

THE GUILFORDIAN

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Benefits offered to domestic partners

◆After a six-year battle, Guilford offers benefits to the partners of gay and lesbian faculty members

BY FRED WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

In December of 1991, at a faculty meeting discussing restructuring of the benefits plan, professor Kathy Tritschler stood up and suggested that domestic partners of gay and lesbian faculty members should be covered under Guilford's health and dental insurance. She was met with dead silence. No more was said about it in the meeting by anyone. She sat down.

In the following days, 24 faculty members approached or called her to express agreement. She continued to push for benefits, and asked the Benefits Committee to explore the issue. She heard nothing. Four years later, in May of 1995, the Administrative Council, which Tritschler served on, asked the Benefits Committee to look into it.

Faculty and staff members have the right to purchase dental insurance and health insurance for their children and

spouses. Gay and lesbian professors could not purchase either one for their domestic partner.

Domestic partners are defined as two people, same sex or otherwise, who share a bank account, credit cards, and residence. To be recognized as a domestic partner of someone in the Guilford community, you must meet various other criteria established by the college.

Benefits Committee chairperson and Human Resources director Robyn Parsons states that her committee first asked Guilford's insurer to cover domestic partners in 1993 and has asked every year since. United Health Care replied that they would do it, but Guilford would have to become self-insured. Becoming self-insured would mean that the college would be responsible for high-cost medical expenses. This was not a risk option that Guilford wanted to pursue, Parsons explained.

Professor Ken Cameron came to Guilford last year. He

was excited by Guilford's non-discrimination policy. This policy claims that, among other things, Guilford does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. He was told that partners of faculty receive all the benefits that spouses do, but in reality domestic partners can use the library, go to the YMCA, and some other things that spouses can do, but medical benefits are denied them.

In the fall of 1996, Tritschler, Cameron, and other faculty members and their partners met with Don and Britta McNemar to request that ben-



Tritschler has lobbied long and hard for these benefits.

efits be offered to domestic partners. Cameron was told that the Human Resources director said *please see BENEFITS on pg. 5*

Smoking soon to be outlawed in the caf

◆Due to health inspector's concerns, the cafeteria's smoking section will be a hazy memory after winter break

BY MAGGIE BLAIR
Staff Writer

After Christmas break, students will not be allowed to smoke cigarettes anywhere in the cafeteria.

Molly Martin, president of the student Senate, said, "Basically, there are no 'ifs', 'ands' or 'buts' about this."

Due to the renovations planned for the cafeteria, the Health Department was called on to advise Guilford College on the proposed changes.

"We talked it over with the Health Department; we said, 'Tell us the best way to do this,'" said Brad McNeely, director of Guilford Dining Services.

The Health Department reported that if the caf is to continue to have a designated

smoking section, more ventilation is needed. "To make these changes," said McNeely, "an exorbitant amount of money would have been necessary to spend."

He recalled that renovations for adequate ventilation would cost between \$12,000 and \$15,000.

Aside from the money factor, McNeely said that within the next five years smoking will most likely be prohibited in all public buildings. McNeely would rather see that money spent on smaller renovations like purchasing new chairs and refinishing tables, two projects already completed.

The Underground will still have a designated smoking section, though. McNeely explained that most students at Guilford

are required to be on the meal plan for the cafeteria. However, no students are required to eat at The Underground.

In addition, there are two entrances and two exits in The Underground, so students who wish to avoid smoky areas can do so. The caf, on the other hand, has only one entrance and exit.

Most students, both smokers and non-smokers, say they do not personally have an objection to a smoking section of the cafeteria. Jenny Craigie, a sophomore non-smoker, said, "I have asthma and have never been affected by the smoke in the caf, and I have even sat there [in the smoking section] at times."

Katherine Shrou, a sophomore frequenter of the smoking

section, commented, "I think that after you eat, it is your constitutional right to inhale tar, tobacco and nicotine. Freedom! Liberty! Justice! We live in North Carolina, for Christ's sake."

"I'd rather have a smoking section in the caf than TVs—and I don't even smoke and I do watch television. And I eat, too," said Joel James, a sophomore non-smoker.

Although most students do not readily object to having a smoking section, some students have complained of smoke lingering in the cafeteria.

When asked about enforcement, McNeely stated, "We are asking students to self-govern." McNeely said that "No Smoking" signs will be posted in the cafeteria when students return from Christmas vacation.

"The more enlightened our houses are, the more their walls ooze ghosts."—Italo Calvino