

Classics Department comes under review

Five perspectives from around campus

To: Board of Trustees, William Rogers, Dan Poteet, Kathy Adams, et. al.

From: English Department
Date: January 30, 1992

We understand that at the retirement of Ann Deagon there is an intention to terminate study of the Greek and Latin languages and of ancient mythology at Guilford.

Of course the English Department is concerned about the loss. And of course the ordinary—though not less valid for that—arguments for retention spring to mind. They are what everybody would say: Ancient Greece and Rome asked almost every question and started almost every study that led to western culture. Philosophy, art, literature, history, politics, jurisprudence, science, mathematics, all have their foundations in Greece and Rome.

Guilford now intends to let pass from the campus direct access to the sources of most of these. We have translations which can be incorporated into the programs of other departments, it will be said. We can do without the kind of direct light that Ann brought to us. We can live in a dimmer light.

And, of course, we can. At a greater cost than may at first appear.

The outstanding students who study classical languages and mythology, including those for whom the study of Latin is all but mandatory for law and medical school preparation, will bypass Guilford. True, there are not many of them, but those students are the salt in our bread. "But if we have lost the savor of this salt..."

In the catalogs of the better colleges the distribution of majors is always noted.

Guilford's listings show that we graduate more business majors and administration of justice (now, "Justice and Policy") majors than anything else.

Still, there was in the listings the presence of ancient connections that signaled the special light Guilford brought to these things. That will be lost. "We need the money elsewhere, we have other lights, we can tolerate this dimming."

The English Department cannot concur, nor can it believe that others really wish this. With the loss of classical languages and the loss of the study of classical mythology, which have been taught here for more than a century, there will come a radical change in the character of the school.

It is sad enough that we must lose Ann's presence and Ann's teaching, which have been for many students the golden bough that gained safe passage through modern flatness and confusion. Something of our ideals go with her. How can we think of not renewing them?

Richard A. Ford
Guest Writer

On January 30, the English Department circulated a memorandum to the trustees as well as a number of members of this community concerning the Classics Department. There was strong support for the continuation of Classics as a department at Guilford and acknowledgement of the importance of Ann Deagon's work in educating students over the years.

I would concur with the assessment that Classics is an important department and should be strongly considered worthy of continuing.

In the memorandum's second paragraph there was reference to a number of disciplines having their origins or foundations in Greece and Rome.

A more accurate statement would have been that

Greece and Rome contributed and enriched these disciplines, however it is inaccurate to say that these disciplines all had their foundation in Greece and Rome. A number of

civilizations before Greece and Rome had developed philosophy, politics, science, history, mathematics, jurisprudence, the arts, etc., including the Phoenicians, the Egyptians as well as others.

During the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. teach-in a group of students from the History Club of A & T State University presented a program on Afro-Centric History and its importance to today's students. In their discussion they made a number of excellent observations concerning the intentional exclusion of Africa and its influence and contributions to Western civilization.

If we were to look at the historical record more closely it would be clear that Africa indeed contributed significantly to all of the disciplines listed in the English Department memo. One of the frustrations of many African-Americans is in the protracted beginning of knowledge from a Eurocentric base and ignoring the contributions that Africans have made to modern civilization.

I write this memo in the hope that we at Guilford College can be more accurate in our assessment of History. I again applaud the efforts in maintaining the Classics Department here. In addition, I would encourage us to support academic courses which emphasize the African contributions to civilization as well as those of the Greeks and Romans.

Richard Ford is Associate Dean of Students

DISCUSSION FORUM: Classics Dept.

With the retirement of Ann Deagon, the fate of the Classics Department at Guilford has become an issue of vital importance to students and faculty. A debate has begun over the importance of Greek and Latin studies in the curriculum.

To: Dick Morton and the English Department

From: Dottie Borei, for the Clerk's Committee

Date: February 6, 1992

Having just read the memo concerning the classics program at Guilford, I would like to give my explanation of the current situation.

Last year the Clerk's Committee recommended that classics be merged into the philosophy department (which regularly offers classical thought) precisely to retain

classics at Guilford. Because both the philosophy and classics departments disliked that recommendation and a number of people voiced concern in the September faculty meeting, the Clerk's Committee has asked the Curriculum Committee to review both programs.

The classics and philosophy positions will be held open until the completion of such a review. As far as I know, there is no "intention to terminate study of the Greek and Latin languages and of ancient mythology at Guilford."

Instead, we are trying to find ways to integrate classics into the departments (such as history and philosophy) while we wait for the review. As we proceed with institutional restructuring, it seems wise to go slowly and carefully in making any appointment. If we are unwise, the faculty already at the college will suffer severe financial loss.

I hope the English Department will support the Clerk's Committee's decision and help us find creative ways to strengthen the classics program in the interim.

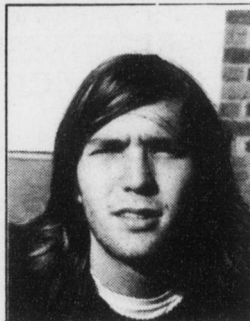
Further viewpoints from Richard Kania and Rudy Behar on page 5

What do you think the fate of the Classics Department should be?



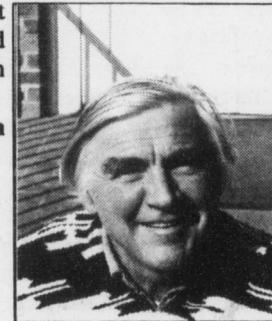
I think it's a shame—the classics are important, more than as a language experience. For example, in a Latin class, students learn about the origination of people, language; as opposed to French, the classics are a better learning experience.

Vanilla Mitchell



If students show a significant interest in the classics, it should remain an area of the English department.

Robb Unseth



Understanding hubris and other concepts we inherited from our predecessors can be a valuable addition to our lives. Study in the classics can help us not repeat mistakes of the past and provide positive examples we can adopt. In fine, study of the classics can enrich us all. Let us not lay aside such a rich resource.

F. Tom Clark

Photos by Joan Malloch