

Chasing the dream: students pursue options for rising tuition bills

By Travis Linville
STAFF WRITER

It is always great when a community finds a common cause, unifying us and making us feel even closer. Except when that cause is a horrendous burden.

We all share the burden of college costs that we pay in one way or another, whether by federal or state grants, academic or athletic scholarships or those obtrusive student loans.

To soften the blow of the rising costs of tuition, housing, beer and coffee — or to buffer the impact of that future debt — students find ways to make money on and off campus.

"This summer, the coolest job was working with my friend's dad, who makes money selling motorcycle parts and shirts," said junior Eamon Deeley-Wood, who has worked odd jobs since high school, like selling water bottles on the side of the road one summer. "I spent this summer selling t-shirts to bikers, who are the least demanding customers I've ever dealt with. Basically, you tell them you have a \$20 to \$25 shirt, they grumble a bit, and then they pay for it."

Deeley-Wood currently does work study at the information desk in Founders and in the Quakeria. Other students, particularly CCE students, find jobs off campus. Heather Cole '04 has returned to Guilford for teaching licensure after having worked as a waitress, a nanny, a lab technician and now as a tutor and babysitter.

Cole amassed \$20,000 in debt during her first run-through of college. Now she is building more debt, fearing the semester of student teaching where she may have to take out a \$15,000 loan.

"I get about \$4,000 (in loans) per semester, so about \$8,000 a year," said Cole. "So it will be about \$16,000 when I finish. I'm going to have debt up to my eyeballs ... I have to understand that I'm going to be paying off student loans for the rest of my life, or at least until I'm 60."

Senior Will Sharkey has thought about his debt obligation since before he came to Guilford, and he realizes he will be facing that debt soon.

"I haven't figured out how I'll pay (my) loans," said Sharkey, who works with Facilities on the campus grounds raking leaves, shoveling snow, picking up trash or mulching — whatever the season calls for. "I don't really have a plan, but I'm not the only person in that boat. I'll have to get some source of income, whether I win the lottery or work at McDonald's."

Senior Ryan Sanders pays for college without his parents' assistance, so he too has massive debt. He has taken jobs as a tutor and teaching assistant in the chemistry department and has worked for Guilford's Phonathon, calling alumni and parents for updated student information. Even with part-time jobs, grants and merit scholarships, he fears he will be in debt until he is 35 or 40 years old.

"I know I have a bias as a college student, but education is one of the best things for a society," said Sanders. "Having educated citizens benefits the entire society by increasing human capital."

If education is such an important part of a society, why is it sometimes so difficult for people to attend college without taking on such a huge burden? With fears of having debt throughout the majority of adult life, students call the system that leads to this amount of debt into question.

As part of budget cutbacks, some states have removed parts of their tuition assistance. North Carolina will soon follow those steps by cutting the Legislative Tuition Grant. Many students will have to take on even more loans, possibly deterring some from a college education.

"(Financial Aid at Guilford) has done really well by me," said Deeley-Wood. "My complaint is with the college system in general. If you want a job that's not minimum wage, you pretty much need a college degree.

If we've gotten to that point, where it's pretty much required, it's ridiculous that (college) is still so expensive. I feel like the financial aid system,

for colleges in general, is broken.

"The poorer you are, the harder it is to go to college, which really doesn't make sense when looking at the American dream as something where we say we're trying to have equal standing for everyone."

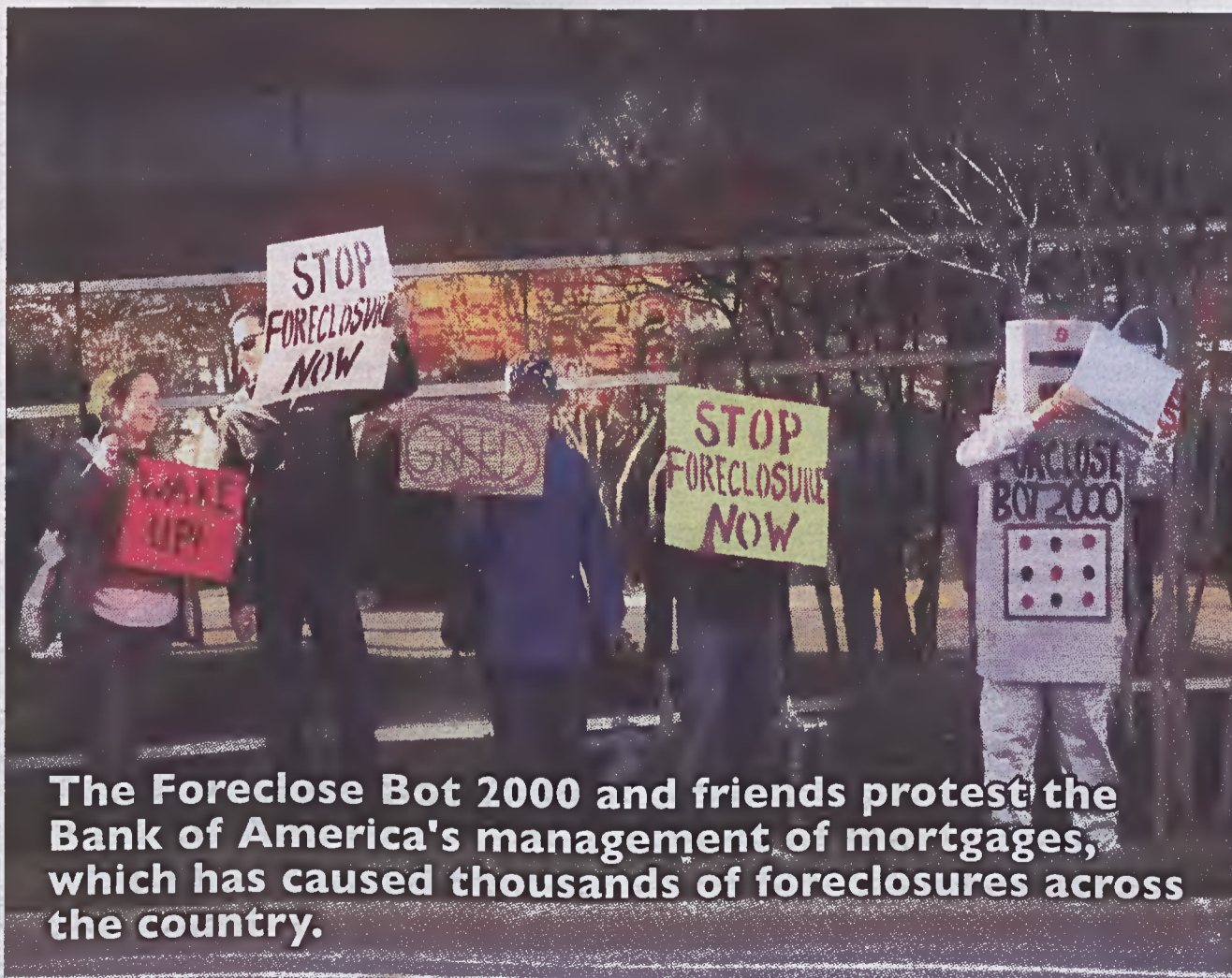
The hovering threat of being in debt for half of your life is enough to frighten nearly anyone. Even with the opportunities given to someone with an education, the cost of that education is an almost-overbearing burden.

"To be frank, I think (the higher education system of the U.S.) is bullshit," said Sanders. "It's unfair to take on this huge burden in order to have a better life. I'm getting an education to be an asset to society, and I'm being punished for it. I don't blame Guilford; it's an American institutional problem. Lives should not be made difficult because you want to better yourself."



GRAPHIC BY JOY DAMON/GUILFORDIAN

Greensboro residents occupy Bank of America to show discontent



The Foreclose Bot 2000 and friends protest the Bank of America's management of mortgages, which has caused thousands of foreclosures across the country.



For more photos of the protest, visit www.guilfordian.com