

Enrollment declines, affects financial future of College

BY IAN PENNY
STAFF WRITER

The numbers are in. For the Spring 2014 semester, Guilford College has enrolled 1,105 traditional students and 952 CCE students.

"(The numbers are) decent, not great," said Dean of Admission and Financial Aid Administration Andy Strickler. "We're a little lower, but these things tend to work in cycles."

Over the past five years, enrollment numbers for both spring and fall semesters have seen a drop-off. In Spring 2010, a total of 1,376 traditional students and 1,322 CCE students attended Guilford either full-time or part-time.

These spring enrollment figures may have wide implications on the budget situation the school faces.

"Whenever we are short in admissions, we are short in funding," said trustee and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee Brent McKinney in a meeting open to students and faculty on Feb. 20 in Joseph M. Bryan Jr. Auditorium.

Guilford has been put in a tough financial position.

"Two years ago, we were whammed by the state legislature," said trustee and Chair of the Finance Committee Carole Bruce at the meeting.

In 2012, the North Carolina General Assembly made statewide cuts to financial aid programs. Guilford experienced a \$2.45 million shortfall in funding and is still grappling with how to move forward.

"Tuition and fees don't cover everything," said trustee and Chair of the Advancement Committee Daryle Bost '93.

In the short term, lower enrollment may mean up to \$250,000 in cuts to the College budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Long term, the board of trustees is looking to become

more dependent on endowment funding rather than tuition. Guilford has not been alone in dealing with the effects of the financial crisis and subsequent recession.

"The economy affects everybody, all institutions," said Strickler.

The big question looking ahead is how next semester's enrollment figures will turn out. Guilford is prepared for a worse case scenario where only 1,179 traditional students and 865 CCE students enroll in Fall 2014.

Though applications are coming in, there are no estimates on the size of next year's incoming first-year class.

"I've been in this business long enough to not speculate," said Strickler. "It's hard to predict."

Forecasting the future is tricky due to the variance in the different student populations.

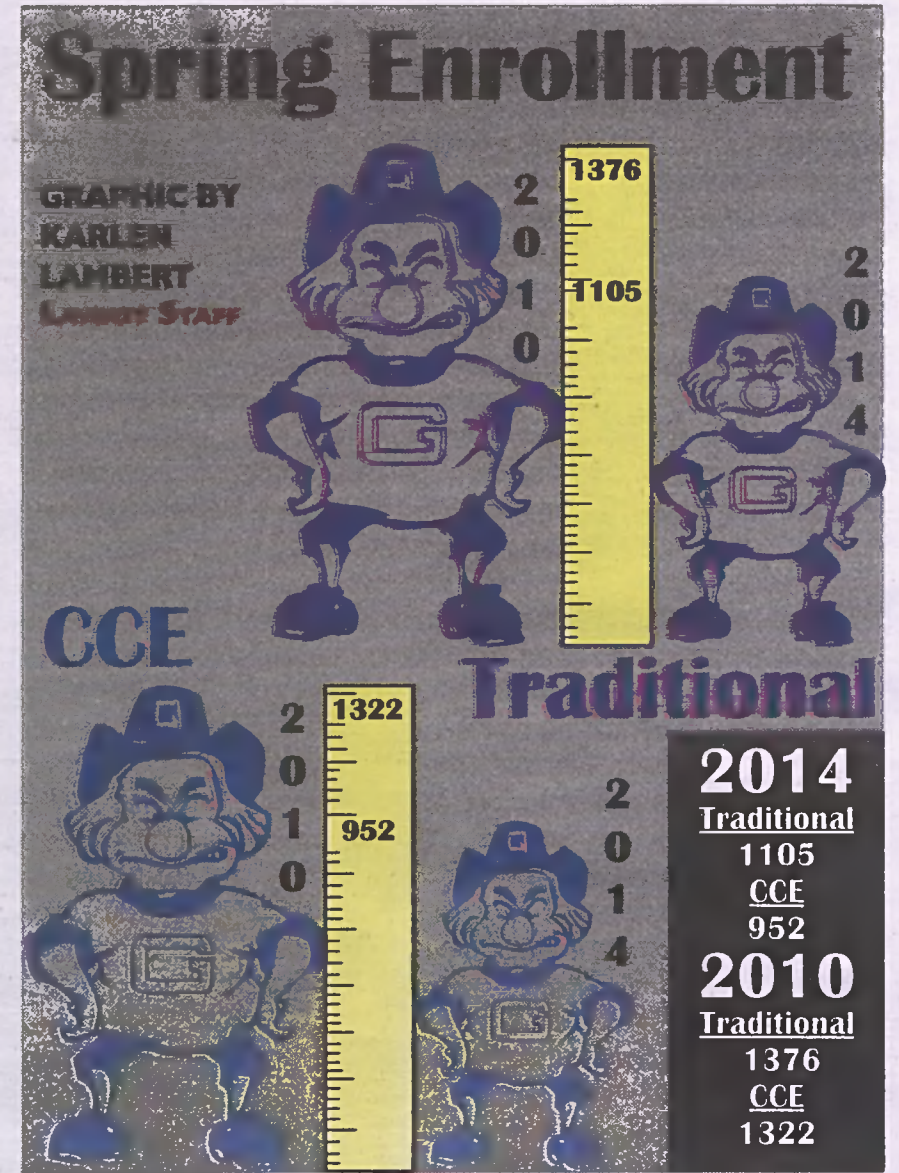
Strickler only oversees the traditional student body. For traditional student enrollment, the two areas administrators focus on are first-year recruitment and subsequent retention. The largest factor affecting the enrollment for first-years and returning students is tuition.

CCE students are under the purview of Associate Vice President and Dean for Continuing Education and Summer School Rita Serotkin. Similarly, administrators focus on the decisions adult students are making in their college careers.

In addition to the cost of attending school, adult students typically have more on their plates than traditional students. Many have jobs and families, making attending class much more complicated.

Guilford's revitalized marketing efforts, including a new website, indicate an attempt to draw in both types of students.

"We are making a concerted effort to highlight our values," said Strickler. "We are who we are."



SENATE UPDATE

this week's developments

The web development team for Guilford came in for a Q&A. Students expressed a desire for the core values and a declaration of Guilford as an anti-racist institution on the front page. Jen Agor and Barb Boyette came to solicit student input on ways to increase retention and recruitment.

next week's plans

Georgie Bogdan will be coming to lead a discussion about accessibility at Guilford. Senate will present a new proposed set of bylaws.

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Compiled by Samir Hazboun, Community Senate president

TOWN HALL

Disappointment after board meeting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

three."

Another question, about diversity at Guilford, was answered only after prompting from the audience.

"We've got a large percentage of the leaders who see diversity as black and white, but ... it's not just black and white," said Chairperson of Advancement Daryle Bost '93. "It's (race), thought, socioeconomic, sexual orientation. It's all of those things."

As to why this question was almost skipped, Associate Professor of English and Chair of the English Department Diya Abdo had some insight.

"The questions were of the softball variety, except the question on diversity, which is why it was nearly skipped," said Abdo.

Students and faculty alike were disappointed by the last question of the meeting, which asked trustees what class they would teach at Guilford. Many felt it was a trivial, fluffy question that did not touch on the many real issues the College faces.

The event intended to help students understand what trustees do.

"There's often a misconception that trustees have the ability ... to do certain things that we don't," said trusteeship and Governance Committee Chairperson Linda Thorup.

Overall, attendees wished the meeting would have been more conversational.

"It was really informative, but it didn't feel like Guilford," said first-year Elena Robles. "Guilford is much more into conversations. It was more of a monologue than it was a dialogue."

Abdo was disappointed by the event.

"If the purpose of the meeting was to create a dialogue between students and the board members, then it did not achieve that," said Abdo. "The meeting, overall, felt like a scripted and very restrained and constrained event. There was no interaction at all between the Board and the students."

Thorup agreed that there should have been more interaction between the trustees and the students.

"I would like to have more questions come directly from the students," said Thorup. "It was great for us to have the ability to talk to students and to hear their questions ... I hope the students could see that we're really people and that we really are passionate about the school."

Many hope that in the future, meetings like this will be more candid and include more hard-hitting discussion.

"If such meetings happen again, they should be more interactive, honest and certainly less stage-managed," said Abdo.

The next board of trustees meeting will be on Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31.