

The business of advancing the college: one step at a time

BY VICTOR LOPEZ
SENIOR WRITER

Across the street from the main campus lays a Zen-like oasis where Chinese room dividers serve to separate one workspace from another and light classical music plays from some secret location, setting a very relaxed scene for the look and feel of the Office of Advancement.

The building houses a team of professionals that reaches out all over the world for donors willing to give money to the school, a team that is fundraising for the college's capital campaign around the clock.

"It takes a lot of time to cultivate a donor," said 30-year veteran of philanthropy Mike Poston, vice president for advancement. "In some cases it takes three years to get some of our larger contributors to commit and give to the college."

The effects of the country's economic crisis has crashed down on higher education by way of shrinking endowments, less financial aid, and staffing cuts at colleges and universities nationwide.

There is no denying Guilford's need for donors.

"Our college, like others, depends heavily on donors and tuition to keep the college running," said Ty Buckner, associate vice president for communications and marketing.

Guilford began a \$75 million capital campaign in 2006 following a study driven by the first Strategic Long-Range Plan put in place by the college. It had completed a \$56 million campaign in 2002.

Poston said that the campaign addressed the immediate needs of the college but was not driven by a strategic long-range plan.

"That campaign's focus was more bricks and mortar and some endowment growth."

However, at the time of the 2006 philanthropic market study, which guided the goals of the current campaign, no one could have predicted the 2008 economic crash. In 2011, the Board of Trustees agreed that the campaign should have a more realistic timetable.

"We were working on unrealistic expectations considering the economic climate of the country, which is why the board separated the campaigns into two realistic goals," said

"As long as there is a need for the college to educate there will always be a need to raise money."

Mike Poston, vice president for advancement

Danny Gatling, senior director of philanthropy.

Phase one of the capital campaign calls for \$60 million to be raised by June 30, 2014. Once that is accomplished, the college will then focus on raising the remaining \$15 million.

"So far we have raised \$50.7 million," said Poston. "It is not just big gifts that help the college."

While some colleges and universities, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University, are embarking on multi-billion-dollar capital campaigns, Guilford remains modest and realistic where

fundraising is concerned.

And at the end of the day, Poston says it is all about students getting a quality education in the face of a frail economy and rising educational costs, which is what is on donors' minds when they give to an institution.

"In many respects, capital campaigns never stop taking place," said Poston. "As long as there is a need for the college to educate there will always be a need to raise money."

The other half of the equation, explained Erin Mezgar, annual giving associate, is student involvement and pride in their school.

"There are many ways students can help," said Mezgar. "Being phon-a-thon callers, contributing to the senior gift campaign, interning in the office, writing thank you notes. These are seemingly small things, but this helps raising awareness of our current campaign and beyond."

Justin Bradley, a senior who is interning in the Office of Advancement, said he didn't know much about the department or alumni donations when he started at Guilford, though that is quickly changing.

"There is some separation being that the physical office is across (the street) from the college," said Bradley. "Now being a senior, I am starting to see the importance of giving back to Guilford. I guess that comes with maturing."

Students interested in helping the Office for Advancement should contact Erin Mezgar at mezgarek@guilford.edu

Paper billing replaced by electronic statements

HISTORIC CHANGES TAKING PLACE AS GUILFORD'S BILLING PROCESS SWITCHES TO ONLINE PAYMENTS

BY VICTOR LOPEZ
SENIOR WRITER

Though historic buildings line Guilford's campus, and the comforting smell of burning wood coming from the Hut can be nostalgic, other items are changing to align the college with the twenty-first century.

Greg Bursavich, vice president for finance, told The Guilfordian the college is unveiling a new billing process in the next few months.

"We are eliminating paper bills," said Bursavich. "Everything will be accurate, online and in real-time under the new system we are putting in place."

Students will now be billed using a secure portal that will provide electronic statements.

"From that portal, students will be able to process immediate electronic payments for all enrollment related charges," said Bursavich.

Along with online payments, there will be enhanced refund options available to students, which will help avoid lengthy waits at New Garden Hall for those who receive refunds.

Bursavich told The Guilfordian that details about those options are forthcoming, but he indicated that students will be receiving debit cards in the mail from Higher One and further instructions from the college on how to use their services in the next few weeks.

In addition to going completely virtual with its billing, the College also plans on joining other schools such as Elon University in adding a 2.75 percent convenience fee to all payment of tuition, fees, room and board, and other charges associated with enrollment made with MasterCard, Discover or American Express.

The College will no longer accept Visa cards.

Jay Harper, bursar at Elon, told The Guilfordian that when the university implemented the credit card processing fees he expected some backlash.

"What we found was that students and families realized that the university was taking a huge hit from credit card companies," said Harper, who noted that many Elon students pay huge chunks of their tuition using credit cards.

In order for the College to accept credit cards, it must pay a fee to companies to process the payments.

Guilford will save \$150,000 in fees annually which could be passed down to faculty salaries and operating expenses.

"We believe these funds are better spent supporting our educational mission," said Bursavich. "Thus, in order to continue accepting credit and debit card payments, the 2.75 percent convenience fee is necessary."

Those like Terry Tarantelli-Louison, a parent sending three children to college including a daughter who graduated from Guilford, said that the College passing along fees to the student is a part of a much bigger issue.

"Charging students fees, which essentially passes along to their parents, is not a real issue," said Louison. "The real issue is the absurd amount of money it takes to get a liberal arts education."

While Elon University and Earlham College have a convenience fee already in place, both have stayed away from partnering with Higher One.

"We consider our students like family members here," said Harper. "We rather keep our student's information in-house so that there would not be a chance of a compromise which in turn could put our student's information at risk. It was not something we were willing to do."

Guilford administrators say that the decision to enhance the billing payments and refund processes was made with students in mind.

"We believe these changes will have a very positive impact on our students and their families," said Bursavich.

SENATE UPDATE

This Week's Developments

We approved the budget as presented in last week's Guilfordian.

Students expressed the desire to improve the relationship between students and public safety in the interest of improving campus safety. This conversation will continue at a CRRC forum next Wednesday at 3 p.m. in Founders Gallery.

Next Week's Plans

We will be joined by staff from IT&S to discuss student needs concerning technology on campus. We hope to have a productive discussion that strengthens the relationship between IT&S and the student body.

Contact Us

We need to hear your voice! Should Senate meet in the Gallery or Boren Lounge? Join us in Founders with your ideas and beautiful faces next week at 7:00 p.m.!

Compiled by Tim Leisman, Community Senate President