

UC school system debates the use of affirmative action

In 1997, California made history by becoming the first state to ban the use of race as a basis for college admission. Now, 17 years later, it almost became the first state to re-establish affirmative action policies.



BY REBECCA DOU
STAFF WRITER

This past January, members of the California Senate voted to pass Constitutional Amendment No. 5, which attempted to repeal the parts of Proposition 209 that allow University of California schools to remain race-blind. Even though the amendment was eventually withdrawn, the debate

around this issue has not settled down.

Supporters of this amendment argue that it would allow schools to create a more diverse student body, but instead, affirmative action limits diversity to physical appearance and actually increases racial gaps.

"Diversity is about bringing together people who see the world in unique ways," said Early College senior Kristen Witkemper. "Race is a component, but so (is) socioeconomic status, upbringing and countless other factors."

Understanding the perspective of someone who holds opposing political views, practices a different religion, or comes from another geographic region can be just as valuable as interacting with people from other races and creates true diversity.

The problem is that using race as a main factor in admissions will not ensure that diversity occurs beyond physical appearances. In fact, it allows universities to appear as though they care about diversity without pressuring them to enforce it. They can simply refer to broad statistics, like the fact that 10 percent of their student population is African American to seem like they are making a difference.

"It is not just about recruiting underrepresented students and making sure we can count a diversity of groups, but that



Citizens protest Constitutional Amendment No. 5 in California. There has been debate in the state about the benefits of affirmative action since January.

we are really open, supportive and embracing to all students," said Director for Diversity Training and Development Jorge Zeballos.

Many systems that use race as a factor in admissions fail to even assure the acceptance of racial differences.

Some researchers, like co-authors of "Mismatch," Richard Sanders and Stuart Taylor Jr., have found that affirmative action policies increase gaps in academic achievement because they place students at schools for which are unprepared.

"Scholarly research has shown that much of the self-segregation of black and white

students at universities results from the racial gaps in academic achievement," said Taylor in an email interview. "Partly because the gaps foster stereotypes and resentments, and partly because students tend to become friends with others who are roughly similar in their academic achievements."

In order to bridge this gap that often occurs, people should focus more on improving the quality of K-12 education for disadvantaged students. That way, they will be more competitive in college admissions without an extra boost from affirmative action.

Along with improving the quality of K-12

education, University of California schools also found more short-term solutions to creating diversity after Proposition 209 was passed.

Some of these solutions included reducing the use of legacy and standardized testing in admissions and creating programs that aided students suffering from poverty. These solutions helped improve social mobility and allowed admission officers to focus on criteria that included more of their personal story.

Hopefully, affirmative action will affirm more than just quotas and foster diversity in the future.

In response to recent articles

FACULTY, STAFF SALARIES ARE ADMIN PRIORITY

Recently, The Guilfordian published news stories and opinion columns about faculty and administrator salaries that ignore realities of the College's budget decision-making process, resource allocation and distinction within its peer group.



BY TY BUCKNER
ASSOCIATE VP FOR COMM. & MARKETING

In fact, raising employee salaries — especially faculty salaries — is Guilford's top priority. In early March, the Academic Dean notified 24 faculty receiving promotions of raises effective April 1. Even with a worse-case budget next fiscal year, raises will be provided for employees, with almost two-thirds of the pool committed to faculty. The higher the enrollment, the higher the raise pool will be.

As is commonly known, nearly 80 percent of the College's operating income is from tuition and fees. In 2011, the College made deep budget cuts due to major losses in state-funded financial aid. None of Guilford's peers and few of the American Association of University Professors institutions to whom we compare are in North Carolina, so they did not take the same hit.

An often-overlooked factor that affects Guilford's ability to pay faculty at the same levels as its peers is that peers have a much higher percentage of traditional-aged students than at Guilford, and those students contribute at a higher net-revenue level. This means that peer institutions of comparable size are more able to fund important campus priorities such as faculty salaries.

This is not to suggest that Guilford should eliminate the CCE or Early College student cohorts, or that it might be able to replace them with traditional students contributing higher levels of net revenue. However, it should be recognized that the College is possibly comparing itself inappropriately to peers with respect to our ability to pay faculty salaries.

Neither faculty nor administrators have received general raises the last few years due to our financial constraints, although they did get a one-time, across-the-board bonus. As a result of the catastrophic cut in state-funded financial aid, the College reduced 17 administrative and support staff positions and allocated the work to other administrative and support staff positions. No tenured or tenure-track faculty were affected.

Guilford's budget decision-making process is transparent and involves many in the campus community. Students and faculty are on budget committees chaired by faculty members. Every raise pool for faculty and staff has been recommended by consensus by the budget committees, and the President and trustees have never cut a dime.

Core Values: Community

Community is defined as a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.

In what ways should Guilford College build upon this concept of community as we move into the future? Are we living up to this value already?

"Staff, faculty and students share the same basic mission, and we often are working in the same direction to make the experience of students as meaningful and rich in learning opportunities as we can. Where we have room to grow, I think, is in the quality of communication — often we have no idea what is happening elsewhere on campus, or about needs we could help meet if we only knew the needs existed — and in equality, the lack of which is currently undermining community in some ways."

Maria Rosales, associate professor of political science

"It is my hope as Guilford prepares for the change ahead, that we never lose sight of community. That we all seek opportunities to sit down together and truly be a community by continuing to get to know each other. That we do not classify ourselves as 'CCE' and 'traditional.' That we all see the gifts that each person brings to Guilford that make it a truly special community."

Nicole Cornett Arnold, Center for Continuing Education, student success counselor

"Here at Guilford, I feel that the diverse community has expanded my knowledge of the world. If you think about it, college is the first place many people will have the opportunity to have any type of real interaction with people from different lifestyles. A campus, in many ways, is like opening a door to the entire world without traveling anywhere, while exploring advanced subject matter."

Jason Brame, CCE senior

"If we start asking students their opinions on community versus faculty and administration making proclamations about it, we might actually learn something about the community that exists at Guilford College. This would address quality of life, retention and affect admissions."

Aaron Fetrow, dean of students and vice president for student affairs

BY ROBERT PACHECO
STAFF WRITER