



VIEWPOINT



Jim Hood '79, an associate professor of English at Guilford since 1999, has assumed additional responsibilities as the college's associate academic dean. In his new role, which is an appointed position held by a member of the faculty, he has oversight for advising, all student academic issues and transfer student issues.

In addition, Hood has been given responsibilities for assisting Jerry Godard, the college's executive vice president, with strategic planning.

Hood, who teaches 19th Century British Literature and writing courses, earned a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Guilford, a master's degree in religion and literature from Yale University in 1981 and a doctorate in English from UNC Chapel Hill in 1991.

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I spend much of my time these days thinking about Guilford's future. I've been involved in focused planning efforts at Guilford for more than a year now, and where we're going as an institution is always on my mind.

Like most small, liberal arts colleges around the country, at Guilford, change is the order of the day. The information revolution continues at warp speed. Students expect and deserve classroom and residential life experiences of premium quality, so we must continually assess and improve what we do. Research continues to realign the boundaries of knowledge, and our academic programs must accommodate and help shape the shifting paradigms of understanding. Who attends college has altered dramatically in recent years — one report indicates that only 16 percent of those enrolled in American colleges are 18 to 22 years old, attend school fulltime and live in a residence hall — and Guilford must be ready to

provide its distinctive education to this expanding population of nontraditional students. The college lives, as it were, in interesting times, a condition (the proverb suggests) of blissful curse.

As I think about Guilford's future, glimmers of which hint at great promise — a capital campaign moving into its final 15 months already at nearly 80 percent of its goal, newly established majors in computing and health sciences attracting students, a Center for Continuing Education experiencing phenomenal growth, another large first-year enrollment this fall — I also try to mind its past. I'm convinced that Guilford must front the challenge of forging what it will become by transforming what it has been. And I'm

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Guilford experience extends beyond the campus and actively involves a community of alumni, families and friends. The college desires to give its various constituencies a voice, especially when the opinion of one represents a broader group. We welcome letters to the editor on topics relevant to the college that are important to you.

When you submit a letter for publication, please sign (unless you are using e-mail or computer fax) and include your address and daytime telephone number. If you are submitting a written letter, please print your name as you wish it to appear. If you are an alumnus of Guilford, please indicate your year of graduation.

Letters should typically address a single idea and not exceed 150 words. We reserve the right to edit for brevity, grammar and clarity.

Deadlines for letters are December 1, 2001, for the Winter 2002 issue and March 30, 2002, for the Spring/Summer 2002 issue.

Send letters by e-mail to Ty_Buckner@guilford.edu; fax to 336-316-2939; or mail to Guilford College Magazine, Office of College Relations, Guilford College, 5800 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, N.C. 27410.

particularly aware these days of three vital aspects of Guilford's past that will inspire its future.

There's something unmistakably rich and practical in Guilford's Quaker identity, a heritage that has always recognized truth and knowledge as works in progress. The dynamic nature of Quaker tradition — and yes, I know "dynamic tradition" sounds like an oxymoron, but I see it more vibrantly, as a paradox — encourages not mere adaptation, but transformation, and this dynamism well positions the college to move in shifting times. George Fox's call to educate for "things civil and useful" cautions us not to chase fashion, but to engage in practices of real and lasting value.

Academic excellence, practiced at Guilford as setting high standards and providing the opportunity for all to achieve, embodies such real value. Our tradition of expecting much of students (and, consequently, of our faculty) does

not make Guilford an easy college, but it makes the education possible here a powerful one. Guilford does not practice excellence by exclusion, admitting only the chosen few. Instead we offer the challenge of substantial intellectual and personal growth, inviting students to participate in a demanding process of transformation.

Interaction propels significant change. Guilford's most potent future-shaping legacy may be its identity as a place where relationships matter. We talk a lot about community, but I often find that concept too abstract, at least until I think about it as the combination of multiple, individual relationships in which we seek the best in one another. As I listen to Guilford alums, time and again I hear them talking about a relationship here, a human connection with another student, a staff member or a teacher, as the defining center of their college experience. That was certainly true for me. As I

envision Guilford's future, I can only see it as a place where we continue to honor one another by demanding much and caring the same.

As Guilford moves along with the adaptations it must make, I'm ready to be, as I quipped to a colleague this past year, a "fool for the future." But I'm only wearing that motley where we bring along the bag of tricks (the Latin root of fool, *follis*, means "bellows" or "bag") that includes a deep commitment to our Quaker identity to academic excellence and to nurturing respectful relationships. That's a good trio to power the furnace in which we'll forge what Guilford is becoming.

Faculty, staff, students and alumni are welcome to submit Viewpoint essays to be considered for publication.

For more information, contact the editor by calling 336-316-2248 or e-mailing Ty_Buckner@guilford.edu.