December 19, 2011

Dear Campus Community,

We are delighted to inform you that two noted leaders in the deaf community will be joining us at the University's 143 Commencement exercises on Friday, May 11, 2012, where Gallaudet will recognize them for their outstanding accomplishments by awarding honorary doctorate degrees. The Board of Trustees voted this year to award an honorary doctor of laws degree to Markku Juhani Jokinen, president of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) since 2003, and an honorary doctor of humane letters degree to Audree Lauraine Norton, '52, a founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) and a respected educator.

Mr. Jokinen will also address the Class of 2012 as our Commencement speaker.

Mr. Jokinen's leadership as WFD president and his career path and civic involvement over the years reflect a deep commitment for improving the lives of deaf people around the world. Gallaudet salutes him for his role at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's 1994 World Conference on Education for All in producing a document widely used as a reference stating the principles of education, including the essential right of deaf children to receive their education through sign language. He has also been active in the language policy work of the Finnish Association of the Deaf in elevating the status of Finnish Sign Language and has been highly involved in formulating a national curriculum of basic education in Finland where Finnish Sign Language is taught as a mother tongue, as a second and foreign language, and as an academic subject itself. Gallaudet also commends him for his diligent efforts with the WFD that led to the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ms. Norton's pioneering work as a deaf actor and as a teacher deserves the recognition of her alma mater. Her groundbreaking roles as an NTD founding member and as the first deaf actor to appear on American network television have encouraged countless talented deaf actors to pursue their dream of a career on stage and screen. Her appearances on television and in theaters across the nation have convincingly demonstrated to society, beyond a doubt, the capabilities of deaf people. What's more, her long and illustrious teaching career at Ohlone Community College, Fremont, Calif., earned her a reputation as a respected and skilled educator. Gallaudet is indeed proud to count Ms. Norton as a distinguished alumna of our University!

We know that you will wholeheartedly concur with the Board of Trustees' choice of these exemplary individuals as honorary degree recipients, and also know that the entire University community extends sincere appreciation for all their far reaching work to benefit deaf people.
We look forward to welcoming Mr. Jokinen and Ms. Norton to Kendall Green at Commencement, to congratulating them for their achievements, and of course to awarding graduates their diplomas for the successful completion of their education from this great university.

Warmly,

T. Alan Hurwitz       Benjamin J. Soukup
President              Chair, Board of Trustees

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