

The Guilfordian

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Editorial Policy

Opinions expressed in editorials and letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff and editorial board.

The editors reserve the right to edit all submissions for length, style, and taste.

Submissions

The Guilfordian encourages submissions. Typed articles and letters are due by 6:00 pm Monday. For more information on The Guilfordian write:

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Staff meetings held weekly.
Mondays at 9 p.m.
Writers, editors, and staff from
THE NEWS AND RECORD
will lecture on occasion.
Sept. 16...Bill Morris
Sept. 20- Kathy Coe
Sept. 27- Lynn Jessup

Making new paths to learning

Ashley Clifton Perspectives Editor

Eighteen members of the class of 1997 entered Guilford this fall having already declared some form of attention deficit disorder. Is Guilford equipped and willing to offer them the special attention they need?

Guilford prides itself on small classes, availability of professors and commitment to diversity. However, do we provide an environment in which a student with diversities in learning feels comfortable asking for help and confident in knowing they will receive helpful responses?

How has the Guilford faculty been educated to be aware and able to offer alternatives to these students? And is the public aware of the number of learning disabilities and differences? Are they aware that they might possess one?

When the topic of learning disabilities arises, many often think of dyslexia, which involves frequent reversal of numbers and letters. A few might be aware of attention deficit disorder (ADD), which makes it difficult to focus on a single stimulus, conversation or reading material for a long (or even a short) period of time.

But how many people realize that poor mechanics in writing, slow reading or writing rate, and difficulty in discriminating sounds or words can also be symptoms of a learning difference which deserves special attention?

Students are often made to feel that they are on their own in college; that they are being prepared for the *real world*, which is not entirely untrue. Responsibility is surely called for in keeping up with classes. But perhaps if more people realized that widespread differences in learning are much akin and equally important to the diversity in

culture, political views and tastes, we as students and faculty could make a place which is more diverse in learning, more accepting of differences. Even better than meeting Guilford's striving towards acceptance of differences in people is the striving to meet the needs of these differences. Differences such as ADD.

In striving to meet these needs we must be aware of the problem and its magnitude. As I read the list of characteristics which may accompany people with learning disabilities or differences, I am struck by their familiar sound: exaggerated fear of failure, low self-image, marked discrepancy between achievement and potential, high degree of creativity, average to high IQ. This list was put together in a hand-out by Sue Keith, head of the

Academic Skills Center.

Towards the top of the page is written, "Nobody's brain works perfectly. Brains work differently. We all have strengths and weaknesses." Here, Keith makes the point that we all learn differently. In making that point, even those who do not have a pronounced learning disability or difference might be aware of and more sympathetic to those who do. It provides a more open attitude for learning and teaching.

The difference with people diagnosed with ADD or another LD, Keith reminds us, lies "in the question of wiring and chemistry." It is often more difficult to recognize students with alternative learning needs than identifying a physical handicap. Embarrassment and hesitation in asking for help has been a problem in the past.

Though this is not the fault of the professors per se, we must take Keith's advice in "giving each other space to claim one's own identity and to honor it, recognizing "many avenues" which can be taken to learn the same thing. In a place such as Guilford, we must accept and meet the needs in bringing such diversity together.

Keith also points out the benefits of responding to the needs of these students. "In teaching exceptional students, we learn more about all students. When we ask, 'How can you tell me what you know?' -- This is what education is all about: genuine engagement." She calls this attitude "Quintessential Quaker," recalling the philosophy of the "light within us being wonderfully different."

By creating an atmosphere where

students are aware of their own diversity, we may allow students to feel more comfortable stating their own and asking for help. Gestures such as professors asking, at the beginning of each course, for students to write down how they learn best will help the professor in providing alternative methods of learning and also create an awareness within the student of his or her own patterns.

By allowing for these working relationships to develop between students and professors, a foundation for communication is laid. Students can then pick up assignments early or take essay tests on the computer, so they are entering the assignment on an equal level.

After all, as Keith points out, "This is not a research institution. It is a teaching institution."

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

My heart goes out to Ms. Carolyn Howes and her bitter words concerning our floral sign at the corner of Friendly Avenue and College Road. I am not sure I can sleep easy tonight knowing that this living sign causes such distress. Maybe I should go rip those flowers out of the ground and plant heinous, unkept shrubbery in their place. That way we could keep ignorant travelers unaware of our institution's name and provide an eyesore for the community all at the same time. No, I think I should realize that planting these flowers was a meticulous task and involved someone's hard

work and perseverance. I bet the guilty party probably feels pretty proud of the job well done he or she accomplished. Either that or hurt by the sharp words of disapproval. Thinking about that brave soul that did such a distasteful deed, I will leave the flowers be and let all that care to enjoy the Guilford name.

In closing, though, I would like to pass on a few words that I acquired thus far in my life: "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all," and "You never know who you might hurt, and words can never be taken back."

Sincerely,
Colin A. Kinken



Photo by Krysta Banke

Students kill time before class in front of King.