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A question of finances

Scholarship allocation to change radically

BEN THORNE
staff writer

The Admissions and Finance Offices proposed a change in the distribution of scholarship funds — a change which could affect the make-up of Guilford's future freshmen classes.



Al Newell

"I am convinced that Guilford, as the college we care about, won't be able to afford to have the kind of student body we have. We're not talking about dire straits, but about taking pro-active steps," stated Anthony Gurley, Director of the Financial Aid Office.

It could have a major impact on the admissions process.

Essentially, the change is being proposed because competition with other colleges is a problem.

About fifteen years ago money was awarded without a standard grade requirement, based on a net percentage of the total tuition, usually 15%.

This was when there were many students, and competition between colleges was not necessary. Therefore, college marketing was not needed.

Gurley said this all changed ten years ago. Colleges began to compete with each other for students. Guilford adapted by setting up different scholarships for different groups of students. While this has helped contribute to Guilford's diversity, it has also been the source of financial trouble.

"What Guilford has discovered is the way that aid is given, particularly to merit and 'need' students, has been particularly expensive," Gurley stated.

He continued, "In 1988, Guilford spent \$281,000 dollars total in honors scholarships. In 1995 \$113 million dollars was spent between honors and presidential scholarships. That's a five-fold increase in seven years. Guilford simply can't afford that. We're talking about a major restructuring of the aid process."

"The goal is to provide the biggest net return to the college for the financial dollars invested with the least impact on the student body, by targeting the grant dollars in a different way," noted Gurley.

"We have gotten so expensive that middle-income families who can't afford Guilford are going to less expensive schools."

What is actually going to change is still being debated. However, Al Newell, Dean of Admission, provided insight on what is currently being discussed.

"Under the current proposal, the honors budget would remain intact. A high percentage of honors students also qualify for need-based aid. We are going to treat some of the money received from honors scholarships towards that need-based aid," commented Newell.

He went on to say that "if it works as we assume it will, we

should still be bringing in the same size pool of honors students among the freshmen class (about 10%)."

"The academic range of the profile will become narrowed because students at the top of the pool who need the most money, and those who are at the bottom who both have a high need and are at the low-end of the academic scale, will probably decide to go elsewhere."

This "narrowing" of the academic range, also called compression, of students at Guilford is the biggest concern.

Rachel Christenson, a senior in Community Senate, stated that it is usual for there to be a panic among students whenever changing the scholarships is discussed. Beyond that, however, is some valid worry.

She commented, "There is some concern that students in the middle range and students who have high need and high SAT scores, who have worked really hard in school, will not get as much money."

"It all gets really confusing, but Al has done an incredible job of relating everything in language we (the Senate) can understand," she further added.

If this plan takes effect, a full need honors student can qualify for \$18,000, all of which is grant money. An additional \$3000 to \$3500 will not be grant money, but will be loans or money earned from work study.

"We'll figure out hopefully what worked and what didn't, and tweak that. I'm absolutely certain that it isn't going to work completely the first time, but when the next year comes around, we should have tweaked what went wrong, and do it better the next time," added Gurley.

There seems to be a general feeling of hope and enthusiasm among everyone involved.

"After talking with Al Newell and Dan Poteet at the student leadership lunch, I felt more comfortable about the proposal," stated Christenson.

Newell added, "I am genuinely excited about what we're going to do."

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