



September 25, 2008

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome back to *Bob's Vlog* and to the new school year. It's really wonderful to see students arrive back on campus and to see faculty and staff, also. Everyone here seems to be working very hard at the beginning of the school year. That's what this University is all about: people teaching, students learning, and everyone here supporting our students as they pursue their dreams and seek out answers to the questions before them. This inspires me and reminds me of why I get up early every day to come to work. It's really an exciting place to be. So, welcome back!

Over the summer, I thought a lot about what this community is and what we have accomplished in a short time. It's really been amazing. I want to thank every one of you for your personal and group contributions to the University's progress over the last year. I applaud your hard work, your dedication, your working together under the banner of "Team Gallaudet" to improve our University so that we can continue to be the place where dreams come true for deaf and hard of hearing people. Thank you very much.

Before I talk about the challenges that we face ahead –yes, I admit there is a lot of work to be done here – I want us to pause for a moment and reflect on how we were successful last year. We were successful because we put Gallaudet first and ourselves second. We worked together in the spirit of collaboration and mutual respect. Among the many accomplishments that occurred this past year was that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed our accreditation, and we also had the successful opening of the Sorenson Language and Communication Center recently. We must continue to work together to strengthen our wonderful University and to prepare for a challenging future.

I mentioned the challenges that remain ahead of us. Our important focus now is on enrollment – recruitment and retention of students. Our enrollment decreased a little bit after the protest two years ago. Additionally, we are challenged by the changing demographics of the college-age student population and the continuing mainstreaming of deaf and hard of hearing students. These factors play an important role in our recruitment and enrollment functions. However, we have made good progress in adapting our ability to find students and bringing information about Gallaudet to their attention, allowing them to consider whether or not they want to come here as students. We want to make Gallaudet the program of choice for every qualified and deserving student who is deaf or hard of hearing out there in the country.

Another important priority is retention. We want students coming here to stay through graduation. Helping students to succeed, graduate, and find good, satisfying careers and jobs after graduation is an important goal of the University. Each one of us must spend more time to become more closely involved with students. That's job number one. Whatever else we must do is a distant second. Our first focus is on students.

Planning for the future is another important priority for us now. Sometime during the next year, Gallaudet will begin the process of looking for a new president and our community here, both on campus and across the country, must begin thinking about the long-term future of Gallaudet. Where will Gallaudet be 10 or 15 years from now? It's important for us to start thinking about that. I am working with the Board of Trustees to develop a process for long-term planning, including developing a vision for the year 2020. Once that process has been developed, I will be sharing it with the community. I can promise you that this process will give everyone in the community an opportunity to become involved and to contribute to that development.

Our *Enrichment Day* this year will be on October 14. We will have a kick-off program and speaker to help us begin a campus-wide conversation about what can and should Gallaudet's future look like. Staff in my office are working with a committee of faculty, and staff, and a nationally known consultant, Robert Sevier, as well as with

members of the Board of Trustees. We are working together to plan for information sharing and educating the community with respect to long-term planning. Dr. Sevier will present to the board during the meeting in October about long-range planning and how the board can involve the entire community in the process. You will be getting more information about this important priority later on. I will be explaining about that and sharing more information.

If you happen to be on campus and want to know more about what I just talked about, you can watch a rebroadcast of the President's Town Hall meeting that was held on Tuesday, September 23. That event will be shown on campus cable television four times daily for about a week. I talked about the same issues that I touched on here, but I will have more information in that broadcast. So, I encourage you to watch it if you want more information. Anyway, I look forward to bringing more news about Gallaudet to you on a regular basis. I want to thank you for sharing this time with me today. Have a good day. So long!