

ROTC cadet encounters disrespect



By Casey Horgan
STAFF WRITER

Michael Mellinger first chose Guilford College for the school's outstanding German department and its new track and field program. He also picked it for its proximity to a host Reserved Officers' Training Corps program that he could attend down the road at NC A&T University.

He became a cadet because he wanted to join the military after college in a leadership-based role.

ROTC allowed him the opportunity to get an education "while being protected in school from deployment," as he put it.

Despite Guilford's academic and extracurricular opportunities that seemed to fit so well with Mellinger's needs, he left after only a year.

He transferred his sophomore year due to several incidents of students shouting offensive slurs and a couple of incidents of people spitting at him while he was in uniform.

"I made sure to not react (because) I represented not only myself, but the United States as well," he said.

So, to whom it may concern:

You're anti-war? Fine. That's your belief and I won't judge you for it. I certainly won't spit on you. I will, however, judge you for your actions. You're disrespectful, you're immature and you haven't learned that your narrow-mindedness can profoundly impact your peers.

Your fellow student transferred because of you. You drove away a student from Guilford because you didn't like what his uniform stood for.

Don't hide behind your faith. That's cowardly. I understand that Quakerism denounces warfare. I'm not asking you to support it. Though Guilford is a Quaker school, students are not required to adhere to the Quaker faith and anyone who differs in opinion or action has the right to do just that. You cannot justify your actions through faith, because no faith, not a single one, condones acting in this manner towards a fellow human.

It's intolerance, plain and simple.

"Let it be known that I did not let these students get the best of me," said Mellinger. "The administration was equally as bad and that bothered me. My goal was to stay at Guilford for as long as possible to prove that

I would not succumb to those who had a difference of opinion.

"I made a ton of good friends who accepted me for who I was. Some of my friends were Quakers. During my time there, they became my brothers — my family away from home."

One of the main reasons that Mellinger finally transferred was that "most people (at Guilford) had no interest in anything but their beliefs," which, he added, included professors.

At no point, said Mellinger, did the administration or student body carry out the values of equality and acceptance that Guilford touts, with the exception of a select few.

"The servicemen and women put themselves in harm's way to defend a nation that has provided them with an opportunity to excel as human beings," he said.

Guilford made him question this principle.

"I questioned the fact that if people treat me like this, what am I really defending? In the end, I would be defending my fellow soldiers, for they would be the only ones who would understand," said Mellinger. "I would be defending my family and my friends, and that is more than enough reason to stand on the front line."

Mellinger is currently a sophomore at Appalachian State University majoring in psychology, and he intends to study clinical abnormal psychology to help soldiers who suffer from PTSD.

He embodies the core values of our school. Someone who would treat a man in uniform as a second-class citizen, and who would go so far as to insult and intimidate him, does not embody these principles.

According to our school's website, "Guilford's longstanding mission is clear and distinctive: to provide a transformative, practical and excellent liberal arts education for every student."

The "timeless" core values of community, diversity, equality, excellence, integrity, justice and stewardship that Guilford so proudly publicizes evidently fall short sometimes.

So, to whom it may concern: remember that you're a part of the whole. You cannot expect that everyone you'll meet in life will share your opinions and you cannot react to those who stand in opposition to your ideals by sinking so low that you would spit at another human being.

Campaign ads fall short

Like the storms of spring or the dead heat of summer, the campaign season wouldn't be complete without its accompanying slew of political advertisements. Ranging from bright, inspirational messages to monochromatic, heavy, negative ads to the image of Herman Cain's campaign manager smoking a cigarette, campaign ads run a wide gamut of possibilities.

Just remember to take the claims made in these ads, which sometimes seriously straddle the boundary between truth and fiction, with skepticism.

"I wouldn't trust them," says Associate Professor of Political Science Ken Gilmore. "I don't trust them. You need to have a critical eye ... these ads mainly play on emotion."

That's something important to digest. Take, for example, a Gingrich-attacking ad run in Florida by the Romney-supporting Super PAC "Restore our Future," dissected and fact-checked by Jonathan Karl of ABC News. It does get some facts right. Newt Gingrich was indeed fined \$300 thousand in ethics violations as Speaker of the House, and his consulting firm was paid \$1.6 million by embattled mortgage company Freddie Mac.

The rest of the ad is much, much more open to question. It accuses Gingrich of co-sponsoring a bill with Nancy Pelosi that would have given money to a U.N. program that supports "China's brutal one-child policy."

However, the bill in question — a 1989 measure to combat global warming and improve fuel standards — doesn't have much to do with China's one-child policy. In fact, it specifically prohibits any funds from going to "involuntary sterilization or abortion or ... family planning." Yes, Gingrich and Pelosi co-sponsored the bill, but so did 142 other members of Congress. The slanderous claims made by this ad are bizarre and seem to have little factual basis.

Given this low standard of truth that is accepted as a part of campaign advertising, what's the average voter to do? It starts with being a critical thinker and varying one's sources of information.

This is a sentiment echoed by Richie Zweigenhaft, Dana professor of psychology, who teaches an annual course on American media and culture.

"You see political candidates sold with advertising," said Zweigenhaft. "It's highly visual and emotional. We all think we're not affected by the advertising, but that's not always true. Political messages in particular require more critical viewing than most advertising."

It's tough to say with certainty who holds the impetus for accountability in regards to campaign ads. Is it the responsibility of the candidates who are doing anything they can to win? How about the press, who are sometimes accused of not pushing the candidates and investigating their statements enough for the "truth"? Or is it the general public, for not demanding a better democracy?

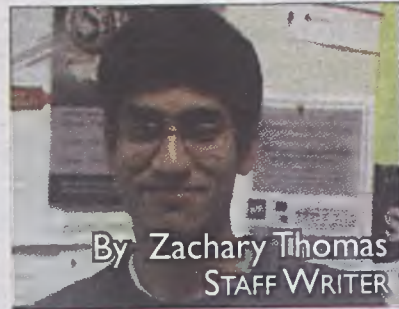
"It's basically all the above," said Gilmore in response to the questions. "You get the democracy you asked for."

Zweigenhaft, however, sees some hope with the Internet and what it brings to the table for political discussion.

"The Internet changes the dynamic," he says. "It incorporates text, gets people to read, and that's a good thing."

I'm inclined to agree. Campaign ads have proven again and again their effectiveness with the public, even if they often unreasonably deviate from the truth. Journalists are constantly reminded to find multiple sources before writing a story, and I would advise the same for evaluating politics.

It's an oft-repeated piece of advice, but it's worth restating as something we all need to keep in mind heading forward in 2012 and the ongoing campaign season.



By Zachary Thomas
STAFF WRITER

BRUCE B. STEWART AWARDS

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED

The Bruce B. Stewart Teaching Award is intended to recognize individuals for their contributions to attaining the highest levels of academic excellence for the students and academic programs of Guilford College.

For 2012, the college will award three Bruce B. Stewart Awards at \$5,000 each: two teaching awards for faculty and one community service award for staff. Any full-time faculty member is eligible to receive an award. Candidates should be nominated based on meritorious service that is beyond the responsibilities normally assigned to their positions.

Nominate only one candidate on each form you submit. The candidate information you provide can be supplemented by additional supporting documentation by the nominator or the candidate. Please submit nomination forms to the Office of the President.

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATION IS FRIDAY, MARCH 16, AT 5:00 P.M.