spends too many dollars on imprisoning people for non-violent offenses, most notably drug crimes, and Wrights aims to correct this.

Alright, I support Wrights' views on marriage, drugs, war, reproductive choices, the promotion of peace, and immigration. What I question is what many liberal-minded people would question: the lack of regulation when it comes to businesses and the environment.

A free market and capitalism could possibly work if everyone was given equal opportunities and if everyone began life with the same circumstances. The truth is those with money are given more opportunities and are given more power.

I am afraid that Wrights' proposals would increase the chances of monopolies developing and that his proposals could increase the poverty gap.

As Dell stated in his interview, third parties widen Americans' perspective on politics, which is healthy. On the other hand, we are apprehensive about their "radical" views.

Senate requests community input, involvement



By Ellen Nicholas
STAFF WRITER

The first Community Senate meeting, which was held on Aug. 31, was an unusual one.

"A typical senate meeting has a more predetermined agenda and ideas," said Yahya Alazrak, clerk/president of the Senate. "No decisions were made tonight. We just explained things and were building up proposals that we will explore in more depth later. This was mainly to gather ideas, research, and feedback from the student body."

The Boren Lounge in Founders Hall filled with students and faculty alike as the meeting was called to order. All were encouraged to bring up any issue, big or small, that they would like to see the Senate discuss further in the future.

Almost 30 topics were brought up

and recorded.

As a new transfer student, this was the first time I got a comprehensive view of what the student body wants to improve, and what they value most about Guilford.

To me, it was clear that the close-knit community is the most widely cherished aspect of the Guilford experience.

From fixing up the Community

All were encouraged to bring up any issue, big or small, that they would like to see the senate discuss further in the future.

Center, to reinstating the bonfires, to forming an on-campus bike co-op and a community appreciation day, many of the issues raised came back to enriching the community and bringing people together.

Among the most dotted subjects from the "dotmocracy" straw poll was the issue of eliminating campus bonfires.

"Bonfires are all about raw energy,

the kind that strips you down and unmask you, and with that you have an atmosphere in which the divide between the athletes and non-athletes dissolves," said senior Bennett Christian. "It's unfortunate that sometimes, but rarely, people aren't capable of experiencing that sensation and commit the kind of violence which is now threatening the bonfire tradition and the communal spirit."

The level of respect between everyone at the meeting left me feeling comfortable and proud to be part of a community that values each other's opinions so highly.

Everyone who had a matter to discuss was fairly and respectfully heard, with much support in the form of "Quaker hands" from the fellow attendees. I hope that the Senate can successfully propel some of these ideas into action.

"I hope there will be really positive relationships between other organizations and the Senate," said Alazrak.

"We've had some high stress relationships in the past," he added, "and hopefully this year that stress has left and things will run smoothly."

If the first meeting is any indication, the Community Senate has a busy and fruitful year ahead of them.