

New FYS diversity proposal necessary, but not implemented

BY EMMA RUMPL
STAFF WRITER

Last year, three Guilford College students and one faculty member proposed a three-day curriculum for Guilford's First-Year Seminar program. The curriculum was designed to introduce first-year students to racism and other forms of oppression and teach them how to combat it.

Since it was announced, the proposal has not yet been implemented in FYS classes.

According to Assistant Academic Dean Barbara Boyette, the classes spend at least one period teaching first-year students about diversity. The professors decide what material to cover and how to teach it.

First-year Elena Sippel described her experience learning about oppression in her FYS class.

"It was sort of like a 'privilege walk' where our instructor would say one thing; ... he didn't specify what was positive or negative, but if it (was something that) happened to you, you took a step forward or a step backward," said Sippel.

Some students were further toward the front than others. Those closer to the back were considered "underprivileged."

"It was cool to see how the people who were 'underprivileged' felt about it," said first-year Laura Sippel. "Some people didn't even realize ... they were being underprivileged."

Though Sippel's class learned about oppression in a fun, interactive way, the class ended before they could finish the activity. Time has been an issue for FYS classes — they take place once a week for 1 hour and 15 minutes — so professors are limited on how much time they can spend teaching different material.

Systems of oppression are not exempt from the lack of time.

"Given the limitations of the one-credit format and the sheer amount of critical developmental information this course addresses, ... the effort (to speak about racism) isn't as thorough as it ought to be," said Assistant Academic Dean for Career Development and Community Learning Alan Mueller in an email interview.

Another issue is how much the professors know about racism and oppression.

"Unlike faculty, who are experts in the area they teach, the FYE 100 instructors must cover a lot of topics with little expertise," said Boyette in an email interview. "Our instructors do not necessarily experts in facilitating conversations around anti-racism and anti-oppression."

Though racism and oppression are important subjects to teach students who are getting their feet wet at Guilford, there are other topics that are equally important to discuss such as ethnic identity, social class and heterosexism. According to Boyette, guest speakers may come in to speak about their fields of expertise — which could include systems of oppression.

This does not mean, however, that discussions of diversity should be restricted to one class.

"There shouldn't be just one lesson about anti-racism," said Jada Drew, director for educational initiatives and partnerships. "If we really want to create an environment that breathes multiculturalism and social justice, we need to make sure (discussions on anti-racism) is inclusive and not separate."

Guilford is a diverse college. People who appear to be the same race may not necessarily come from the same country, share similar views or even be of the same ethnicity.

"(With) everyone coming from different backgrounds, who knows anything about (each other)?" said first-year Donzah Pitre.

Regardless of whether the three day curriculum is implemented, students are encouraged to take the extra step in learning about racism and oppression.

"We have a significant amount of important subject matter that must be covered in the FYE labs to help students make the transition to college," said Steve Moran, director of student leadership and engagement.

Guilford offers plenty of on-campus opportunities to help students learn about racism and oppression. There are numerous "Understanding Racism" workshops available for students, staff and faculty to attend throughout the year. Students may also visit the Multicultural Education Department for more information on racism and oppression.

Bill Bryson shares his wit and wisdom



CARLTON SKINNER/GUILFORDIAN

Bill Bryson (R.) speaks with Guilford's Ty Buckner at Greensboro's War Memorial Auditorium as part of the Bryan Series on Nov. 11.

BY CARLTON SKINNER
STAFF WRITER

Famous travel writer Bill Bryson visited Greensboro's War Memorial Auditorium on Tuesday, Nov. 11, as a part of the Bryan Series.

"It always makes me feel good when people actually know who I am," Bryson jokingly told the audience, just moments after taking the stage. Best known for his quirky tales like "The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid" and "A Walk in the Woods," Bryson came to share his peculiar brand of self-effacing observational humor.

"We knew Bill Bryson would make people laugh," said Ty Buckner, director of Guilford College's department of communications and marketing. "We want to have speakers visit who have the ability to connect to students."

The Bryan series began as a campus-based program. The lecture series aims to bring thought provoking and eye-opening speakers to Guilford College and the community at large. The series was held in Dana Auditorium until 2005 when the program expanded its size and visibility, and moved to the War Memorial Auditorium at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex.

Before his appearance at the Coliseum, students interested in English and

Environmental Sciences were treated to a more intimate meeting with the world-renowned writer in the Community Center on campus. About 40 students attended the session.

"I think it's really valuable for students to get to interact with and talk to a working writer," said Jim Hood, associate professor of English.

Bryson answered numerous questions, navigating effortlessly from subject to subject.

Many students wanted to talk about a career in writing, while some enjoyed being able to have a leisurely conversation about hiking with Bryson.

"I got 'A Walk in the Woods,' and was reading it before Bill Bryson came to Guilford," said senior C.J. Green. "The book was hilarious, so I wanted to make sure to go see him speak."

Green was struck by Bryson's relaxed, affable personality.

"He felt like someone you could just sit there and chat with," he said.

Later, at the Bryan Series event, people came from all over Greensboro to hear Bryson tell his favorite stories, like his bear story from "A Walk in the Woods," and read passages from a selection of works in his extensive repertoire. Over the course of the 90-minute event, Bryson shared clever anecdotes and answered questions about

his personal life, and his career as well.

"I was thoroughly entertained," said Pollie Studley, a Bryan Series subscriber. "I enjoyed hearing him read passages from his books, and I didn't think I would like that because I've already read them, but I really enjoyed hearing him read it to me, and it was even funnier in his own voice."

Hood shared Studley's sentiments about Bryson.

"His voice on the page is very bold, but his actual physical voice is kind of muted, so it was an interesting contrast," said Hood. "He was very impressive to just be talking right out of his head, but I think my favorite part of both events was just the kind of warm, genial attitude he portrayed."

One common theme which seemed to run through both the smaller student session and the larger Bryan Series event, was the idea of 'home.' During the closing question-and-answer session, Bryson was asked to describe his favorite place to visit as a travel writer.

Bryson wowed the audience with his answer.

"Out of all the places I've been, home is still my favorite place to be," said Bryson.

When asked to define "home" for the audience, Bryson responded simply.

"Home is where my family and the people that I love are."

New endowment will provide creative writing scholarship

BY BANNING WATSON
STAFF WRITER

The Sherwood Anderson family has donated an endowment of \$600,000 to Guilford College to support emerging creative writers at Guilford.

Sherwood Anderson was a 20th-century American novelist best known for his novel "Winesburg, Ohio." The endowment comes from his estate, which has been passed down through his family.

"Some of the Sherwood Anderson family members are Guilford alumni, and they approached the college saying, 'If we were to offer an endowment, what would Guilford do with that money?'" said Mylène Dressler, assistant professor of English. "We began designing something that we thought would not only be appealing to the family but would be wonderful for the college as well."

As of spring 2015, Guilford will offer creative writing scholarships of \$3,500 each to four students. However, these students do not have to be English majors.

"The Anderson family was very interested in the idea that creativity happens all over the place on campus," said Dressler. "We, ultimately, agreed, so we wanted to make the scholarships available to anyone showing promise and commitment in the area of

creative writing."

Students will be asked to provide 20 pages of their creative work, not limited by genre or style, and an essay that explains why they have applied and what they hope to accomplish.

"The number one problem we have here at Guilford is that students do not having enough money to make it possible for them to attend the college," said English Professor Jim Hood. "Any way that we can provide more support for students is fabulous, and I think it's particularly fabulous to have the opportunity to support students who are interested in creative writing. It will be a shot in the arm to the creative writing program and could be a great recruitment tool."

The Anderson endowment also allows for the English department to bring an established writer to campus to speak, not only to grant winners but to the Guilford community.

"We're really making the stand that creative writing matters, and that Guilford believes that it matters," said senior Mary Heisey, English major and student representative in talks with the Anderson family.

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