

Guilford Enjoys Highest Enrollment

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This is the first in a series of articles about the increasing enrollment at Guilford College and its implications for the institution and the Guilford community. This article focuses on the Office of Enrollment, in particular the office of Admission.

Guilford College has the highest enrollment it has seen in years.

Currently, the college is enjoying the largest enrollment for a spring semester, 1,778 students, including traditional age, CCE, and Early College, in the institution's history.

Applications are also up, with the college receiving a record total of 1,536 from both first-year and transfer applicants as of late February.

College officials expect that the college will surpass its all-time enrollment record of 1,862 students, set in 1965, when the incoming first-year class arrives this fall.

"Interest in Guilford College is at an all-time high," said Randy Doss, vice president for enrollment and campus life. "Prospective students are making the judgment that Guilford not only offers a great academic environment but can also be life-changing. We've challenged prospective students to 'be the change they wish to see in the world' and to be willing to be challenged in every way. They are obviously seeking this kind of experience."

Why is enrollment up at Guilford? Why are more students applying than in previous years, and what if anything is the college doing differently to attract them?



Courtesy of the First Year Center

The Class of 2006, which began the academic year with 305 students, is part of the record spring-semester enrollment of 1,778 students, including Early College, Traditional, and CCE. Guilford anticipates enrolling 2,000 students next fall, which would break the all-time enrollment record of 1,862 students set in 1965.

Where are these new students coming from, and in what age group, traditional, CCE, or early college, are they most enrolling? Will the college continue to enroll more and more students every year, or is there an ultimate goal, a cutoff point?

For answers to these questions, the Office of Enrollment is a good point of origin.

Enrollment: Where It All Begins

This year marks the fourth enrollment cycle under the current Vice President for Enrollment, Randy Doss.

After the senior class, which was recruited by then-Dean of Admission Al Newell, graduates in May, the student body will be made up entirely of classes that arrived under Doss' tenure.

"The purpose of enrollment is to support the educational experience," Doss said. "And that educational experience takes place in the classroom and it takes place out of the classroom."

"We have to build an enrollment sufficient for our needs and our wants. Frankly, we have to work right now on our needs."

Doss notes that the economic climate over the last three years has led to a lower return on the college's endowment than originally projected, a problem Doss says is faced by other colleges as well. This, in turn, has forced the college to rely more heavily on tuition rates as a source of income.

"How you maintain your educational enterprise in an era of declining returns on investments is an unbelievable challenge," Doss said.

"The bigger an endowment you have, the less tuition driven you have to be."

Doss notes that students suggest that a slightly larger school is better.

A 1999 survey by the research firm C. G. Associates found that students say they are looking for a college of 1500 students.

"The definition of small is so subjective," Doss notes that Guilford is spread among groups, Early College, and CCE, and also residential and off-campus. In designating a target size, Doss says Guilford will decide how that size fits into the different age brackets.

"What kind of student-faculty ratio do we want during the day?" Doss said. "What kind of student-faculty ratio do we want during the night? How many full-time people do we want during the day? Is that the same percentage we want during the night?"

"[These are] the kind of issues that budget committees are discussing and trying to work through."