

Disability resources to expand with "Empathy, Equality and Access" plan

By Omar Hamad
STAFF WRITER

Empathy, equality and access — these three values compose the title of the 85-page document put forth by the college to expand the resources available to the over 400 students at Guilford with disclosed disabilities.

The concrete goal of the plan is to create "universal access" for all spaces and academic facilities on campus, meaning that when anything is designed it should be made accessible in the best way possible for all people. However, the broader goal of the new plan, which has a five-year implementation modeled after the school's Strategic Long Range Plan, involves raising awareness of differences that exist on campus.

"I believe that this plan is not only important for providing resources to disabled students, but also for building a better sense of community on campus," said junior Bryan Dooley, who was heavily involved in providing student input for the plan.

"There should be an attitudinal change on campus for people to be open and expressive in communicating about who they are," said Associate Coordinator for Disability Services Georgie Bogdan of the plan's implications to raise awareness of psychological diversity on campus.

Although the document is bound by the legal definition of "disability" as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, it also recognizes the widespread differences in the way all students think and behave and attempts to promote ways to accommodate those differences.

One example of this is an online note-taking system developed by the college to facilitate better in-class learning.

"The new plan — "Empathy, Equality and Access" — grew out of the Senate's Diversity Action Plan originally," said Learning Commons Director Melissa Daniel Frink. "Disabilities were not originally represented under the diversity plan. Out of those meetings, the decision to



Sophomore **Rose McIntyre** discusses the new five-year plan to expand accessibility and resources for people with difference and disability.

create a subcommittee to address expansion of disability resources was created."

The document also encompasses cultural changes in the way accessibility is thought about for students with disabilities.

"Although the plan has a five-year scope, the need to continually address disability will never end," said Frink.

"There needs to be more collaboration among departments in the future regarding ways to better facilitate student achievement."

"There needs to be a shift in the school from being reactive to proactive," said Director of Disability Services Kim Burke. "More importantly, it's a cultural shift to start to think about what it truly means to promote 'accessibility.'"

The plan examines the ways in which students with disabilities are provided with equal resources in four ways, not only from an angle of physical space, but also from attitudinal, informational and policy/procedural standpoints.

"In terms of academic success, students with disabilities at Guilford already achieve a higher graduation rate than students with no documented disability," said Burke.

"What we really want to achieve with this plan is to create greater acceptance, to create an atmosphere where people don't hide their authentic selves and own who they really are," said Burke. "Then we can treat people in a more human way."

Student support for the plan at the Nov. 9 Community Senate meeting was overwhelmingly in favor of approving the implementation of the document. However, some students called for more input from the wider community. As a result, the decision to give support to the plan was postponed until the Nov. 16 meeting.

The plan was endorsed at the Nov. 16 meeting with no opposition.

"Ultimately, this is about community and finding ways to help each other," said senior and Community Senate Clerk/President Yahya Alazrak in concluding the Nov. 9 meeting. "I feel that this plan is a step in the right direction towards doing that."

•Community Senate Update•

stuff we did

Endorsed Accessibility Plan!
Rejected GTA 7 Route proposal.
Brainstormed on marketing and recruitment.

Creating an amnesty policy for students who don't feel safe while under the influence.

stuff we're doing

stuff we're gonna do

Inviting Ty Buckner and Andy Strickler to hear students' thoughts on recruitment, admissions and marketing.

Get involved and send Community Senate your ideas and concerns:
Contact senate@guilford.edu
Full Senate meets at 7 p.m. in Boren Lounge on Wednesdays.

stuff you wanna see done

By Yahya Alazrak
COMMUNITY SENATE PRESIDENT/CLERK

HATCH

Jon Hatch forum allows for open discussion about true feelings

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could do something like this.

"I did feel a little hurt, in part because of what he had allegedly done and in part because of the tone of the articles (that came out at the time)," said senior Bernard Pellett, commodore of Yachting Club, a club for which Hatch had been a faculty advisor, in an email interview. "It was confusing because different news sites stated different sets of charges. It's still hard to reconcile this thing he did with what I know of his personality and personal convictions."

"It hurts, of course," said Marlin. "And that's something I don't think I can explain to anyone who doesn't already understand it. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that there are a lot of us hurting in the same way."

Some people broke into tears at the forum. Some acknowledged that it may have been easy to condemn Hatch based on how he looks.

"Jonathan is a big, sloppy ... man," said Marlin. "People like to believe that those who are unattractive are also evil. People also love to revel in the mistakes and suffering of others. This has all of that rolled up into one."

Some news sites reporting on the incident show the type of behavior Marlin references in their comments section. One commenter on TrueCrimeReport.com posted, "Yeah, just by looking at the guy, you could tell he was either a serial killer or a pedophile."

"It is a natural thing to demonize folks

whom are convenient anonymous centers of vitriolic magnetism," said Mortensen. "When you love someone who did something that hurt others, you have to struggle ... to both prioritize hope and health for the victim, while maintaining your love for someone you know to be a fundamentally kind person."

For the most part, the circle of 50 students, professors, and alumni felt that the incident did not make Hatch less of a human being.

"Jon cares a ton about this community," said Mortensen. "And I'm glad to see the community coming together to try to wrestle with and digest what Jon is alleged to have done, and to move forward in a way that is best for the community."

Another sentiment was to not lose sight of the victim in discussing the incident.

"It's hard to say anything about the victim, since we don't know anything about her except that she had been a student of Jon's for a long time," said Pellett. "My heart goes out to her, of course. I wish her the best in terms of dealing with it."

As hard as it may be to forgive Hatch for what he did, Marlin believes that this should not hinder trust held within current and future relationships.

"We must not allow ourselves to collapse in and become hard and jaded from this," said Marlin. "If you never risk yourself, you may reduce your chance of being hurt. But you will also miss so many opportunities for friendship and love."