



5 September 2007

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. It's really nice and pleasant to be visiting with you again.

This summer I have not visited as regularly as I did last spring – sitting here in front of you and reporting to you about a number of things happening here at Gallaudet – because we've been so busy over the summer months. We've been busy with the things required for our accreditation process. Now, I'm excited to tell you that in the beginning of this new school year, the last two weeks have been very busy, but very pleasant, and I think very successful weeks for Gallaudet University.

Two weeks ago we had our new student orientation week – that's the time when new students arrive at Gallaudet and before returning students arrive. We decided that we wanted to make Gallaudet a kinder and gentler place, and to give new students a really warm and friendly welcome to the campus. Collaboratively, all of the faculty and staff greeted students and made them feel good about coming here to Gallaudet to study. It was really interesting to see many faculty

people in blue jeans and even in shorts, including deans and the Provost, running around helping students and guiding them to their dormitory rooms. I even saw the Provost carrying a trunk to help a new student feel welcomed, and we met and chatted with many parents. It's really wonderful. This reaction on part of the university was to send the message to students that we are very excited to have them here and we are looking forward to working with them in the future. I think it was a very successful week.

Now, we are in the second week of classes for all of the students and everything has gone well. I want to report to you that this year's enrollment number is a little bit less than last year. It's obvious that it's related to the protest and some students had doubt about whether they should come to Gallaudet or not. We understand and accept that, but our numbers are slightly lower. We are now working on developing changes in our enrollment management programs so that we can expand the areas where we look for students and expand the number of new students every year. It's important we do that. I'm very comfortable that beginning next year we will see a big improvement in our results.

We have also increased the admission requirements for students. The standards are now higher. We have a new curriculum for freshmen and made other important changes to our programs so that we can really commit ourselves to continuing to provide high quality

programs to our students. We have also focused on the support of all student related programs and activities.

In our budget plans, we are focusing our first priority on student related activities and programs – strong programs to offer our students. Those changes reflect the fact that we now have more honor students than we've had over the last few years. We're excited about that because this university really serves good students in every possible way, and having more honor students really reflects well on the quality of our programs. When I talk with the deans and the faculty, they report that they notice that the quality of this year's entering freshmen class is higher than it has been, and we're very happy about that.

I also need to report to you on the continuing work that we have been doing with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, MSCHE. Over the summer, we had over 100 people on campus working on different tasks and in groups to focus on making program and planning improvements in the way that we meet our compliance requirements within the MSCHE standards. This was a really productive summer because we feel comfortable that we are making good progress.

On October 9th and 10th, we have the site visit team from the MSCHE. They will come to Gallaudet and review what we have already done. They'll look at the work that we completed this summer

and verify that the things we did and said that we accomplished are appropriate. We'll also get more advice and guidance from them. The October visit will be followed by another site visit on January 9th and 10th. That January visit is important, too, because it will bring us closer to the timeline for meeting full requirements for continued accreditation, so we look forward to the two important meetings – one in October on the 9th and 10th, and the other on January 9th and 10th. We are also comfortable that we are doing good things and we have good work happening here on campus that will result in a successful conclusion.

This week, I also plan to have a Town Hall meeting for all of the Gallaudet community here on campus. We need to have time with the community so I can report on the plans for the next few months of the fiscal year beginning on October 1st, as well as outline and answer questions that people have raised. Last week, I sent a communication to all of the Gallaudet community with budget decisions and priorities that we want to follow beginning in the new fiscal year on October 1st. People received the communication, reviewed it, and their reaction has been good, but I'm sure that people have more questions that they want to ask me. Maybe someone wants to ask for clarification of some points that I raised in my communication, so that Town Hall meeting will be for the purpose of reporting back to the community and answering their questions and, then, continuing with our plans to really do the best we can this year to bring our university around and make it a really successful academic year.

I want to close this brief report by telling you an interesting story of my pleasant experience this past weekend. The Gallaudet University football team played its first game of the year in Latrobe, Pennsylvania against St. Vincent College. St. Vincent College is coached by Bob Colbert who was a former Gallaudet football coach almost 35 years ago. He was a coach of the famous Gallaudet team called the *Dirty Thirty*. That team in 1972, 1973, and 1974 was made up of 28 players and 2 coaches totaling 30. They were not very successful, but they never gave up on the season. They worked hard, fought hard, and played hard becoming part of the tradition at Gallaudet – looking back at the wonderful things that have happened here.

Well, Bob Colbert is now at St. Vincent College. It's his first year in this new position and his very first game was against Gallaudet, so the *Dirty Thirty* decided to have a reunion to honor their former coach and, at the same time, watch Gallaudet play football. I was there, as well as many people from campus who drove to Pennsylvania to see the game. It was a very exciting game and I have to tell you that Gallaudet won, and they won big, 32-13! It was a wonderful game. I was very impressed with the quality of the Gallaudet football team, but the most pleasant thing about the weekend – on Saturday – was the fact that 18 out of 25 living members of that team attended. It was very impressive that people flew from all over the country to attend that reunion and enjoy the game, and they had a wonderful reunion

with their former coach, as well as cheering for and supporting the new Gallaudet team, so it was a wonderful weekend.

That was the end of the summer for me, and now we've started a new school year and we see that it's starting off very well. We are making progress. The spirit on campus is high. The enthusiasm on the part of the faculty, students, and everyone associated with Gallaudet is also very high, so we're looking forward to a very exciting and successful school year. I will keep you informed on a regular basis, as I have done up until now, about things that are happening here, but I wanted to share that real human interest story about our *Dirty Thirty* football reunion in Pennsylvania last Saturday.

Enjoy yourselves. I'll be in touch with you again. Thank you very much and so long.