



May 8, 2008

President Davila:

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome to *Bob's Vlog* once again. This month of May is really a wonderful time here at Gallaudet University. It's really a very exciting time because during this month we recognize the accomplishments of our wonderful students, and especially those students who completed their program and will graduate on May 16. It's really wonderful to see the changes happen among students who arrive here and, a few years later, they graduate. It's so wonderful to see changes in their growth, maturity, and other skills. The knowledge they acquired prepares them really well for the world that is waiting for them out there. It's nearing the time for them to leave and go forward, and they will be joining the wonderful organization, the Gallaudet University Alumni Association. That will allow them to continue to stay involved with our university and to interact with many of our former students and graduates.

Here, today, I have three outstanding young people: Brian Lucas, Arlyn Penaranda, and Brooke Budzinski. The three of them will be getting their degrees on May 16. Brian and Arlyn are undergraduate

students getting their bachelor's degree, and Brooke will be getting a master's degree from the Graduate School, having finished her second year here now. She also previously received an undergraduate degree from Gallaudet, so I wanted to sit here and talk with them. I want to share with you that when our young people arrive here, they really develop in fantastic ways and leave here to go on to other things in their lives. We want to learn a little bit about their plans, and learn a little bit about the experiences they had here while they were students.

I want to welcome the students to *Bob's Vlog*. And, I want to ask you some questions so that we can share information with our audience out there and give them a better understanding of how Gallaudet University helped you while you were students. First, I'd like to ask the three of you to tell us about yourselves. Where did you go to school? Where are you from? What was your undergraduate major? We'll start with that and we'll start with you, Brian.

Brian Lucas:

Thank you, President Davila. I would like to start by describing myself as a tri-sport athlete. I participated in sports, such as basketball, football, and track for all four years in high school before I entered Gallaudet University. Here, I played other sports – and basketball under Coach DeStefano for four years.

I have always been restless. I never let a year go by without participating in something. I enjoyed and benefitted from participating in organized sports and programs.

President Davila:

What was your major?

Brian Lucas:

Business administration at Gallaudet University.

President Davila

Wonderful. You were a busy guy, considering that you were involved in all of those sports and still found time to focus on your studies. I congratulate you on that achievement.

Brian Lucas:

Thanks.

President Davila:

Arlyn, what about you?

Arlyn Penaranda:

I was born in the Philippines and grew up in Maryland. I was mainstreamed and didn't know any sign language. I learned sign language through the *New Signers Program* in 2004. Since that time, I've participated in various organizations especially the Asian Pacific

Association, the Latino Student Union in 2004, Best Buddies, Circle K, and many others, like the Black Deaf Student Union and D.E., Delta Epsilon sorority.

President Davila

Oh my, you are also a very busy person considering that you are also an outstanding student. I congratulate you. It is hard to believe that you came here without knowledge of sign language and now you sign clearly and so beautifully. Congratulations to you.

Arlyn Penaranda:

Thank you.

President Davila:

Now, Brooke.

Brooke Budzinski:

I grew up in Wisconsin, and later I moved to Virginia Beach. I went to a school for the deaf so I was always involved with activities at the school like camps, the NAD, and all of those things. Then, later, I came to college and I was involved with so many organizations and activities. When I got to graduate school, it was a bit tough and more intense. I had to focus more on my studies, plus I had a job on the side.

President Davila:

I can certainly understand that. Yes, graduate school puts increased demands on students so I can understand that, but you did well. My other question for all of you is during your undergraduate years, what kind of participation did you have in student organizations and activities? You mentioned your athletic interests that you were involved in, but what about other than that? Brian, let's start with you.

Brian Lucas:

I participated in a fraternity, and I participated in an organization called *Keeping the Promise* which focuses on the education of deaf black males. That's one organization that I really enjoyed being a part of.

President Davila:

Can you explain a little bit more clearly for the benefit of our audience, what is *Keeping the Promise*? What is that?

Brian Lucas:

Three letters, *K.T.P.*, or *Keeping the Promise*: Its purpose is to meet black people's needs –psychological, social, and financial aid – all of those things. It's to ensure that they can keep their promise to graduate from Gallaudet University.

President Davila:

That's wonderful. Gallaudet is doing anything we can to help young people stay in school and meet all the requirements of the program to graduate. What you've described is wonderful and it has been successful. I'm happy to hear about that.

Arlyn, tell us about yourself and your involvement in different organizations. I know you are also a busy person.

Arlyn Penaranda:

I'm involved in the Asian Pacific Association, D.E., and many others, like Circle K, but I really love the Asian Pacific Association. I was a member all four years. In my freshman year, I became chair person of that organization. Then in my sophomore and junior years, I was president. And as a senior, I was vice president of that organization.

President Davila:

That's amazing, and I have gone to some of your organization's activities and I know that you planned them very well. I am really impressed with the work you have done. Thank you for all of your support of other students.

Arlyn Penaranda:

My years here at Gallaudet were really something!

President Davila:

Okay, now Brooke, what about you?

Brooke Budzinski:

As an undergraduate I was involved in the *Class of 2004* organization, and with *Tower Clock* and *Buff and Blue* as a photographer. Now, as a graduate student, I am involved with my work at the Visitors Center and I am a graduate assistant for the dorm residents in Benson Hall. I'm challenged by meeting so many different people and by all of the different things going on. I really enjoy serving people.

President Davila:

You know that some people say that busy students are also good students and, in this situation, hearing all of you explain about your experiences as undergraduates, I really agree with that. You are busy but you are also good students, and I congratulate you on your achievements.

Let's talk a little bit more about your undergraduate experience here at Gallaudet. Through your years here, what were some of the biggest challenges that you had to overcome and how did you do that? Arlyn, let's start with you first.

Arlyn Penaranda:

Signing was a challenge for me because I arrived at Gallaudet without knowing any sign language. It was good to have the mentoring program and I was able to get support from faculty and staff. They supported me through all my years here at Gallaudet. And, I wasn't afraid. I wasn't afraid to ask for help when necessary, so I guess that helped me through my four years here at Gallaudet.

President Davila:

That's very good and you clearly succeeded in overcoming that challenge. That's good. What about you, Brooke?

Brooke Budzinski:

I remember when I came into Gallaudet my freshman year – that was 10 years ago! I remember I didn't think it was any big deal when I came, and I thought it was just like my school where I knew many deaf people. Instead, I found it to be a completely new world. I found myself like a small fish and meeting so many different people here. I also remember I wanted to give up, but I told myself to keep going and that I would make it through. I had to be responsible because before, my parents had the role of taking care of me and telling me what to do. That was fine then, but now I had to do it myself and it was a good experience. I found I could move forward. Everyone grows up and moves on.

President Davila:

That's a wonderful story and I'm happy that you made it! I think that you have strong determination in that you finish almost everything you started. That's wonderful and congratulations on that, too.

Now, Brian, tell us about you. What was the biggest challenge that you overcame here?

Brian Lucas:

There were many challenges in my college career, but one challenge that I remember most was a car accident experience – the car rolled over. It happened in Pennsylvania after *BrickFest* weekend and I was on my way back to Gallaudet. My life could have ended right there in that moment but, thank God, I was given another chance to make up what for what I had done in my life. After that, a halo vest was put on my head for the purpose to stabilize my neck because I had C1 and C2 fractures. I had to go through that and “mourn” for the next two weeks. I kept blaming everyone. I was angry at my family. I was in grief. But I realized if I continued that way, I wouldn't go anywhere. The only way to get through it was to think positively, and it worked. There is no secret in that.

President Davila:

That is an amazing story. You really survived a terrible incident. I'm impressed with how well you have come from that incident. That's

good. You have a lot of things going for you. I look forward to seeing great success from you in the future. That's very clear.

Okay, I have another question that I want to ask you three. I know that everyone is somehow inspired by a relationship or an association with an individual. We call those individuals role models. I know many people in my life that I have looked up to and who inspired me to make me want to succeed also. I am curious who are your role models – people who inspired you to succeed, to be good students, to do well in everything you strive for? Brooke, let's start with you. Tell us about that.

Brooke Budzinski:

I notice that talking about role models should be easy, but oddly, I find it hard to decide. So, I have decided to pick the people who work with me or the people I am working with as my role models because I learn so much from them. They have taught me a lot, so I really thank them.

President Davila:

That's good. That's good. What about you, Arlyn?

Arlyn Penaranda:

I have many role models, especially my family, my mentors, and my professors here at Gallaudet because without them, I would not have been successful in my life. I wouldn't be here without them. I applaud

them for helping me with everything that has been challenging in my life. They have never left me.

President Davila:

It's wonderful to hear that. And you, Brian?

Brian Lucas:

My parents, of course. They have been through it with me and stuck by me, no matter what. That's what I love about them. Secondly, an interpreter named Claudia Nygard, an interpreter from high school. She has taught me a lot. My grade level in reading and math was awful, really low. She was happy to give up her time and come to my home and help me on that part, and my score rose by maybe 5 or 6 grade levels because of her. I'm thankful to her today because of that. And, lastly, Isaac Agboola. I'm embarrassed to say that I failed under him once, but he is the reason why I am motivated now and forever.

President Davila:

You have described a good teacher. I had a number of wonderful teachers myself. And, I think we are all the same. It's good to know that you always had someone willing to help you and encourage you. Without that, it's hard to succeed. I understand that.

Okay, now, another question I want to ask the three of you is how has coming to Gallaudet – studying and graduating – really changed your life? Give me some ideas. Let's start with you, Brian.

Brian Lucas:

I would like to start with how my study habits in my first year stank. But, of course, I required some support services to explain how to study the right way. That helped improve my study habits and helped me reach the finish line to graduate from Gallaudet University.

President Davila:

That's a good answer. I like that answer. That's inspiring. Arlyn, what about you?

Arlyn Penaranda:

Before I arrived at Gallaudet, I didn't know sign language at all so I got help and many people helped me. I got many services from Gallaudet like the mentoring program that really helped me grow a lot, more than I could have even imagined. Also, participation in different programs like the internship program. I was just in the Philippines. I spent nine months there and that helped me grow. Gallaudet offers so much, more than I could ever imagine in my life. I feel like I'm ready to leave Gallaudet, but I can always come back because I will always fit in at Gallaudet.

President Davila:

That's good. That's good to hear that. And you, Brooke?

Brooke Budzinski:

Gallaudet provides many good teachers who are guides and give us tools. We can make the most of the social opportunities here.

Gallaudet is the only deaf university in the world. It is really unique.

President Davila:

That's for sure. Okay, I have one last question for you. I think it is a question you have been waiting to get. I know for myself, and our audience wants to know too, what are your plans? You will graduate now and you will leave Gallaudet University. You are going on to do other things in your lives after this, maybe jobs. Are you looking for a job, or do you have a job, or do you have other plans to study, or what? What are your plans immediately after graduation? We will start with you, Arlyn.

Arlyn Penaranda:

I want to apply to AmeriCorps. About two or three years from now I want to go to graduate school, but I am not sure where yet. I plan to move to Arizona. I've been offered a job there as a youth advocate, but that starts in August. So, I will stay here until then, socialize with friends, and work a summer job with disabled youth in Virginia. Then I'll move to Arizona and see what happens. I have plans to go into the Peace Corps; that's another job I want, so we'll see what happens in the future.

President Davila:

Wow, that is impressive. I am really impressed because when I was a senior I didn't really have that much in the way of plans, but you seem to know and that's wonderful. I wish you a lot of good success in your plans. Brooke?

Brooke Budzinski:

I remember as an undergraduate, I had my mind set on moving home and getting a job. After four years and graduating, I decided to go straight to graduate school. But at that time, I realized I wasn't ready for graduate school. I decided to complete one semester and then I went off to work. I had some different work experiences and I could see for myself what I really wanted, which was to go back and finish my goal of graduate school. And now, at this time, I've changed my ideas of where I want to live. My mind has changed. I want to stay in D.C. and work in the area. I've been offered a job at Northern Virginia Community College teaching ASL there. And, of course, I'll still be a part of Gallaudet.

President Davila:

A wonderful plan and I wish you also a lot of success in your new experience. Now, Brian.

Brian Lucas:

My summer plans are unclear. I'm overwhelmed by job offers this summer, but as of now it is becoming clearer. It's more than likely I

will do an internship at Edens & Avant, a retailing consulting business. If that works out, then maybe in mid-summer I'll switch to a job with the government. My long term goal is that I want to lead a Chicago 2016 World Olympic event for deaf people and disabled people. I would like to lead that in 2016.

President Davila:

Really, I have no doubt at all that you will succeed in doing that. Keep up your goals. You will be successful in everything you try. That's good.

This has been a wonderful short program, but you can see that our students leave Gallaudet really well prepared to face many continuing challenges out there in the community. We continue to keep in touch with them. I want to thank these three young people for sharing their views, their experiences, and information with us. I think our audience appreciates hearing from you also. I wish you three a lot of success in your work. You know that Gallaudet will always be here and you can always come back. Keep in touch with us and let us know how you are doing. You know that we continue to have personal interest in what you do. Thank you for joining us and I thank the audience for joining us this morning. We'll be in touch with you again soon. Thank you, and so long.