

Academic Skills Center "Fills Holes" in Students' Experience

The challenge to engage in creative and critical thinking is one of five academic principles governing Guilford's academic program. The Academic Skills Center, on the second floor of Hege Library, is right in the center of helping students meet that challenge, according to Sue Keith.

The center has faculty tutors that help students, in group or individual sessions, develop quantitative, writing and reading skills as well as organizational skills related to test-taking and time management. There is also an alternative learning specialist who provides support for those with learning differences.

Peer-driven tutoring programs such as Community of Writers (COW), facilitated by some of the college's best writers, help students explore ideas for a paper, formulate an outline or work out grammatical and punctuation issues. "Chemistry 911," for those seeking help with introductory chemistry courses, and "Debug," for computer programming assistance, are similar in structure to COW. Course-specific one-on-one tutoring is available upon request, with the Center paying for up to eight hours of tutoring per semester.

Ashley Kangarloo '06, a criminal justice major with a concentration in philosophy, has had a weekly standing appointment at the center since she was a freshman. Kangarloo originally went to the center seeking help with writing and organizational skills. She received the help she needed and found a friend and mentor in Keith. "She always believes in me even when I don't believe in myself," she says. "She has given me a confidence that will help me succeed in life."

The steady increase in the number and diversity of students using the center demonstrates its success. More than 500 students, ranging from early college to traditional undergraduate and graduate and adult students, received services last year.

"We do a lot of hole-filling," Keith explains. "We see students who are doing fine except for little chunks of stuff that they do not know."

Sue Keith's Legacy is

COMMUNITY

By Tracey Holyfield

Sue Keith's teaching certificate was merely an insurance policy while she pursued a career in writing. At least that's what she told herself when took her first teaching job in Georgia shortly after earning her bachelor's degree in English and French from UNCG in 1962.

"I was scared to death my first day of teaching," the director of the Academic Services Center (ASC) and part-time lecturer recalls. "The second day I realized that I absolutely loved teaching. My plan was to get a teaching certificate as an insurance policy while I became a writer, so I was surprised that I loved teaching.

"Dadgummit!" she exclaims with an exaggerated slap to her thigh. She thus began a career path in teaching peppered with editing and publishing jobs in Georgia, Michigan and California and along with the acquisition of a master's degree in contemporary fiction and linguistics from Michigan State University before returning to Greensboro with her husband James in 1982.

She joined Guilford as part-time lecturer in the English Department when her husband became the head of career development, internships and service learning. She later added tutoring in the ASC to the mix before becoming the center's director in 1991. Today, as Keith reflects over her career and her plans for retirement this summer, it is this job that she passionately declares "her favorite."

"It's a balance of administration and one-on-one tutoring and classroom education," she says. "I have so enjoyed that balance. I think each of those things informs the other. It fits together really well. I know that's one of the reasons, I've enjoyed this job."

She unabashedly loves the challenges of administration, which she

refers to as "moving the immovable" as well as the "luxury" of tutoring one-on-one, and the "choreography" of the classroom environment.

Keith has accomplished much during her time at Guilford, including the development of the "Adult Transitions" course, which helps adult students with the transition back into the writing intensive environment at college; the addition of support services for students with learning differences; and the creation of the Community of Writers, a peer-driven program designed to help students with all facets of writing papers.

Part-time English department lecturer and ASC tutor Douglas Smith expresses sadness that Keith is leaving. He describes Keith as intelligent and kind. "She creates a kind of place where people can be open about what they think and need. She really is a very good person in all kinds of ways. I'm sad to see her go."

"I have tried to build a community," Keith says of her work with the students, tutors at the center and the college's faculty. "I have a big belief in the community and the kind of energy it can give. This spills over into how the students feel."

She is now looking forward to spending more time within the community of her family, which includes her husband and three daughters: Sarah Keith Chowning, Anna Keith and **Emily Keith '03**. "My husband has been waiting patiently for me to retire for five years now," she jokes. She anxiously awaits more time to read, garden and "time to just be."

Musically-inclined, Keith has sung alto in the Choral Society of Greensboro for 15 years and plays the piano and cello.

Perhaps she will study piano again, she muses. Then of course, there's that never-forgotten dream. "Remember when I said I wanted to be a writer?"

Tracey Holyfield is a freelance writer living in Greensboro.

BUILDING



Erica Bratz '07 discusses the fall exam schedule with Sue Keith.

JULIE KNIGHT