



October 22, 2008

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome to "Bob's Vlog." As you can see, "Bob's Vlog" has changed. We have installed a new set, renovated the studio to include new lights, and made changes in the control room. Many other things have changed, also. I think it's beautiful. Don't you agree? It's very nice.

Last week was a very busy week for Gallaudet. In the beginning part of the week, the University hosted an Enrichment Day. The week ended with Homecoming. That made for a full week. Enrichment Day gave the Gallaudet community a chance to come together and focus on a very important topic. This year's topic was about strategic visioning and looking forward to the year 2020. Specifically, the theme was creating a vision for an ASL/English bilingual University in 2020.

The morning program included a keynote presentation by Dr. Robert Sevier, senior vice president for strategic planning with Stamats Higher Education Marketing company. Dr. Sevier talked about issues and trends in higher education. According to him, four things—declining numbers of college level students, escalating costs tied to a

college education, competition for limited scholarship money among many students, and, finally, the worldwide economic problems—have come together to impact higher education. That is the setting for a “perfect storm” to have all of these issues come together at the same time, and that raises many concerns among the 3,600 colleges and universities all over the U.S. So, I can see that education is really at a crossroads, and the success and future survival of many colleges and universities depends on a good vision, and looking to the future, and realistic planning. But, for those colleges and universities who do careful planning for the future, this offers many new challenges and opens up opportunities for growth and improvement.

This wonderful presentation in the morning was followed by a panel of educators and a panel of students. The educators are responsible for programs related to young deaf children, and they discussed their vision for these deaf students when they grow up and become freshmen in colleges, including Gallaudet University. What do they see as changes in the future? What do they see as challenges? And, do they have the same vision as we have about the future?

Also, the second panel was comprised of young people who just finished college recently. Similarly, they were asked for their vision of what it will be like 10, 12, or 15 years from now. What do they think colleges should require of students and what should colleges plan for to support and serve students better?

These two panels really shared their thoughts, and it was very interesting and very educational for people in the audience. We had a good discussion and raised many questions. Later in the afternoon, different academic departments met separately to discuss and to develop a number of questions that they feel should guide our work as we move toward long-range planning for Gallaudet University. For example, what will Gallaudet look like in 2020? Who will the students be? Where will they come from? What changes in educational programs should we plan for? These are all important questions which will help us prepare to meet the needs of future students in much better ways.

Enrichment Day was very important for several reasons. First, it began conversations among the Gallaudet community about the need for a long-range vision and planning so that we can better prepare ourselves for changes that are happening all around the country, including changes in higher education and changes in the deaf and hard of hearing demographics.

Secondly, one of the first things to do is to develop a list of the 10 most important questions, such as those I just mentioned, so that we can help ourselves to envision what needs to be done for the future and how the University will change and move forward. These questions will also be guides for research and data collection efforts in the coming months. For example, how many college-ready deaf and hard of hearing students will there be in 2015 and 2020, not only

in the U.S., but throughout the world? And what will those students really need through our programs and services? We want to make sure that students coming here to Gallaudet in the future can succeed and be better prepared to face all of the requirements and challenges of the world of work.

Thirdly, these changes will require Gallaudet to make important changes in programs, in the ways that we find and bring students here, and in the outcomes of our educational programs.

Fourth, there is a difference between current strategic plan and beginning the long-range vision and planning. These are two separate but parallel plans.

Fifth, the long-range vision planning is connected to the next presidential search for a new leader for Gallaudet University. You develop the long-range plan so that the new president, who comes later, will have a document to guide their work and move the University into the future.

The Board of Trustees and the President's Office have collaborated to establish a 15-member joint Board of Trustees and campus task force to guide this long-range planning process. This group will include a GUAA alumni representative. Also, on campus we will have a steering committee, including 13 faculty, staff, and administrators. Those two groups will work separately and together. I will really keep

you informed about the process as we move forward with our long-range plans.

The end of the week was all about Homecoming. Many, many alumni came to the campus to participate in class reunions, to see old friends, to watch football and soccer competitions, and to see how Gallaudet has changed and what has been happening on campus all this time. Number one on the list of places that the alumni went to visit was the new Sorenson Language and Communication Center, SLCC. It is a very impressive building and everyone who went to see it was very impressed with what they saw.

Other highlights of Homecoming included: First, five members of the Board of Trustees who live in the Washington, D.C. area met with nine members of the GUAA Board of Directors. That was really special because it has been many years since those two groups have really met and worked together. I am sure that everyone agrees that was a good way to communicate and keep in touch with each other. So, I'm sure you will see in the future that the GUAA and Board of Trustees have more and more contact with each other.

Second, 45 alumni got their Alumni Emeriti Club medallions. Those medallions are given to alumni members who came to campus during the 50th anniversary of their college graduation. The numbers are increasing. The oldest alumni who received theirs were from the class of 1948. They were here celebrating the 60th anniversary of their

graduation. That was a wonderful ceremony, and a new tradition for Gallaudet University.

Third, the Kappa Sigma Fraternity celebrated its 25th anniversary. Additionally, the alumni of color group gathered for a meeting and had their own reunion. There were many different groups who gathered on campus.

Fourth, 36 members of the Class of 1958 were here to celebrate their Golden 50th Anniversary, and 80 members of the Class of 1983 were here to celebrate their Silver 25th Anniversary.

Fifth, a special celebration was held to recognize Gerald “Bummy” Burstein’s 30 years of service to the GUAA. He was honored by being named an emeritus member of the GUAA Board of Directors. This is the first time anyone has ever received that title.

Sixth, this was also the last meeting of the current slate of GUAA Board officers. The new officers have already been voted in and appointed, and their service will begin now. Right after Homecoming ended, the new board took over.

Seventh, the week ended on Sunday with the installation of 10 new members of the Gallaudet Athletic Hall of Fame. Six players and four coaches and supporters were inducted, making this one of the largest

groups ever to be included at one time in the Hall of Fame. It was a wonderfully attended program and ceremony.

Also, the Student Body Government, the SBG, successfully hosted various events and activities for students during Homecoming weekend, building up excitement for Homecoming, allowing the opportunity to interact with the alumni, and helping in the celebration of this wonderful annual event. I offer my congratulations to the officers and leaders of the SBG for the good work they performed during the weekend.

I can tell you that even though our teams lost both the football and the soccer contests, it was still a successful weekend for our University. It was really a wonderful time for entertainment, and for friendship, and to recommit our support and love for our University.

Now I want to thank all of you for visiting with me this morning, and I want to let you know that I will be back with you very soon. So, for now, so long!