

Survey to measure service and civic engagement at Guilford

By Bryan Dooley
STAFF WRITER

Mark your calendars, Guilfordians: Starting Oct. 31, Guilford will participate in the Assessment of Service and Civic Engagement survey. Siena College developed this survey, which measures the level of student involvement in nine areas.

"Some of the areas are hunger and homelessness, environmental issues, elder care, youth development, public awareness, economic justice and spiritual life," said James Shields, director of Community Learning. "Our main goal is to find out what students are doing and where."

All students will receive three invitations to answer the survey during the 12-day period ending Nov. 11. Guilford College will receive the results after Siena analyzes the data.

"(Siena) will tell us how much we do and how many do it," said Kent Grumbles, director of Institutional Research and Assessment. "Then they will say Guilford is at this level and schools like Guilford are above or below."

Historically the level of service at Guilford has been high.

"For the last 20 years, civic engagement has been strong," said Shields. "There wasn't a lot of organized service until 20 years ago when the Bonner Scholars Program started. Now we have 14 sites that

are community partners, some of which go back to 1995 and are open to everyone. So, when you think about it, there have been easily a couple million hours of service done in the community."

Generally, Guilford believes civic engagement is a vital part of education. Student participation in the survey is crucial because it allows the school to monitor and improve volunteer experiences. Until

which will improve the quality of experience students obtain, because the institution will be able to cater to students' desires.

"We are really interested in the quality of the civic engagement because we view it as a part of (students') learning, not a separate thing," said Justad. "So we feel as much as possible we should ensure the quality and depth of the experience."

According to the executive summary

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now, there has not been an organized examination of students volunteering, according to Mark Justad, director of the Center for Principled Problem Solving.

"We are asking for (students') help in helping us to understand the student body better," said Justad. "There is no better way than talking to students, and a survey is one way of talking to a broad number of them."

The survey will give Guilford a baseline

of the ASCE survey, "By understanding the current service environment both on and off campus, schools can speak and act confidently on issues of service and civic engagement. Some areas where this knowledge could prove beneficial include marketing, strategic planning, recruitment and retention, and outside funding opportunities."

Guilford will use the results from the

survey for the second Strategic Long-Range Plan (SLRP II) to improve engagement experiences for students.

"We need to do more experiential things for students," Grumbles said. "This is one way the college can be accountable to our strategic plan."

Some students also see the value in service and civic engagement.

"I know how to deal with the community in an effective manner," said junior Bonner Scholar Lily Wotkins. "I like making others smile; knowing that I am affecting someone in a positive way changes it all for me."

"The survey will help us establish baseline — where we are now," said Judy Harvey, engaged teaching and learning specialist, via email. "SLRP II has ambitious goals for getting students involved in experiential learning and so we need to be able to measure our progress. We know what Bonner Scholars are doing in the community, but other students are involved, too, and we need a way to measure what they are doing so we have a full picture and can chart our progress."

The more students participate in the upcoming survey, the better the opportunities will be in the future.

"It's really important for everyone to participate so we have a realistic picture of where we are now and we can work to meet the goals for improvement set by SLP II," said Harvey.

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