



November 13, 2008

President Davila:

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome to *Bob's Vlog* again. I have a good show for you today about plans for an exciting first-year student experience. I have with me today two guests, Dr. Barbara White and Ms. Touria Boren. Welcome, and thank you for joining us today.

Ms. Boren:

Thank you. It's exciting.

Dr. White:

Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

President Davila:

Today's show also talks about something new that Gallaudet is offering to first-year students. For the first time ever, Gallaudet is offering a free study tour to Costa Rica. This is for first-year students and also for first-year transfer students. It will happen for one week during spring break. It will be called the First Year Study Tour. It is designed to interest students in international studies, which will be

available at Gallaudet during future semesters. This study tour will give first-year students a global perspective early in their academic careers. Gallaudet is also giving them an opportunity to meet deaf and hard of hearing students from other countries and to see their needs from a global perspective.

Here with me today is Dr. Barbara White, a faculty fellow with the Department of Enrollment Management. She has also been on the faculty in the Department of Social Work for 25 years. Also here is Touria Ouahid Boren, a project specialist with Enrollment Management, as well. She has worked at Gallaudet for six years, first at MSSD, then in Multicultural Student Programs, and now is with Enrollment Management. They are both co-directors of the First Year Study Tour program. Before we start, let's take a look at some of the wonderful opportunities and things that our students will see and do when they arrive in Costa Rica in a few months.

(One-minute scenic video plays.)

President Davila:

What a beautiful country! Let's tell our audience a little bit more about what the students will do. First of all, I want to ask both of our guests what is this new and exciting first-year experience that you are planning?

Dr. White:

This is a new idea at Gallaudet, as you mentioned, but it is not new at some other universities. For example, one university near Philadelphia, PA – Arcadia University – has been doing this for about 20 years. They found, and told us, that it increases enrollment and retention. We want to do the same here at Gallaudet. We want our students to stay here through their undergraduate years and graduate.

Ms. Boren:

And to add to that, going to Costa Rica helps the students increase their international knowledge, global perspective, and personal growth. They can see different cultures and internalize that knowledge. It also meets our new curriculum.

President Davila:

That's interesting. You know there are so many different countries all over the world. Why Costa Rica?

Ms. Boren:

Okay, for this particular week – March 14 to 21, 2009 – our research found that spring break was the best time to go. Also, Costa Rica itself is reasonably priced and affordable. And, there are many things to visit to increase knowledge of culture, language, people, and foods. The students will, for certain, have the experience of a lifetime, visiting schools for the deaf, learning Costa Rican culture, language,

and foods. Also, we will do some activities. For example, we will work with a national park preserve. Costa Rica is well known for its regard and care for the environment. As you just saw in the film, it's a beautiful country. Did you see the many turtles arriving on the beach? The female turtles carry their eggs, swim in, and make their way across the beach to their nests. The people there need help and are thrilled to have us help them with tagging the turtles for research purposes. Another thrilling activity involves going to the villages where the Indian people live and work making pottery to sell. The students will have an actual experience making pottery and will bring it back home. That's really nice.

Dr. White:

Another reason we are going to Costa Rica is that Gallaudet has a long-standing relationship there. We have a resource center there at the University of Costa Rica. Quite a while back, I remember meeting Mima Bravo. She was a young woman who came here, and that started a relationship with Costa Rica. We have continued that relationship, so we have contacts there in the deaf community.

President Davila:

That's very exciting, and I am sure that will give our students an experience that will stay with them for many years to come, and that will relate to many things that they will be studying as they go through college. I'm very pleased to hear about this trip. Are there any other things you would like to add to explain more about the activities or

experiences that the students will acquire? For example, who is eligible to go? How do you select students? Is it for all of the freshmen or must they meet some requirements? How does all of that happen?

Dr. White:

This particular trip is for freshman new students and transfer students who just enrolled this past fall of 2008. Other students, upperclassmen, have other opportunities with other study abroad trips that are planned through the Center for International Programs and Services. For example, in January another group will go to India and next June another group will go to China. Also, there are several departments here who for many years have offered internships in different countries, and I hope that our students will take advantage of those opportunities.

President Davila:

That sounds great! You mentioned some interaction with deaf people in Costa Rica. Tell me a little more about that. Give us some ideas.

Ms. Boren:

We've been working on the itinerary. We have been making sure that the company and the deaf people in Costa Rica are working together to include deaf events. We will go to the deaf elementary school to see the kids. Also, I want to emphasize that we want to establish a small project that relates to TTYs. The people in Costa Rica need

more TTYs. After consideration, we decided it would be good for the students to bring TTYs. It would be considered a social responsibility. So, people who have TTYs that really work well, please inform Barbara White by email, or bring them to the Social Work Department, because we want to bring those TTYs to the deaf elementary school. Okay, another event, as I mentioned earlier, is making pottery. That pottery needs to dry, so while it is in the kiln we will have a soccer game. The Gallaudet freshmen will face off against the deaf Costa Ricans. Do you want to make a bet about who will win?

President Davila:

Wow, you put me on the spot, but, I need to tell you that I always bet on Gallaudet! It's wonderful that you are going to have that kind of social interaction between our students and new friends that they meet there in Costa Rica. That's a wonderful way to learn about other cultures and another country's history and really understand the world we live in a little bit better. I appreciate hearing that from you.

Barbara, is there anything else you would like to add with respect to the value of this trip for the students themselves and the experience they will get?

Dr. White:

Yes, we want to travel for education, but also for fun. We have other activities for fun for the students. As you saw in the pictures, there is a volcano. Students will glide through the canopy on a zip wire. There

is a rain forest we will visit, and students will have four different activities that they can choose from--a hike, including the glide through the canopy, or horseback riding, or they can also go white water rafting. I'm looking forward to us having fun together as a group. And, part of the experience is doing things with faculty and staff together, as a bonding experience.

President Davila:

Really, that's exciting. Touria, where can freshman students who are interested in going get more information?

Ms. Boren:

We have many ways. There is a home page which students can go to. First they have to go to [Gallaudet.edu](http://Gallaudet.edu), then click on admissions, then on undergraduates, and you will see free study tour information. You click on that and you can pull up lots more information and instructions and learn where to get the application form, and some other documents like a passport and an ISIC (International Student Identity Card). If students are interested, please fill out the information for a passport. You must have one, so do it now because it takes a long time to process. Or see me in person. My office is in HMB, N 202A. For more information, please see me or email me.

President Davila:

I'm sure there's going to be a long line outside your door starting right after this show. Wonderful! Will faculty and staff be going with students? How do you arrange that?

Ms. Boren:

Yes, we are excited that staff and faculty will go on the trip. Students have filled out surveys, and in those surveys we note that students want to have more involvement with faculty and staff. This trip is a wonderful opportunity for exactly that. Students, faculty, and staff will come together, cooperate and learn from each other. It's a wonderful opportunity.

President Davila:

Well, that sounds wonderful! I'm sure that many of our faculty and staff will be lined up also, hoping to get picked to go with the students. That really sounds like a wonderful experience.

Dr. White:

We'd like to invite you, Dr. Davila, to join the trip if you can.

President Davila:

I don't get many opportunities to use my Spanish often. That sounds like a wonderful opportunity, but, I have to tell you that I need to look over my schedule to see if it's possible. But it sounds like a wonderful opportunity. Thank you for the invitation.

I want to thank you and our audience also for being with us today. This is a wonderful example of the kind of educational, social, and cultural experience that we try to provide our students to help grow their understanding, and help them function in a global economy and a multicultural world. It's a wonderful way for young people to grow. We look forward to this trip and to other experiences, too. Thank you for joining us today. We will keep in contact with you from time to time as we present you with different scenes and things happening here at Gallaudet. Thank you for joining us again. So long!