

"Deaf, Diverse, and Distinct: Gallaudet Continues to Change the World for Deaf People"

Address by President I. King Jordan

November 15, 2005
Swindells Auditorium
Kellogg Conference Hotel
Gallaudet University

Cover Letter to the Campus Community

November 2005

To: Gallaudet Faculty, Students, Staff and Teachers,

This booklet contains my November 15th address to the University community; *Deaf, Diverse and Distinct: Gallaudet Continues to Change the World for Deaf People*.

As I state in my address, we are so busy doing the work that makes Gallaudet successful that we rarely pause and consider what we have accomplished. Although we may not always see it firsthand, we do many things here at Gallaudet that make the world a better place for deaf people in large and small ways. This is possible because of what I described as "Gallaudet's unique spirit."

My address cites only a few examples of the wonderful things we are doing here. The truth is that we do so many things, that I cannot possibly identify them all in the address. This in no way diminishes the work we are all doing in our respective areas.

While we have much to celebrate, we must be mindful of future challenges that we face. Because of this, Gallaudet's eight strategic goals that were approved by the Board of Trustees last May are very important to our future. I want to remind you that these goals were established as a result of open and inclusive planning processes in which every member of the campus community was invited to participate. These processes included the Academic Affairs Planning Committee's work that led to *New Directions for Academic Affairs* and the work of the diversity fellows that led to the establishment of the two university goals related to Gallaudet as an inclusive deaf university in which every person is included, valued, and respected. In short, *you* made these strategic goals a reality.

Thank you for your contribution to Gallaudet's unique spirit. Each one of us is helping Gallaudet continue to change the world for deaf people.

Sincerely,

I. King Jordan
President

The Address

Deaf, diverse, and distinct: Gallaudet continues to change the world for deaf people.... You know, we-all of us-have changed the world! During my remarks at the announcement of my retirement I spoke of Gallaudet's unique spirit-the spirit that made the dream of having a deaf president a reality; the spirit that attracts exceptional faculty and staff and makes Gallaudet the leader in deaf education throughout the world; the spirit that attracts students with dreams and aspirations to our campus. It is the spirit of our shared mission that makes it possible for us to change the world for deaf people. We sometimes change the world in very large and public ways-DPN, for example. We also change the world for deaf people by what we do every day.

We are so busy doing the work that makes Gallaudet successful that we rarely pause and consider what we have accomplished. Today I want to take time to do that. I want to share some examples of how we are changing the world for deaf people. I also want to talk about why we are able to accomplish so much, challenges that face the University, and why Gallaudet's future will be even better.

Our students, of course, are why we are here, and it is our students who hold the future for deaf people in their hands. Recent incidents on and off campus may suggest to some that there is something wrong at Gallaudet. I am here to tell you there is not! The students responsible will be held accountable for their behavior and the university community, faculty, staff, students and administrators will work together to assure that such incidents do not happen again. I want to talk about the real Gallaudet-what's so good about what we do. In fact, the community's response to these incidents exemplifies the good that is at the core of Gallaudet: the CREs, other Student Development people, and DPS officers who worked so hard to deal with the situation, and students who tell us they are greatly disturbed by the incidents. Faculty, staff, and alumni have also talked to us and expressed their concern. I commend the president of the Student Body Government for sending a letter to students and calling upon other student leaders to "develop a plan to restore trust and respect with our administration, with the Hyatt, and with others who may question the behavior of the Deaf community." This is Gallaudet at its best and demonstrates clearly that Gallaudet's values have not changed. The speech I prepared for today has not changed. This speech was planned and drafted long before these incidents and the only change is to stress that it is the response to these incidents, not the incidents themselves that define Gallaudet and our values.

I saw a wonderful example of the real Gallaudet in a meeting I attended a few weeks ago. Students who received World Deaf Leadership scholarships discussed their projects for improving the lives of deaf people in their home countries. I was amazed at the ambitiousness of their projects, and I am also confident they will succeed. The students have outstanding, involved mentors from Gallaudet-and one from Johns Hopkins University (a physician and faculty member there)-who are helping them establish connections with leaders in their home countries who will help make change possible. The collaboration among students, faculty, and staff is inspiring. These students will help make the world better for deaf people!

How we respond to crisis is another indication of the Gallaudet spirit. Hurricane Katrina is a good recent example. Members of the Gallaudet community volunteered for disaster training and spent two weeks in areas affected by Katrina, identifying deaf people and making sure they received the services they needed. In Houston, where some volunteers went to work with those

evacuated from Louisiana, the Gallaudet volunteers became part of another evacuation, spending long hours on clogged highways when Hurricane Rita struck Houston. These volunteers not only provided assistance to deaf individuals and families affected by these hurricanes, they also laid the foundation for better communication and response to the deaf community in the event of future disasters. After their return to Gallaudet, I listened to their presentation, again inspired by the spirit that is Gallaudet. You should also know that the Gallaudet community donated more than \$13,000 which has been sent to New Orleans, Houston and Mississippi to help deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind victims of the hurricanes.

This fall we enrolled 351 new degree seeking undergraduate students, the largest number since the end of the rubella period in the early 1990's. We are also seeing consistent improvement in the academic preparation of entering students. One indication of this is the increase in the percentage of new freshman who qualify for credit-bearing English courses. For the last three years, the percentage of new freshmen who take credit-bearing English has been 65-66%. In prior years the percentage was in the mid-50's-and when I first became president, it was in the 30's. I applaud all those involved in recruitment and admissions for this success.

Some of you may not realize how important your work is to recruitment. Many students, who are undecided about attending Gallaudet and then visit the campus, decide to enroll. One of the students featured in "Faces of Gallaudet" on our new web page, tells how he chose Gallaudet after a visit when he had lunch with professors and left convinced that Gallaudet would offer both quality academics and an enhanced social experience. Many of these students also tell us that the attractive campus was a major factor in their decision. I applaud those who keep the campus beautiful for their contributions to recruitment, as well as for making the campus a pleasant environment for all of us who work, study and live here.

We are engaged continuously in efforts to ensure that all of our academic and co-curricular programs are rigorous and prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. As part of this effort, the Task Force on Liberal Education recently completed a draft document that presents a new vision for a liberal education at Gallaudet. The campus community will be involved soon in a discussion of this proposed new vision. If approved, it will place Gallaudet among the leaders in higher education because of the focus on:

- Goals for student learning
- Integration of general education, majors, and electives
- Diversity of approaches to teaching and learning, and
- Assessment of student learning beyond the level of individual courses

Increased emphasis on assessment of outcomes of student learning is very important in relation to the Middle States Association's (MSA) new accreditation standards. These new standards have significantly greater expectations for assessment of student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. They also require documentation of how we use the results to improve what we do. We are working right now on the five-year Periodic Review Report to MSA. We will be documenting the progress we are making in assessing outcomes and how we use the results of assessment to improve our programs and services. A committee of faculty, staff, and students is working on the report that will be sent to MSA at the end of this academic year.

I think it would be wonderful if every student who enrolled at Gallaudet left with a degree. We know, however, that some students leave before graduating. We also know that many who leave return later and earn a degree. I am pleased that the persistence rate for first year students is improving. Ten years ago, 60% of first year students continued to the second year. By 2003, the rate increased to 70%, and for academic year 2004, the persistence rate improved to 75%. This is encouraging progress and we want to do even better in the years ahead.

The Honors Program continues to be strengthened, attracting the best and brightest students and creating an academically challenging environment in which they thrive. The Honors Program has been reconfigured into two tiers, enabling transfer students and slower blooming students the opportunity to qualify for Honors study; there is a significant increase in the number of students working on Honors capstone theses; there is an entire course that helps students develop capstone thesis proposals; and there is significant progress in all aspects of Honors student assessment. The Honors program is committed to curricular innovations demonstrated through linked courses, the first fully integrated Honors course and several upper level seminars. The Institute on Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) has resulted in new, challenging interdisciplinary courses and increasing numbers of faculty have expressed interest in IDS. The Gallaudet community supports the development of interdisciplinary courses as the best way to teach and learn about the complex problems in modern society.

We at Gallaudet are leaders in the use of technology for teaching and learning. Currently, 75% of the courses at Gallaudet use GDOC Blackboard. This much use of technology is approximately double the national average. During FY 2005, the number of computers in student labs increased by 30%. The Library has electronic reserves so that students have access to assigned readings on the course instructor's GDOC site. In addition, on-campus users and researchers throughout the country can contact a reference librarian using Instant Messaging. I understand that this has rapidly become a very popular way to contact our Library. Times have certainly changed since I was a student!

With the selection of the SmithGroup architectural firm, plans are being drawn for the Sorenson Language and Communication Center. Recently, I saw a model of the new building and it is very exciting to imagine it being built soon! This facility will be a world-class teaching, research, and service center on deaf people's language, culture, history, and community. The building will also include teaching, research, and service in audiology, speech, and language, which will foster communication and collaboration among disciplines and fields that traditionally work independently. The concept for this center is innovative and exciting. The committee that planned the center has worked to ensure that the unique environment will provide our students with the knowledge and skills they need in the challenging world of today-and tomorrow. They will be prepared to change the world for deaf people! As we move forward with the design of this revolutionary building, we have created a new word-visucentric. By visucentric, we mean that every decision about the construction of this building will be guided by the knowledge that it will be a building for people who use their eyes to process language and other information.

I also want to recognize some of the accomplishments at the Clerc Center. The Honors Program, established last year at MSSD, has expanded its offerings. Eighty-six students are now enrolled in at least one honors course and five advanced placement courses are being offered. In addition, the Honors Program sponsored Summit 2005: An Academic and Leadership Camp for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. In June, 35 students from across the nation participated in the summit.

The two-week camp provided exposure to the advanced placement curriculum and a journey through deaf history.

One of the important ways the Clerc Center continues to lead the way with cutting-edge approaches to best educational practices for deaf students is through the dissemination of materials they develop. New products during this past year include:

- Dialogue Journals Manual, designed to promote literacy: *I Like Dialogue Journals, BUT: Strategies for Using Dialogue Journals with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students*
- *Signs of Literacy DVD: Book Sharing the Deaf Way*
- *The Nine Areas of Literacy Manual: Literacy, It All Connects*

The ultimate measure of our success is the achievement of our students and graduates. In 1988, Gallaudet students rose up and demanded the appointment of a deaf president to lead the university. Their protest was heard round the world-and changed forever the deaf world and the aspirations of deaf people. Never again will deaf people tolerate limitations on their opportunities. I began my talk with you today about the spirit that is Gallaudet. DPN surely demonstrates the unity and power of that spirit, the power to break down seemingly insurmountable barriers.

Wilma Newhoudt-Druchen, Class of 1992, is an individual who tore down barriers and changed the world. Chosen as the undergraduate speaker at her Commencement, she spoke of growing up in South Africa and experiencing racism and oppression as a black person, "handicappedism" as a deaf person and sexism in a world of unequal opportunities for women. One of her dreams was to one day obtain the right to vote in her country. She spoke of her parents as role models who taught her that she had value. She also spoke of the importance of the deaf community in Cape Town that raised money for her to attend Gallaudet and presented her with a suitcase in which to pack her belongings for the trip. She spoke of Gallaudet as a special community and concluded by saying she would return home with that same suitcase filled with the knowledge, skills, and memories from Gallaudet that would enable her to advocate for change in South Africa. Not only did Wilma achieve her dream of being able to vote, she was elected and re-elected to Parliament in South Africa, the first deaf woman elected to a national parliament.

We can take great pride in the achievements of students who earn their degrees at Gallaudet University. Just within the past 15 years we have graduates who are attorneys, financial advisors and analysts, small business owners, corporate leaders, scientists, faculty members at Gallaudet and elsewhere, Hollywood actors and actresses.... the list goes on and on. Our graduates are in leadership positions throughout this country and the world.

In his 1994 Commencement address at Gallaudet, President Bill Clinton spoke of the spirit and achievements of our students and of the university. He said:

"You students of Gallaudet University who have struggled so mightily, first for simple dignity and then for equal opportunity, have built yourselves-and in the process you have built for the rest of us, your fellow citizens of this country and the world-a much better world. You have regiven all of us our hope. Gallaudet is a national treasure...[President Lincoln] had the vision to see not just farmland and a tiny school, but the fact that we could use education to tear down the

walls between us, to touch and improve the lives, and lift the spirits of those who, for too long, had been kept down."

I wish there were time to describe more of our-your-successes. You know what they are and you should take pride in them. I am certain it is true that we are united in our commitment to Gallaudet's mission and in working towards fulfilling that mission. Visitors who come here from outside notice it and comment on it. The two consultants we engaged to work with us on issues of governance commented in their preliminary report:

"The members of the faculty, administration, and staff alike appear united in their passionate commitment to Gallaudet's educational mission, a mission that focuses ultimately on the academic and personal success of Gallaudet students. At the Stakeholders' Conference, not only were students included as full participants, but they also were accorded full respect and participant status. This spirit of inclusion and, again, commitment to mission energizes the Gallaudet community and would be a source of envy at many other institutions. It represents a primary source of strength that should always be celebrated."

Observations like this reinforce my belief that one of our major strengths at Gallaudet is that there is more that unites us than divides us. I sometimes think we are too hard on ourselves, and on each other, and when there is conflict we should step back and remind ourselves that we all share a common vision and mission. At the same time, it is not entirely surprising to me that we are sometimes too hard on ourselves. This often happens among people who hold high standards for themselves and for others. They-we-want so much to do our best, and we push ourselves and others when we feel we can do even better.

Gallaudet faces many challenges. Our student body is richly diverse-and we strive to achieve even more diversity. The Middle States evaluation team that visited the campus in 2001, noted in their report, "Gallaudet's achievement of a minority population of 24% is an extraordinary accomplishment, one your visiting colleagues, from the vantage points of our various organizations, can only envy." But we have not yet fully achieved our goal of having an inclusive deaf university where everyone feels included, valued, and respected. We are, however, making progress and we took an important step on Enrichment Day last month when we spent the day considering the problems of racism and white privilege; audism and hearing privilege. Elstad Auditorium was almost full, and the seating capacity is 700. I am pleased that most people returned in the afternoon for the closing session. These are difficult topics, but we have begun the discussion in a serious way. I thank those who planned the day, those of you who facilitated the discussion groups, and those of you who participated. This effort will continue until everyone at Gallaudet feels included, valued, and respected.

As we meet today, Congress has not passed a final appropriation bill for the current fiscal year, FY 2006, and it is unclear what our total funding for the year will be. Although there is always some uncertainty in the federal appropriation process, I am confident about the future of our relationship with Congress and with the Department of Education. We have received strong and consistent support from Congress for almost 150 years, and I expect that relationship to continue into the future. At the same time, we have to recognize that Congress currently faces some very difficult funding choices because of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters.

We cannot expect the federal government to fulfill all of our needs. This is something we have long recognized and during my presidency we have worked to diversify our funding base. Twenty years ago, 82% of our operating funds came to us from the federal appropriation, as did virtually all of our funding for new construction. In contrast, last year only about 70% of our operating funds came from Congress. This reduction in the percentage was not due to a lack of federal support-during that period increases in our federal funding kept pace with inflation-it was because of large increases in our non-federal funding. I particularly want to call your attention to two issues. First, our endowment has grown very significantly-twenty years ago it had a value of about \$3 million. Today it is worth \$165 million, and we spend about \$4 million annually in interest income. This is income that can be used to support new programs and student scholarships. Second, since we began construction of the Kellogg Conference Hotel in the early 1990's, all new construction on campus has been supported by private donations-this includes the Student Academic Center and also the Sorenson Language and Communication Center that will be under construction soon. The decision to diversify our income base was a strategic decision that has served us well in the past and will continue to serve us well as we move into the future.

In addition to the uncertainties surrounding federal funding, there are other factors beyond our control to which we need to pay close attention. During the past several years we have faced almost unprecedented growth in some of our basic costs. For example, between FY 2003 and FY 2005, our utilities expenses, driven by huge increases in energy costs, rose by almost 40%, or \$1.5 million. We are also committed to providing our employees with the medical, educational, and other benefits they need to perform effectively, and we have seen a similar rise in the cost of benefits. It is not possible to cover such a rapid rise in these costs with income from our traditional sources, so it is necessary to look elsewhere-either to new sources of income or to cost savings in other areas. Finally, you are probably aware that inflationary fears have returned to the U.S. economy in general after two decades of modest growth in costs. In a complex organization like Gallaudet University, we need to be constantly aware of these economic trends.

Although the current fiscal realities are not cause for alarm, they do make clear the need for careful planning to make sure that we use our resources wisely and that budget and other resource priorities are linked to the eight Gallaudet University Strategic Goals. We are well positioned with a dynamic strategic plan that has evolved to meet our current needs and our needs for at least the next five to seven years. I would like to explain briefly how we arrived at the Gallaudet University Strategic Goals that were endorsed and approved by the Board of Trustees at the May 2005 meeting.

I am confident that you know of the work of the Academic Affairs Planning Committee (AAPC) that culminated in the Academic Affairs planning report, *New Directions for Academic Affairs*. Five of the eight University Goals were taken directly from *New Directions*-they are the five "directions" in that report.

I want to talk about the process that led to the five directions (now University Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7) because it shows that those five goals emerged from the campus community-you told us they were important. The members of AAPC are faculty, staff, and students. The Provost's charge to the committee was to develop a plan for Academic Affairs, using an inclusive process. A hallmark of the committee's work was the inclusion of community input during each phase of its work. Input was provided by focus groups, online discussions, meetings with numerous

departments, groups, and individuals, during Enrichment Day 2003 and 2004, and meetings with Academic Affairs Administrators.

The diversity fellows developed two of the University Strategic Goals (1 and 5). Their work is an outgrowth of recommendations from the Climate Process, a process that involved the entire campus community. The diversity fellows also obtained extensive community input, meeting with numerous groups and providing opportunities for input by e-mail. They carefully analyzed the information from the interviews and identified themes that are reflected in the two diversity goals: Gallaudet as a model of an inclusive deaf university (Goal 1) and Gallaudet promoting an environment where everyone is included, valued, and respected (Goal 5). The diversity fellows have been working with the Provost and a consultant on an implementation plan that will be shared with the community in the near future. A preliminary action plan was discussed two weeks ago with the President's Council.

At the recent President's Scholars dinner, the diversity fellows spoke about issues that were identified on Enrichment Day in the discussion groups on white privilege and audism. These topics generated a lot of serious thoughts about the inequities that exist on campus and participants clearly want and need more opportunities to talk about them and plan for change. Part of the diversity plan is to ensure that there are ongoing discussions as well as opportunities for those who did not participate in Enrichment Day 2005, to watch the videos on white privilege and audism and discuss them.

This brings me to a very serious topic, the issue of language and communication on campus. Following the goalpost incident, we were reminded by students that we need to improve the way we communicate during emergencies. The vice president for Administration and Finance is hosting a meeting of key administrators and student leaders later this week to identify problems that occurred and discuss plans for improvements.

University Strategic Goal 8 focuses on the physical, financial, and operational resources necessary for the university to carry out its mission and to nourish its dynamic and diverse community of students, faculty, teachers, and staff. This strategic goal is an extension of A-RAP strategic objective 3 that focused on resources, now expanded to include diversity. The ten-year facilities master plan and the five-year budget plan are linked to this University strategic goal.

A-RAP not only provided the context for the Gallaudet University strategic goal on resources, it also provided the impetus for the development of the Academic Affairs plan. The three broad objectives from A-RAP evolved into six of the new University strategic goals and the Climate Process led to the development of two of the goals. These eight goals position us extremely well for the current challenges and challenges in the years ahead. The successes and plans I discussed at the beginning of my remarks this afternoon all link to the planning processes I have just described and to the Gallaudet University Strategic Goals. There will be implementation plans for all the goals. We are already making solid progress. There is a budget plan and Facilities Master Plan for the strategic goal on resources. The plan for the diversity goals is nearly complete. The Task Force on Liberal Education (Strategic Goal 3) is about to distribute a draft report to the community for discussion and feedback. Most promising initiatives in each department, unit, and program in Academic Affairs that support the five goals from New Directions have been reviewed and summarized and will be shared soon with the campus community.

There is more work to be done in developing implementation plans for our University strategic goals. We must link strategic planning and budget planning very carefully, particularly for the reasons I mentioned earlier. But remember too what I have said on prior occasions:

- The university is very healthy
- We have outstanding faculty and staff
- We continue to attract more students with higher academic achievement
- We have outstanding goals and plans either in place or being developed
- Our endowment is well-funded
- Most of our facilities are in excellent condition
- Every year we have had a balanced budget and we have no debt

I am reminded of a comment made in the MSA evaluation team report in 2001:

"Many American universities these days spend a great deal of time fabricating reasons to declare themselves unique. Gallaudet University, the MSA team is convinced, truly is unique...Every college these days has a mission statement; Gallaudet actually has a mission. It has been the MSA team's great pleasure to spend two days within the deaf culture of Gallaudet University, meeting with administrators, faculty, and students, learning a few basics of the incredibly intricate art of signing, and gaining a profound respect for the dedication of the professionals here who have committed their lives to validating the proposition that deaf students can be anything they aspire to being at Gallaudet, and beyond it as well."

I look back to when I started here at Gallaudet as a student many years ago and I marvel at the many changes Gallaudet and the deaf world have gone through. When I was first a professor here in the early 1970's, I would tell people outside Gallaudet where I worked and they would say, "Galla-what?" Today, nearly everyone I meet knows about Gallaudet: who we are and what we do. Because of your efforts, we are truly a national and international treasure.

I want to conclude by saying I am confident that the Board of Trustees search process will lead to the selection of the person best qualified to serve as the ninth President of Gallaudet and that the University will continue to prosper, achieve the strategic goals, and become even stronger with new leadership at the helm. In the meantime I look forward to continuing to work with all of you for the remainder of my presidency. We will continue to change the world for deaf people!