

## Leveraging Higher Education to Improve Employment Outcomes for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Testimony

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Welcome, Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and distinguished Members of the Committee! I am honored to be able to testify today on how Gallaudet University provides the resources and opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students' future employment. Without this university, I don't know where I'd be today, and I know many of my colleagues could say the same. Thank you for being here and continuing the fight to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Your investment and support mean a tremendous amount to the deaf community.

Gallaudet University provides a unique experience for deaf people like me. This university has high expectations for its students and opportunities are always appearing for us. We have a wonderful resource available right here on campus: Career Center. The advisors there are always notifying us of internship and work opportunities in DC and internationally. They are available to meet with us anytime we need guidance, and I have worked with Career Center in the past myself. It was here at Gallaudet that I first heard of the position of reporter for the Deaflympics, hosted at Taipei, Taiwan in 2009. I would likely not have heard or applied for the position had I been anywhere else other than at Gallaudet, and because one of my professors strongly encouraged me to apply, I got the job.

It turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. For three weeks, I had to

work under pressure every single day at Taipei, going to two sporting events a day and then typing a complete report within a few hours after the games. The job required me to interview various people everyday, including coaches, players, and fans from other countries. I learned to communicate with all kinds of people, using whatever means necessary. On the flight back to America, I felt like I had grown to be a much more independent, interactive, and capable person in such a short time.

It was through Career Center that I was able to afford and complete my first internship. Career Center will help pay for one international and one domestic internship per student. I am currently on my second internship with a former professor of mine. This school is a great networking base, and I have often received opportunities in many different areas through the people that I have worked with. She is starting a new company that develops multimedia products that promotes bi- and even multilingualism within literacy. I am the Project Manager and I take care of various tasks, such as creating a Press Kit and organizing a retreat. It has been a wonderful experience to be able to witness and be a part of building a company from scratch.

Also, there are Career Fairs on campus several times a year. Employers from different companies come with their booths to meet students and potential employees. This has proven to be successful as one of my friends got an internship with Volkswagen by talking to a representative at the Fair. Volkswagen and Gallaudet had an agreement to have two students work at Volkswagen as a part of "giving back to the local community" plan. My friend was one of the students that got the internship, and Gallaudet ensured that he would have a positive work experience by providing interpreters when needed.

I have another friend who is also a Gallaudet alumni success story. He landed an

internship with Central Information of Technology under National Institute of Technology through the Work Recruitment Program that Gallaudet provides. That internship turned into a full-time job, and he has been working there for nearly a year and half now.

I also need to recognize the support I receive from Vocal Rehabilitation. I was fortunate to go to California School for the Deaf, Fremont, where there was a VR office on campus. High school students could simply walk to the next building to meet with their VR counselor, and that's what I did my senior year. VR is paying for my undergraduate tuition, which also includes books and supplies. I don't know how else I would have been able to afford coming here.

Gallaudet is considered a Mecca for deaf people all over the world. Here, we receive equal communication access, which allows us to enhance our university experience by being able to have direct communication anywhere on campus with anyone. However, we do have many new signers, and for those students, Gallaudet provides interpreters, Real Time Captioning in classrooms, and the option to have a notetaker. This greatly helps new signer students to transit to an all-signing community.

The technology that we have nowadays truly does contribute to equal access for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Not only it helps new signers adapt into a signing environment, it does the opposite as well. I am able to make calls from everyday purposes to professional ones through Video Relay Services. That technology has advanced to the point I can be doing my homework on my laptop with the Internet on one side of the screen while on hold with a video call on another side of the screen. This kind of access helps me be a more independent individual, capable of multitasking and

depending on myself to do all kinds of business.

As the ultimate center for deaf people, students often blossom throughout their years at Gallaudet. I can vouch for that. I have been given so many opportunities to experience various activities that I have become such an all-around, multitasking, and capable person. My experiences here have included: being Fundraising Chairperson for two different organizations; writing and editing for the school newspaper, the *Buff and Blue*, and then getting promoted to Managing Editor and eventually, Editor-in-Chief; working as Peer Leader for a Freshman Year Seminar course; acting in the student television production, Bison TV; becoming Senator for Student Body Government's Student Congress; becoming a member of my sorority; being the co-chair of this year's Homecoming Bash; and many more. It has always been a dream of mine to be an editor of a magazine company, but I honestly never quite believed that I could do it until now. Witnessing my growth and ability to pull off difficult responsibilities and tasks has helped me realize that I am capable of so much more than I thought. Gallaudet has given me the confidence to pursue my passion in media, which includes the areas of advertising, journalism, and literature. Because of my experiences here, I now know what I want to do. I plan on applying to San Diego State University for graduate school in Mass Communication and Media Studies. I know that I am an intelligent and hard worker that any employer would be lucky to have, and I plan on carrying that confidence with me for the rest of my life.