

# SPORTS

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## Alumni gym access restricted, but change possible

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Upon passing by Ragan-Brown Field House, a casual observer can see various athletes, faculty and students flowing in and out of the facility. They come to practice, watch and work out in a fantastic environment.

Part of this facility, the Alumni Gym, offers a great space to play for anyone on Guilford College's campus except alumni. Now, the facility's staff hopes to alter policy and offer alumni a gateway back into the Guilford community.

"For some time we've wanted to be able to accommodate alumni with some kind of paid membership," said Vice President of Administration Jonathan Varnell in an email interview.

"Some form of payment will make sure that an already over stretched PE Center staff and housekeepers can take care of their current duties and make budgets for supplies, etc."

Though changes may be approaching, the current situation is far from ideal. For more than a decade, Guilford's policy for the gym has prevented alumni from using Alumni Gym.

The fallacy creates a dilemma. Why are the facility's namesakes unable to make use of it?

"I say why not (let alumni use the gym)?" said first-year Keenan Blough. "Guilford is an accepting place. Why not let them in?"

At a school where alumni cannot find parking or get Quaker Cards, it feels like gym access could be an opportunity so set up a positive precedent.

As it turns out, the answer to the question lies in a six-letter word we often see plastered on playgrounds, science labs and skate parks: safety.

"The limits imposed on Alumni Gym are strictly for the safety and security of our students," said Student Success Mentor Faris El-Ali '14 in an email interview. "If every random person who approached the front desk of Ragan-Brown Field House claiming to be an alum was given admittance, it would put our students and community members at risk."

The answer raises one issue, and Guilford students only pointed out more problems with an unlimited access plan.

"I would want to know how many alumni wanted to be there at once," said senior John Richardson. "If something like five alums wanted access that would be fine, but I can see problems emerging if 10 or 20 wanted to use the space for different uses."

If an unlimited access policy falls flat, what can the Guilford community do to grant alumni some kind of access?

As members of a Quaker community, we Guilfordians value community. Now how do we bring alumni back into the fold?

As is often true in cases like this, communication reveals solutions.

"I reached out to the Alumni Office for their input before Christmas, but was just recently able to connect with them on this topic," said Assistant Director of Facilities Brian Wenger in an email interview.

"Hopefully, they will be providing me with input soon." These discussions could help develop a mutually beneficial paid membership system. Many alumni donate to the college after graduation, and adding gym access as a perk would only sweeten the deal.

"I'd say yes (to alumni access) if the alumni in question continued donating to the school," said first-year James O'Bryant. "If they're already giving a bit of money, a gym membership is a great reward."

For now, alumni will still have to find somewhere else to exercise. Future discussions between the alumni office and the facility's staff could find a happy compromise to give Guilford's alumni another reason to continue their association with the old field house. Quakerism values community, and it is about time we helped bring alumni back into ours.

## Quakers basketball starts strong



COURTESY OF ASHLY BENNINGTON '16



COURTESY OF EMILY ZIEGLER '18



COURTESY OF BARBARA VAN WAGEN

(Top) Senior **Brittany Drew** looks to make a pass while guarded by an Emory & Henry College defender. (Bottom left) Senior **Jennette Taylor** drives to the basket against Washington and Lee University. (Bottom right) Sophomore **Zachary Houston** crosses the half court line and sets up the offense.

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