

New headcounts challenge us to keep our focus

Tristan Dewar
STAFF WRITER

Guilford's student body is a lot larger than it was just a few years ago, and the latest enrollment data confirms that it will only get bigger. This presents a unique challenge for a college that has traditionally maintained a small population. Change isn't always bad, however, as more students means more diversity of ideas on campus.

Once upon a time, the new apartments were actually new. The Frank Family Science building harbored a multi-million-dollar new car smell, and a rumored billiards table or two existed for those who were inclined to play. Sodexo ruled the caf with an iron skillet, and professors and students in King had reason to worry about (possible) lead poisoning or asbestos inhalation. Brian Hall housed athletes sans prison bars, and the concept of security cameras on campus was laughable to all but the most paranoid of students.

For many students on campus, that Guilford is but a reverie. Even more are unaware it existed at all. To most, the Guilford of 2002 is hardly more than an ephemeral first impression of life away from parents, yet very close to red Solo cups and alcohol. Lots of alcohol.

Alas, even the significance of the Solo cup itself, a timeless symbol of promise and bounty on campus, is encroached upon by a new era in Guilford's history: the era of the big-ass student body.

Guilford released its official enrollment data on Oct. 1, registering a total headcount of 2,641 students. This number is comprised of 1,387 traditional students (of which 406 are first-years), 1,159 adult students and 95 Early College students. Though this number seems relatively small in comparison to other collegiate headcounts in N.C., consider that in the spring of 2003, the Guilford's student population amounted to only 1,778.

I've had the unique pleasure of experiencing this rapid growth first hand: I first entered Guilford as a high-school sophomore through the fledgling Early College program in the fall semester of '02 and then stayed on for college in the fall of '05.

Although Guilford has changed drastically over my school career, it's been a journey of maturation.

And as the student population continues to expand (Guilford's long-range strategic plan projects that the number will climb to 2,830 by the fall of '09), Guilford aggressively hires new faculty and staff to accommodate the growing number of eager young minds and unregistered vehicles on campus. The 15:1 student-teacher ratio remains firmly intact.

And with more students on campus and more money in coffers, new student organizations are always being introduced to accommodate expanding interests (skateboarding and parkour clubs represent!).

An ever-increasing population invites a plethora of different ideas and personal experiences into the community. The Guil-

ford of '08 isn't as simple to classify as it might've been a couple of years ago.

I had a friend at UNCG that incessantly referred to Guilfordians as "stank-ass hippies," and while there are certainly people on campus that proudly fly their own freak-flags, even my hippy-hating-friend would give pause when asked to characterize the present student body.

Though Guilford is famously liberal, a shifting political spectrum on campus is far from lamentable.

No one enjoys being pigeonholed. Conservatives on this campus used to be an endangered species - or at least an invisible species. I may curse Reaganomics until my dying, pollution-clogged breath, but I want this community to extend beyond the predictable. By all means, resuscitate the College Republicans and let's get to sparring.

What I have observed, unfortunately, is a student body that is decidedly more docile. Well, docility can't be bad, right? It's a school steeped in Quaker tradition, after all. Typically, one hand can't collect cans while the other's igniting a Molotov cocktail.

While Guilford's long history of social activism still endures, I'm afraid something has fallen by the wayside as the old Guilford transitions into the new.

As the community has reached record numbers, we've adopted a consensual view of what Guilford should be for everyone, and loud-and-proud activism didn't make the cut fully intact.

I remember class-walkouts and protests

along Friendly Avenue when Bush invaded Iraq, and rallies and speeches on the newly constructed Founders patio in the wake of the Bryan incident.

During the quieter stretches of semester, there would at least be people camping on the quad in advocacy of fair trade or living in trees around the meadows in protest of parking fines.

And while even the most dedicated Che Guevaras of Guilford need to attend class every now and again, it wouldn't hurt for us to revive that sense of urgency and activism. That's not to say that Guilford students are dispassionate about or uninvolved in this community and beyond, but you don't have to leave Greensboro to assemble peacefully (and perhaps, angrily).

Differences of opinion are the natural result of a changing Guilford community. As the headcount grows, so too does the probability of conflict. But if conflict and frictions are the growing pains of the Guilford community, activism and social consciousness are the deodorant and anti-perspirant for our smelly, maturing student body.

I fondly remember the Guilford of yesteryear. As we move into a new era of Guilford's history, it's time to embrace new traditions. But lest we forget in the face of these record enrollment numbers, Guilford is a community grounded in the intimacy of student relationships.

This campus is celebrated for its enthusiasm for challenging the status quo; let's assure ourselves that we'll never succumb to it.

SAT/ACT declared an old hat

Maxwell Reitman
STAFF WRITER

According to The New York Times, a new report issued by a National Association for College Admission Counseling group questions the efficacy of the SAT & ACT. The report came from a year-long study by the group, which included some of the bigwigs of college admissions like William R. Fitzsimmons, the dean of admissions and financial aid at Harvard.

Guess what their conclusion was? The test doesn't work like it should. Surprised?

The report showed that standardized tests weren't tied to what high schools were teaching. The NACAC also noted that "the test scores appear to calcify differences based on class, race/ethnicity and parental educational attainment."

"It would be much better for the country to have students focusing on high school courses that, based on evidence, will prepare them well for college and also prepare them well for the real world beyond college, instead of their spending enormous amounts of time trying to game the SAT," said Fitzsimmons.

The report didn't stop there; it also went on to speak against using the tests at all because of the possi-

bility that the tests are actively misshaping secondary education, encouraging students to game tests.

Hallelujah!
I can say honestly that I've been waiting for the SAT bubble to burst for years now.

I remember studying for the SAT. I remember taking it twice before I was required to, just to eke out another few measly points on it. I remember learning tricks to circumvent what the test was supposed to do.

That is not what education is supposed to be.

Rather than learning the material, I spent my time taking an abbreviated course in "testing theory." Unless you expect everyone to be writing tests, there's something wrong with that system.

It's good that some of the people at the top are recognizing the problems with the system. Too many factors are in the way with a one-day, one-sitting test that's been around for years.

Unfortunately, the good news ends there.

The report suggested the use of the AP and International Baccalaureate exams as a stop-gap measure, since they supposedly reflect high school curricula better.

Stop-gap measure until what? Until we develop yet another achievement test.

Fantastic, we trade an old cage for a new one. Is another exam really going change things? I'm more than a little skeptical of just how new this brave new world is.

How certain can we be that we want our tests to reflect the current state of our high schools? Since No Child Left Behind, the low end of the testing spectrum has moved up a little bit, but the top scorers are doing worse, if anything (at least according to the National Education Association).

The school system isn't motivating them, and these tests are supposed to help locate the best and brightest, right? So why make something new in the image of something broken?

I'm not certain that I want another test. The only ones I've seen used on a national scale try to slim education down to straight rows of numbers. The AP tests rush us past courses where we could learn valuable things, the SAT and ACT are disconnected from the high school curriculum according to this new report, and I don't think that one piece of testing will ever do everything it needs to.

As Mr. Fitzsimmons said in that same article: "No one in college admissions ... can come away thinking that standardized tests can be a measure of someone's true worth or ability."

Earn Credits With

THE GUILFORDIAN

The award-winning student newspaper at Guilford College

Register for Engl 285:
Guilfordian Practicum

Section 001: Writing (4 credits)
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

Beginners MW
11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.
Veterans MR
11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

2-credit option also possible

Required staff meeting
M 7:30 - 8 p.m.

Sections 002, 3, 4, 5 (1-4 credits)

Design
Photography
Copy Editing
Managing Editor
Webmaster
Business
Advertising

Required staff meeting
M 5:25 - 6:30 p.m.

'Tis a pleasure indeed
to see oneself in print."

Lord Byron

Contact Jeff Jeske (x2216)