

Campus debate regarding energy sourcing continues

BY AMOL GARG
STAFF WRITER

To safeguard the environment or to safeguard profits, that is the question.

The movement to divest from fossil fuel companies has gained national importance. Nine colleges, 22 municipalities, two counties, two dozen religious groups and 19 foundations have committed to divest from fossil fuel. Guilford may soon be joining this list.

After a debate in the board of trustees' office last February, Guilford students and alumni are raising awareness about Guilford's current investments in fossil-fuel companies and its environmental impact.

Defined as ridding oneself of immoral investments, stocks and unions, the fossil fuel divestment crusade calls universities and colleges to refrain from financing fossil fuel corporations.

So why are alumni and students intent on divorcing Guilford from fossil fuels?

"It's not just about a political agenda against oil companies," stated senior Julia Draper. "It's more about the social injustices of allowing these huge corporations to destroy our Earth and continue to create these huge inequalities in the world."

In an effort to convince the board of trustees to take an affirmative stand on this issue, Draper, along with Guilford students Tom Clement, Lily Collins and Marek Wojtala, sent a letter to the board highlighting Guilford's \$65.5 million endowment in fossil fuel companies and requesting that the Quaker principle of stewardship be taken into account before a decision was made.

The topic was tabled.

"At Guilford, we should be in line with Quaker values," said Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment Executive Director and President of the Guilford College Alumni

Association's Board of Directors Katherine Cummings. "Religious and faith values should directly impact the investor's money. Guilford has had a positive fervor in protecting the environment up to this point, so why stop now?"

Along with her team of Wojtala, Collins and Draper, Cummings hopes to raise awareness about the positive impacts of divesting from fossil fuels — some of which include preventing pollution and protecting the environment from the harmful effects of burning fossil fuels.

However, not everyone in higher education advocates for divestment.

"While I share their belief in the importance of addressing climate change, I do not believe, nor do my colleagues on the Corporation, that university divestment from the fossil fuel industry is warranted or wise," said President of Harvard Drew Faust in a statement he delivered on the topic.

Assistant Professor of Economics Natalya Shelkova explains a divestment policy's implications.

"The fossil fuel industry in the energy sector is among one of the most profitable enterprises in the economy," said Shelkova. "It performs well in the stock market, so there would be financial consequences regarding divestment."

Are there any feasible substitutes for fossil fuel investment?

"There is no good alternative out there yet for investment in fossil fuels," said Kathy Cooper, an Early College teacher and active environmentalist.

"There is nothing out there right now that can fully support a university with the electrical and power needs they have."

So, what might become of Guilford's investment in fossil fuels? The only way to find out is the next board of trustees' meeting coming this October.

No fossil fuels?
OR
No divestment?

DIVERSITY

Guilford first-years represent most diverse class to date



COURTESY OF GUILFORD COLLEGE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The orientation events emphasized diversity. Mirror Me was an event held by the campus' Multicultural Education Department to educate the new students about the importance of diversity to a well-rounded education. Through presentations and workshops, students learned how to address problems like privilege as well as differences in opinion or perspective.

First-year Max Goodwin attended Mirror Me.

"From some of the reactions and comments I heard ... I could see how it (was) necessary," said Goodwin. "I think it's good that they did something like that at the beginning of the year."

Senior and orientation leader De'shauna Ottley agreed.

"I think it was well-needed, especially being a part of orientation, because it opens a door to conversations that you normally don't have," said Ottley. "And that's kind of what we do at Guilford."

Orientation concluded with Guilford's traditional Quaker

Passing of the Light ceremony, where speakers including José Oliva, sophomore and president of Community Senate, expressed high hopes for the new students, partly because of their open-mindedness to perspectives that are new and different.

Last Wednesday, President Jane Fernandes also spoke to the students' potential at Convocation. She emphasized the importance of broadening one's experience through integrative education, which helps one to understand people's differences

and eventually make a positive difference.

This message is pervasive.

"You get to be first-year students at the same time as you have a first-year president," said Strickler. "The new class will have a pivotal role in the conversations that occur here and who we are a decade from now."

New students seem to be getting the message.

"That's the best way to learn and grow as individuals and as a culture, I think," said Hannah Brewer-Jensen, sophomore transfer

student. "Being able to branch out of your community or culture or country or whatever it is and just kind of open new doors."

Guilford has been pushing diversity more and more, and people are taking notice.

Ottley was surprised to learn that diversity is so high in this class but then was excited by the idea.

"I think that's a great start to our year, knowing that our campus is so diverse — especially when we push diversity so hard, being that it's a part of our core values. I think that's awesome."