

Academic Convocation '08: 172 years of community

By Meredith Jones
STAFF WRITER

The sound of 800 pairs of feet thundering down the aisles of Dana Auditorium announced the start of this year's Academic Convocation on Sept. 3.

The convocation marked the beginning of Guilford's 172nd academic year.

Max Carter, campus ministry coordinator, led a brief prayer that culminated in a moment of silence. After that, President Kent Chabotar took the podium to give his commencement address.

Chabotar detailed Guilford's achievements, which included its ranking as one of the top colleges for political activism and the increased size of its graduating classes. He listed what he termed Guilford's "competitive advantages": a small, community-focused liberal arts campus, the presence of the Early College at Guilford, and its core Quaker values.

As he spoke, images appeared on the screen behind him. In one, a girl clutched a sign that read,

"What does 'become more' mean to you?"

Kent Chabotar, President

"Quakers oppose all war." In another, the green, canopied campus stretched out before the viewer. Finally, two words flashed across the screen: Become More.

"What does 'become more' mean to you?" Chabotar asked the graduating class of 2012, before leaving the stage to much applause.

A short interlude providing information about Guilford clubs and organizations followed his speech. Then Adrienne Israel, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean, introduced Jeff Jeske, the keynote speaker.

Jeske, Dana professor of English, took the stage next.

"I'd like to begin by taking you back a few years," he said. He proceeded to detail the experiences of a former editor-in-chief of the Guilfordian who never, despite her efforts, managed to connect meaningfully with other students at Guilford. He went on to discuss how to prevent the dilemma of this woman, recommending that students take advantage of Guilford's community spirit, emphasis on academics, and "truly vibrant campus life office under the leadership of Aaron Fetrow."

"I truly believe that the focus on academics and recognition of the distinctiveness of Guilford were a perfect combination to kick-off our academic year," said Dean of Students Fetrow about the convocation.

Students poured out of the doors of Dana after a performance of the school alma mater. Some added their own ideas to Chabotar's list of Guilford virtues:

"The people are so nice and accepting," said Elijah Dacosta, first-year.

Kiyomi Lafleur, first-year, added "I really like the Quaker values, you

know?"

Some of the named virtues were more specific.

"I like calling teachers by their first names," said Ben Chaves, first-year.

"The trees!" exclaimed Emily Silverman, first-year.

Many students mentioned the ever-present sense of community at Guilford, which seemed to be even thicker in light of Jeske's remarks.

"That's where we draw our strength," Jeske said, "from our mutual willingness to put aside selfishness and bureaucracy and hierarchy to create a loving community."



Guilford's women's choir, directed by Wendy Looker, singing the alma mater.



PHOTOS BY CLAIRE OOSTERHOUDT/GUILFORDIAN

Kent Chabotar, president of Guilford College, gives one of his famous powerpoint presentations at convocation.

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Email: jjeske@guilford.edu