

## Letter to the Editor:

On Feb. 16, The Guilfordian published a letter to the editor from John Teague, a Guilford graduate, in which he leveled a number of charges and asked for a public response to four questions, many previously asked by others and answered. In order to provide the community with information, I will also respond to John Teague's letter.

1) *Given the overwhelming supporting data available, would Dean Israel and president Chabotar admit that Guilford remains at or below the already disparagingly low national averages when it comes to the recruitment, hiring, compensation, and retention of women faculty of color?*

Although some have devoted much time and energy to improving the recruitment, hiring, and retention of international faculty and faculty of color, only recently have these efforts yielded significant results. Nevertheless, Guilford currently employs a higher percentage of faculty of color than similar colleges in North Carolina and nation-wide. Although the numbers continue to be lower than I would like to see, awarding tenure to anyone simply to satisfy diversity goals is not what racial and gender equality are about.

As for compensation, according to the most recent American Association of University Professors (AAUP) study of gender and faculty salaries, the average salary for women faculty at Guilford is higher than the average salary for men in all ranks. The AAUP does not reveal data on the compensation level for women faculty of color at Guilford; however, it is on par with the compensation of other women faculty at Guilford at all ranks.

2) *Would Dean Israel and President Chabotar agree or disagree with notes civil rights attorney Julius Chambers' conclusion that the tenure review process at Guilford is "broken"?*

Given that Julius Chambers did not make this statement to me or to Kent Chabotar, it is best that he respond to your inquiry. Julius Chambers stated on Monday, Feb. 19: "I expressed to Dr. Branch my general observation that every tenure review process, including Guilford's process, would do well to eliminate as much subjective consideration as possible.

I recognize, however, that some subjectivity exists any time promotion decisions are made, and I did not find Guilford's process to be 'broken' or defective to the extent that race was or could have been a factor in the tenure decision.

I suggested, however, that the College should eliminate as much subjectivity as possible, and I made some suggestions to Dr. Chabotar in the context of the specific matter I reviewed. I believe my suggestions were followed." the decision not to

award tenure resulted from a process that incorporated Julius Chambers' advice.

3) *Given that Julius Chambers has no objection (in fact, he never did) to make his complete report available to the Guilford community, and that Dr. Branch has stated that she has no objection to this, would Dean Israel and President Chabotar recommend that his complete report be released for review?*

In an extraordinary effort to respond to Eleanor Branch's charges of racism, the College retained Julius Chambers to review the process as it was applied to Eleanor Branch and to inform the President whether the decision resulted from race discrimination. Mr. Chambers was given access to whomever and whatever information he needed to make this determination, and, as you know and as has been previously reported, he concluded that race was neither a legal nor a deciding factor the FAC's decision.

Everyone who spoke with Mr. Chambers agreed to do so after the President assured them of confidentiality. The President does not intend to breach that trust. However, the college community should be reassured that a noted civil rights expert reviewed the process and concluded that the decision not to recommend tenure was not racially motivated.

4) *Would Dean Israel and President Chabotar at least acknowledge that compulsory training for members appointed to the FAC, which could include widely regarded training programs for white FAC members, such as Judy Katz's "White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training," would no doubt have a positive impact on Guilford's "broken" tenure system?*

As I have said before, I have enthusiastically supported anti-racism training campus-wide, have worked to get it funded and institutionally sanctioned, and in the late 1990s as a faculty member joined the group who approached members of the Board of Trustees asking that the anti-racism initiative be adopted at Guilford. I recommend anti-racism training for all faculty, staff, and students, those who serve on policy committees and those who do not. Each of us can help dismantle racism.

Unfortunately, the last time the College attempted to require such training, some actively resisted participating. Current efforts to incorporate anti-racism training into all aspects of College life are clearly described in the strategic plan and are supported by me and Kent Chabotar.

I trust this letter responds to the questions posed.

—Adrienne Israel,  
Vice President for  
Academic Affairs

## Transparency at Guilford

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Under the heading, "Staff talk about integrity," the Guilford College website quotes President Kent Chabotar as saying, "Guilford College believes in holding everyone accountable for results. Decision making is transparent and we usually get an avalanche of information. Myths and rumors do not last very long here."

We fully support the values promoted here—transparency and accountability. Moreover, we acknowledge that the administration has taken steps to implement these values by holding meetings and "open" forums, etc. But President Chabotar is overstating when he claims that such conditions already exist at Guilford.

Chabotar has committed the error common to many statements of value. He has conflated the "is" with the "ought." While indeed decision making ought to be transparent, more than one institutional practice suggests that it is not.

One such practice regards timing. We see a troubling pattern in the timing of controversial decisions at Guilford. The trend is simple: administrators at Guilford often make their most profound and difficult decisions when the broader community is most distracted, right before a break.

The following list of instances is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it strongly suggests the tendency on the part of Guilford to diverge from its stated respect for transparency. We do not mean to imply this practice is necessarily deliberate. We also do not mean to eliminate this possibility.

The effect, in either case, is the same. The choice by Guilford's decision-makers to act when everyone is absent or distracted thwarts outright any community response to controversial decisions.

In the most example, the principal players of the "incident in Bryan Hall" received their judicial decisions on Feb. 28, during midterms, two days before spring break.

Eleanor Branch, assistant professor of English, and Shelini Harris, assistant professor of religious studies, received the latest reiterations of their dismissal from Guilford by the board of trustees on Feb. 28, during midterms, two days before spring break.

In Branch's case, the pattern is obvious. On April 14, 2006, the Guilfordian reported her initial ten-

ure denial, which took place on March 2, right before spring break. The tenure appeal board met in April and refused to overturn the decision as finals approached before summer.

Julius Chambers, the noted civil rights lawyer whom Chabotar hired to investigate Branch's discrimination allegations, released his report in early September 2006 after the summer's inquiry.

**Guilford's practice of making important decisions at times when much of the community is distracted or absent — often right before a break — calls into question claims of transparency.**

Chabotar waited to make his decision to uphold the denial of tenure until October 11, 2006, during midterms, three days before fall break.

In mid Dec. 2006, during finals, the week before winter break, someone made the baffling decision to annihilate nearly every artificial

structure in the woods and leave enormous piles of tetanus in their place.

The same week, campus life held an open forum regarding changes in their smoking, alcohol and social gathering policies. Huge turnout for that one.

Similarly, on March 17, 2006, the Guilfordian reported on Chabotar's open forum discussing Guilford's master plan, held during midterms, the week before spring break.

During fall 2005 and spring 2006, a contingent of students mobilized a proposal to introduce gender-blind housing options at Guilford. The proposal, supported by community senate, was turned down at the spring meeting of the Board of Trustees, which was ... guess when ... during midterms, right before spring break.

On May 12, 2005, SLRP committee held an open forum regarding the physical impact of the plan on our beloved campus. That's days after graduation, more than a week before the summer term.

Such institutional practices are overtly paternalistic. They allow for claims to transparency while limiting the participation and input of many concerned parties. Open forums, for example, have low turnout because of poor scheduling choices. One is free, however, to attribute this to "apathy" and thereby to justify the elimination of such forums altogether. Ingenious, really, and pernicious.

It seems ridiculous that one must actually state that, despite the president's claims, myths and rumors do indeed last at Guilford. No time, space, or point to listing them here. The important thing is that these rumors spread and maintain in large part because of Guilford's own practices, and integrity requires that we examine these.