

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

Testimony

**T. Alan Hurwitz**

President, Gallaudet University

**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

**Gallaudet University (Kellogg Conference Hotel)**

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Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor for me to appear today to testify on leveraging higher education to improve employment opportunities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. You have my warm thanks, and the warm thanks of people who are deaf or hard of hearing for the leadership you have shown on so many issues for this population, and particularly on the issue of employment. I applaud the outstanding leadership of Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi in promoting the rights of people with disabilities in all aspects of everyday living.

In addition, all of us here at Gallaudet University are also pleased and honored to welcome you to our wonderful campus for this hearing. We continue to be grateful for the ongoing support you and others in Congress have shown to Gallaudet University, and the significant investment you have made and continue to make to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing students have the best higher education available that will provide them with entry to significant employment opportunities. We are delighted to share that Gallaudet experience with you while you are on campus today.

My name is T. Alan Hurwitz, and I am the President of Gallaudet University. I have been president of this storied institution since January 2010. Before coming to Gallaudet, I was President and Dean of the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), and also vice-president of RIT. I am fortunate to have had the privilege over many years to be heavily involved in advancing the rights of deaf and hard of hearing people as well as people with other disabilities. I have served on the board of many organizations and am past president of the National Association of the Deaf, the World Organization of Jewish Deaf, and the Rochester School for the Deaf.

I strongly believe that Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf are outstanding examples of a government investment that makes extraordinary use of the federal resources that each Member of this Committee works so hard to provide to these institutions.

Allow me to provide a brief review of the long, successful history of Gallaudet University, which will bolster that statement.

In 1864, our Congressional charter was signed by President Abraham Lincoln. This is a heritage that we take very seriously and a unique historical distinction that generates great pride at our university. President Lincoln believed in equality of opportunity and stated so – although not within the context of Gallaudet University – as follows in 1861 at the onset of the Civil War.

“This is essentially a People’s contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose

leading object is to elevate the condition of men – to lift artificial weights from all shoulders, to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all, *to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance, in the race of life*. Yielding to partial, and temporary departures, from necessity, this it the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.”<sup>1</sup> (Italics added.)

Gallaudet continues, nearly 150 years later, to provide that “unfettered start and a fair chance, in the race of life” to enable deaf and hard of hearing students from a variety of backgrounds to receive advanced education, which leads to successful employment.

At the time Gallaudet was created, education for all in America was not fully realized. In 1870, 20% of the population of the United States was illiterate while 80% of African Americans were illiterate.<sup>2</sup> While literacy figures for people who were deaf and hard of hearing are not available for that period, we can be sure that the literacy rate was unacceptably low, perhaps similar to the rate cited for African Americans. However, deaf education had long been encouraged in the United States, with the founding of the first permanent deaf school in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut. The subsequent establishment of Gallaudet would provide higher education for deaf students, which would better empower them for the job market.

Today, Gallaudet University enrolls 1,546 undergraduate and graduate level students, and 262 elementary and secondary school students (in the Model

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<sup>1</sup> A familiar quote that appears at many locations, including this Lincoln Legacy site of the National Park Service: <http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/legacy.htm>

<sup>2</sup> SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970.

Secondary School for the Deaf and the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School respectively), for a total of 1,808 students.<sup>3</sup> Many additional students enroll in our English Language Institute and in our Professional Studies programs. With students from nearly every state and over 20 countries, we are an international university serving the deaf population of many parts of the world.

For the record, allow me to include the Gallaudet Mission and Vision Statement.

### **Mission**

Gallaudet University, federally chartered in 1864, is a bilingual, diverse, multicultural institution of higher education that ensures the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. Gallaudet maintains a proud tradition of research and scholarly activity and prepares its graduates for career opportunities in a highly competitive, technological, and rapidly changing world.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees - November 2007*

### **Vision**

Gallaudet University will build upon its rich history as the world's premier higher education institution serving deaf and hard of hearing people to become the university of first choice for the most qualified, diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing students in the world, as well as hearing students pursuing careers related to deaf and hard of hearing people. Gallaudet will

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<sup>3</sup> Preliminary Fall 2011, 15-day student census numbers.

empower its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work. Gallaudet will also strive to become the leading international resource for research, innovation and outreach related to deaf and hard of hearing people. Gallaudet will achieve these outcomes through:

- A bilingual learning environment, featuring American Sign Language and English, that provides full access for all students to learning and communication
- A commitment to excellence in learning and student service
- A world-class campus in the nation's capital
- Creation of a virtual campus that expands Gallaudet's reach to a broader audience of visual learners
- An environment in which research can grow, develop, and improve the lives and knowledge of all deaf and hard of hearing people worldwide.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees - May 2009*

**HELP COMMITTEE QUESTION: What is the role of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and Gallaudet University in preparing students who are deaf or hard of hearing for the workforce?**

Since its establishment, Gallaudet has built on its mission and vision and has helped deaf and hard of hearing people gain employment – the focus of our hearing

today. It has led the way for the world in higher education for deaf people. We take enormous pride in the many alumni who have left our university and gone on to prominence, often with a focus in their lives on 'giving back' to others less fortunate who were not able to obtain the start Gallaudet provided to them. For example:

- The husband and wife team of Olof Hanson and Agatha Tiegel Hanson were both graduates of Gallaudet, Olof in 1886 and Agatha in 1893. Olof would go on to a highly successful career in architecture and Agatha, one of the first known women to graduate from Gallaudet, during a time when the number of women in higher education was minimal, was a successful teacher of students who were deaf.<sup>4</sup>
- Another alumni, Andrew Foster, the first known African American to graduate from Gallaudet, in 1954, took his education into the workplace and established 31 schools and 2 centers for deaf children in 13 African nations.<sup>5</sup>
- Gregory Hlibok, who graduated in 1989, was named chief of the Disability Rights Office for the Federal Communications Commission in November of 2010.
- Sean Virnig, class of 1997, was recently selected as the first deaf superintendent of the California School for the Deaf in Fremont, California. It is one of the largest schools for the deaf in the country. In his spare time, he runs Rawland Bicycles, a company he started up that sells innovative products that he himself designs.

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<sup>4</sup> Gallaudet University Deaf Collections and Archives

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

- Leah Katz-Hernandez graduated in 2010 and is serving as an HSC Foundation Youth Transitions Fellow at the American Association of People with Disabilities.
- Vivienne Schroder, who received both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Gallaudet, graduating with her MA in Mental Health Counseling in 2011, is the Dean of Student Life at the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

There are countless similar stories of success of Gallaudet graduates, many of them "firsts" in their own right, each reflecting on our goal of producing well-rounded students who will succeed in life and in the workforce after gaining at Gallaudet the skills and confidence needed to overcome societal barriers.

### Successes

As an institution of higher education, we have seen a great deal of success regarding the employment of our students. Gallaudet conducts annual surveys of graduates to determine employment experience, employment fields by occupational category, internship participation, whether the employment involves service to people who are deaf or hard of hearing and satisfaction with their preparation.

Excerpts of data from the most recent survey indicate the following highlights:<sup>6</sup>

- 98% of graduate degree alumni and 82% of bachelor's degree alumni, stated they worked either full-time or part-time one year after graduation.

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<sup>6</sup> Gallaudet University Annual Survey of Recent Graduates, 2009.

- The percentage of alumni pursuing additional education or working full- or part-time during the year after graduation increased over the past three years.
- 98% of graduate degree alumni who participated in an internship stated the internship helped them very much or some for employment after graduation; while 71% of bachelor's degree alumni said the same thing.
- 95% of graduate-level alumni and 69% of bachelor's level alumni stated that Gallaudet prepared them for their occupation very well or adequately.
- Graduates were working in an entire cross section of employment areas including the following from the Occupational groups from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Standard Occupational Classification: management occupations; business and financial occupations; life, physical, and social science occupations; community and social services occupations; education, training, and library occupations; art, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations; healthcare support occupations; personal care and service occupations; sales and related occupations; and office and administrative support occupations.

These statistics show the success that Gallaudet has had in preparing our students for the workforce. The resources that are received and used to educate these students are effective at providing our graduates with a bright future in their chosen careers.



While there is a great deal of success with our students, I also want to use this opportunity to identify a number of the barriers our students face and describe how Gallaudet is working to bring down those obstacles, and identify areas of need regarding those barriers in which the Committee can be helpful.

### New Opportunities and Pathways

Providing our students with the means to obtain high quality and well-paying jobs is pivotal to us as an institution of higher education. We want Gallaudet graduates to not only get jobs, but to have fulfilling, enriching careers that will benefit them, and society. We know too well that the “professions” are far underrepresented in the numbers of people who are deaf and hard of hearing entering professional schools to gain access to these careers.

One of the goals in the Gallaudet Strategic Plan is as follows:

“By 2015, refine a core set of undergraduate and graduate programs that are aligned with the institutional mission and vision, leverage Gallaudet’s many strengths, and best position students for career success.”

As we consider additions to our undergraduate curriculum, let me report on new pathways that we will follow. As a university focusing on the Liberal Arts, we will build in new ways on the strength of what we offer, enabling future students to take advantage of our Liberal Arts education. How can we turn those strengths into theirs? How can we give these students wings to soar?

We are delighted to announce that we are beginning the process of developing four new programs that will better position our graduates to receive advanced degrees and gain professional employment. These programs are:

1. Pre-Law
2. Pre-Medicine
3. Pre-Architecture
4. Pre-Business.

These programs can transform the lives of students who pursue them. We can offer a significant service to students who will come to us for undergraduate work in the Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Technologies. When they graduate they can apply to graduate schools to enter these rewarding professions. We will have provided programs intended to guide graduates into professional graduate schools.

Imagine the service we can provide to future generations of deaf and hard of hearing students. These offerings will raise the educational aspirations of these youthful students throughout the country. How? By raising the expectations of young deaf and hard of hearing students, we will instill in them the potential of coming to us, graduating, transferring to a professional school, and then transitioning to work. Imagine the impact!

- More deaf lawyers.
- More deaf doctors.

- More deaf architects.
- More deaf business people.

Our vision is to increase the numbers of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in these professional areas, stimulating improvement in their economic well-being and promoting better societal understanding of deaf and hard of hearing adults. We will have given wings to future generations of deaf and hard of hearing students. What are we giving them? It is the gift of the self-confidence to envision themselves succeeding in these great professions.

These four new programs will do more than just provide our graduates with the skills they need to receive advanced degrees and thrive in highly professional careers. It will show deaf and hard of hearing teenagers, and their family and friends around the country, that Gallaudet believes in them and has high expectations of them. Gallaudet knows they can achieve and should aim high. We know that they can become lawyers, doctors, architects, and businesspeople; they can achieve whatever they can dream. We know that people who are deaf or hard of hearing are already members of these professional fields; but we also know from personal experience that their numbers are terribly small. These programs will increase those numbers, providing deaf people with high levels of training and skills, and also raising the bar of expectation for these youth.

Let me briefly describe our vision for each of these programs.

- The Pre-Law program will allow this nation to see a growth in the number of deaf lawyers who will be able to assist both deaf and hearing clients in all aspects of legal matters as they obtain advanced legal knowledge. Rather than limit these individuals to the practice of disability law, we will encourage these individuals to enter all fields in which lawyers ably work – even including politics.
- A Pre-Medicine degree will of course empower our students to become doctors, thus providing multiple benefits by increasing the job options for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, by providing the population who are deaf or hard of hearing with access to health care provided by these graduates, and finally benefiting the general population who will be served by these individuals.
- A Pre-Architecture program will give students the opportunity to put their visual skills to work as they create and plan the buildings and cities of the future. “DeafSpace” is the concept that begins by describing people who are deaf and hard of hearing as inhabiting a rich sensory world that relies on visual and tactile sensibilities for spatial awareness and way-finding. The on-going work at Gallaudet in DeafSpace will provide one of the pillars for the foundation of our Pre-Architecture program. We know the work in the area of DeafSpace, like so many other recent changes initially designed to help a small segment of the population, will in reality be found to contribute to universal design, and will benefit the larger society. Our Deaf Space Design Guidelines document fills what we believe

is a void in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing design guidelines created for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

- Lastly, our Pre-Business degree will give more of our students the tools they need to continue their education in MBA programs, and then use their entrepreneurial spirit to begin their own companies or become recognized industry leaders.

It is our intention that all of these programs will provide our students with the opportunity to participate more fully in the American dream through economic empowerment.

Gallaudet understands these programs and other potential new programs cannot be optimized by standing alone; for that reason, we are leveraging our relationship with the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, which we intend will allow us to offer some of these, and other, programs jointly with those other universities. This collaborative effort is expected to allow each respective institution to provide their respective skills and knowledge in ways that utilize each one's strengths. Through course offerings on our own campus, as well as at other schools in the Consortium, our students will be able to receive the best education and training in these fields.

### Barriers to Professional Education

At the same time, we are aware of significant barriers to entry to professional schools. We do not doubt the capabilities of our students to succeed in these

programs, but we are well aware of the added cost – particularly in the provision of access to communications, usually through interpreters or real-time text services – which will continue to prevent the entrance of qualified students to these graduate programs. Unfortunately we do not have a ready answer for the Committee, but certainly we do pledge to work with the Committee on solutions which may resolve these barriers.

### Barriers to Health Care Careers

Gallaudet is proud to be a partner with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, the Rochester General Health System, and the University of Rochester Medical System in the “Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community” which was formed in June 2010. The description of this group below is taken from their interim report delivered in June 2011. [I will provide a copy of the report for your review and consideration].

“The Task Force mission is to provide recommendations that will increase career opportunities for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing individuals in health care professions. Such professions include those positions typically requiring associate degree level training through those requiring graduate and professional education in a variety of health care fields (including medical and pharmacological technologies, clinical care, research, administrative and IT support). The Task Force was created in response to a national demand for more skilled health care professionals, a need to improve the quality of

health care services for underserved citizens who are D/HH, and an acknowledgment of the significant employment barriers that exist for qualified D/HH individuals in the health care industry. The Task Force also supports and furthers current Department of Labor goals that focus on increasing employment and career advancement opportunities for all workers and professionals with disabilities.”<sup>7</sup>

The Report recognizes that unemployment is particularly high among the deaf and hard of hearing population at a time of acute shortages in health professions. The report also highlights several compelling needs and includes several short-term recommendations for addressing these needs. Those recommendations are provided in the following five areas, quoted from that report, which provide information on barriers to success in this field. The five areas are:

- 1. Develop and implement a coordinated plan of information**

**dissemination** regarding health care careers and needed academic preparation for deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents, educators and other professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, gatekeepers in educational institutions, and health care employers.

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<sup>7</sup> “Building Pathways to Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community,” unpublished Interim Report, Short-Term Recommendations, Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community, June 2011.

2. **Enhance educational curricula and training programs** to assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals in preparing for and obtaining employment in health care professions.
3. **Adapt existing employer training programs** to address health care organizations' ability to support the success of deaf and hard of hearing employees and ensure that such modified programs are available to a broad spectrum of current and prospective organizations that employ or could employ deaf and hard of hearing health care workers.
4. **Promote improved access services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals** within school and workplace settings by supporting the identification and development of best practices with respect to specialized interpreting for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in health care fields and the increasing array of available technological applications.
5. **Initiate contact with relevant local, state, and federal agencies** to inform them about the Task Force goals and recommendations and, as appropriate, ensure that the language of "eligibility criteria" for specific funding opportunities relevant to Task Force recommendations is inclusive of deaf and hard of hearing individuals and the institutions that serve them.

While many of these activities can, and will, be supported and put into place by the four sponsoring institutions, there are others which are dependent on outside assistance, such as the HELP Committee, for support. This Task Force has been funded primarily by Gallaudet and NTID, with the funds supporting regular travel to



meetings, faculty and staff time for the 28 members and support staff, and travel costs for the voluntary appearances of many outside professionals at Task Force meetings. When the group completes its assignment in several months, the internal funding will no longer be available, and the implementation of its recommendations will be left to those four institutions to fund; assistance of the HELP Committee could make a difference in the completion of this work.

I would like to highlight two related issues that can be addressed through congressional action.

- First, the report highlights the need to maximize information dissemination about career opportunities in the health care fields to deaf and hard-of-hearing students and their parents and to expand and improve the pipeline for such individuals to appropriate educational opportunities and from education to careers in the health care fields. Too often, deaf and hard of hearing students have not enjoyed opportunities to work in health care as volunteers, interns, emergency service workers, nor have they had opportunities to shadow and be mentored by professionals in health care fields like others have experienced. I request that you and your staff work with the Task Force to ensure that our deaf and hard of hearing students qualify for federal diversity training programs such as Area Health Education Centers and explore options to provide career exploration opportunities and information about career opportunities to deaf and hard of hearing students comparable to those provided to minority and disadvantaged students under existing programs.

- Second, the report highlights the need to promote accessibility and technological solutions that ensure meaningful and effective access. In order for deaf and hard of hearing students to enter the “pipeline” to educational programs and achieve ongoing career success, they must be able to access information and instructional processes required to achieve desired goals. While access to education and employment opportunities, especially the use of sign language interpreters, are required by the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the reality is that lack of access continues to hinder deaf and hard of hearing individuals from entering into and succeeding in health care fields. I request that you and your staff work with the Task Force to identify federal programs that will allow the deaf and hard of hearing community to establish information clearinghouses and adopt other strategies to provide information to health care providers about access and technological solutions that facilitate access and accommodation in health care fields and create opportunities for replication of best practices.

#### Barriers to Career Advancement into Management

We are all aware of various “ceilings” that prevent the advancement of one or another group into management or prevents the movement from lower management into upper management. People who are deaf or hard of hearing face similar barriers.

Gallaudet is developing a program, the Masters of Public Administration (MPA) degree, specifically designed for one segment of this population – deaf and hard of hearing individuals working in public and non-profit sector organizations.

The program is especially appropriate for deaf and hard of hearing professionals working in federal government agencies. The faculty working on the development of this program have worked closely with, and have the support of, the Federal Office of Personnel Management’s Eastern Management Development Center (EMDC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. We are working to create a collaborative relationship between EMDC and the Masters of Public Administration program that would allow MPA students from the federal workforce to take their elective courses through the EMDC.

Once approved and offered, we believe this program will prepare individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing who work in public sector organizations to lead with a sense of direction, to focus on results, to develop others’ capability to perform, and to serve with integrity.

Once this program is approved, we would appreciate the opportunity to turn to the HELP Committee for advice and counsel on ensuring that federal employees who are deaf and hard of hearing have the opportunity to participate in this offering.

**HELP COMMITTEE QUESTION: What training and opportunities are available for students of these two schools to facilitate the transition from school to work, and promote economic self-sufficiency?**

An understanding of our student body will be helpful in understanding what we do regarding transition from the university to work and regarding promoting economic self-sufficiency.

Our 99 acres in Northeast Washington DC are a microcosm of American society. We have students with a variety of backgrounds, who come from across the nation, and the world, to attend our University. Just as American society has experienced challenges throughout our history and emerged better and stronger, our school has as well, because of the challenges that deaf and hard of hearing students face on a daily basis.

One of these challenges has been to address paternalism and low expectations. Low expectations lead students to believe they are not capable and discourages them from reaching their full potential. The impact is felt while at the university, during the transition to work, and while fully at work. At Gallaudet, we constantly strive to address these issues, and continually increase what is expected of our students. We have raised our admission and academic standards. For example in 2006 we had 31% of our students whose English levels required their placement in a “conditional” status; by 2011 that number had dropped to 16%. In 2006 our average ACT English score, math score, and reading score were 14.0, 16.9, and 16.8. By 2011 those three scores had risen to 17.6, 17.9, and 19.7.

Furthermore, as the caliber of students who are enrolling has risen, our graduation rates have improved, as has persistence. For example, our retention from year 1 to year 2 rose from 54% in 2006 to 70% this year. Increasing our standards has not led to decreasing enrollment, showing that if we have high

expectations for the nation and the world to see, deaf and hard of hearing students will rise to the challenge.

As the nation's school placement of deaf and hard of hearing students, mainstreamed compared to attendance at a state school for the deaf, evolves, Gallaudet finds that students are coming here with a wide variety of educational background and communication languages. A larger percentage of our undergraduate students come from mainstream schools than in the past; for example, four years ago 68% came from schools for the deaf, and that number is now 56%. The same is true for students who transfer to Gallaudet from other colleges. Many of these new students do not know American Sign Language. Gallaudet is a bilingual institution, and we provide these students the tools to become bilingual through innovative programs like JumpStart and the New Signers program. Our intention is that all of our students can become fluent in both American Sign Language and English. We are also witnessing an increasing number of Deaf Blind/Low vision students attending our university. Furthermore, the percentage of students of color as a part of the total student population is on the rise.

It is clear that Gallaudet has been very effective in serving a very diverse population of students while continuing to raise our admission and academic standards. These students represent the future workforce of our country.

## Facilitating the Transition Through a Career Center

The Gallaudet University Career Center is a service unit that supports our commitment to the education of our students and employers about how to work with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. It accomplishes its mission by providing students, alumni, employers, faculty, and staff with expert advising, leadership in experiential education, current information and resources, and networking opportunities on and off campus, as well as on-line.

Staffed by career services professionals, information is shared both within the university and between students and employers at career events such as Job Fairs. In fact, while this hearing is occurring, our Career Center is sponsoring a job fair on campus to place students with companies who are here seeking employees. This is always an exciting time on campus, as the transition from the university to work is on the minds of our students. We also provide facilities that allow students to research participating employers in advance, as well as view on-line employer profiles, which provide information like available positions and majors recruited by the company.

Employer information sessions offer students a convenient way to learn about prospective employers and start building relationships with key recruiting contacts. On-campus interviews are commonplace. A 'professional network' allows students to find a professional mentor who can provide career advice and insight from our database of alumni mentors and volunteer career advisers.

Workshops are offered throughout the year on topics like mock interviews and appropriate business attire to help students develop and refine career-related skills.

### Facilitating the Transition Through Internships

A strength of Gallaudet in providing employment opportunities for our students is our placement of students into internships. The Career Center reports that 80% of graduating seniors completed at least one internship prior to graduation, much higher than the national average of 52%. Gallaudet uses internships to provide our students with on-the-job, hands-on experience. This gives them the skills they will need that will greatly aid them in their careers.

Allow me to illustrate with details of some Gallaudet student internship experiences.

-Krista Brown, from Illinois, did an internship at the Sidwell Friends Academy in Washington, DC, where she assisted in teaching a class of 24 first graders. Originally, the students did not know how to work with an interpreter, but eventually they learned how to communicate with Krista, and that was an enriching experience for them. In the future, Krista would like to open a charter school in Chicago, Illinois.

-Leila Hanuami, from California and our student witness today, did an internship as a reporter with the Deaflympics in Taipei, Taiwan in 2009. She is also currently interning with a professor at Gallaudet, working on starting a new company.

-Dylan Hinks, also from California, landed a prestigious internship with the American Association of People with Disabilities this past summer. He was the AAPD fellow in the office of Congressman Ed Markey.

-Briana Johnson of Georgia, did an internship through Gallaudet's Capitol Hill Internship program, in the office of Senator Sherrod Brown. Briana assisted with constituent correspondence, and her experience inspired her to want to attend law school in the future.

-Robert Siebert, from Minnesota, did an internship with the Gallaudet Administration and Finance Internship program in the summer of 2010. He worked with the Associate Director of Real Estate Development in the Program Development office. This past summer, he was an intern with Volkswagen in Herndon, Virginia.

-Rami Traurig of Maryland did an internship with the James Madison University's Department of Chemistry's Research Experience for Undergraduates program. The REU program is sponsored by the National Science Foundation. As an intern, Rami, a biology major, assisted with collecting and analyzing water samples from areas in the Shenandoah Valley and the George Washington National Forest.

These students are well on their way to becoming successful in their careers, just as Mike Ellis and Seth Bravin – both witnesses today – and so many other Gallaudet alumni.

We recently initiated a Capitol Hill Internship Program that places Gallaudet students in federal offices, particularly with members of Congress. These programs



allow deaf and hard of hearing students to gain valuable job and life experience as well as gaining a crucial understanding of how our government functions.

Placing our students in internships not only provides them with crucial job training, it educates employers about the capabilities of deaf and hard of hearing people. One of the barriers to employment for deaf people is that employers and the public in general often have low expectations and negative stereotypes about the abilities of deaf people. We place our students in internships to show that they are capable and competent and can thrive once given the opportunity. Our students, through internships, break down the misconceptions held about deaf people.

In addition to internships, Gallaudet University provides a variety of study-abroad options for students, which allows them to develop an appreciation of the shrinking global environment in which we now work and live.

### Facilitating the Transition Through Other Venues

Gallaudet understands that providing academic support and internship opportunities are crucial to successful future employment. But there are many other skills that must be developed outside these venues that will allow our students to compete successfully in the workplace. These skills involve working in teams, making real-life decisions that impact themselves and others who work with them, interacting with and learning from people different from themselves in non-controlled environments, and obtaining leadership experience.

These characteristics are the hallmark of the Gallaudet experience unmatched anywhere in the world.

- Through student organizations, our students can thrive in an environment where each one can experience unfettered communications with one another and one where they can become leaders, organizers, and follow their dreams and initiatives to make the world a better place. Deaf and hard of hearing students at Gallaudet can become club presidents, editor of the newspaper, and president of the student government association. If these same students attended another university, their opportunities for such experiences would be limited dramatically. These experiences in leadership roles will help our graduates become leaders in their employment and in the communities in which they live.
- As mentioned earlier, study abroad programs give students the opportunity to broaden their horizons and better understand the world. Our First Year Study Tour provides this knowledge early in their university experience.
- Our athletic programs allow students to grow as well, as they work hard, both on and off the field, to achieve great things. The opportunities for leading as team captains would be non-existent or very limited at other universities.

These student life activities provide students with valuable life skills that will aid them in succeeding in the workplace. Higher education is not only valuable for classroom time, but what is learned outside of that space is incredibly important. Surely as former college students ourselves, we can never forget the late night discussions in dorm rooms, student body government meetings, and spontaneous

debates in hallways. These are possible only in an environment where students are given the opportunity to gather and directly communicate with each other and learn the joys, and yes, the frustrations of becoming responsible adults and civic partners of our nation.

As you can see, Gallaudet University prepares students for the employment world in a myriad of ways. From classroom learning that provides them knowledge and information, to social and leadership opportunities that supplies them with life skills, and internships that give them hands-on experience, Gallaudet makes it possible for deaf students to enter the workforce and have successful careers. Those opportunities will only increase as Gallaudet continues to innovate and grow as, for example, the establishment of our four new “pre-“ programs demonstrate.

**HELP COMMITTEE QUESTION: Are there any communications technologies used by NTID and Gallaudet University that have broader societal use and application?**

Gallaudet has long been a leader in using up to date technology to enhance the experience of our students. Tools like CART, VRS and other technologies provide access to those attending Gallaudet, and are efforts that other universities could learn from, in order to better provide access to their students and employees. As we serve a variety of students, from those who primarily use visual language, to those who mix both visual and auditory communication, Gallaudet has expertise in the best technological practices for this population. We can educate employers on the

technologies available in order to assist them in hiring deaf and hard of hearing people.

For example, we have the Technology Access Program (TAP) that researches communication technology for the benefit of industries, the government and deaf consumers and seeks to provide equity in communications for deaf and hard of hearing people. Additionally, there is often informal experimentation taking place among Gallaudet students, faculty and staff, with smartphone applications and other technologies that will provide more access and better employment opportunities for our graduates.

With the advent of new technologies, many barriers that previously existed for deaf students are evaporating. Textual communication is becoming a large part of the world, as texting, email, instant messaging and social media have become frequent means of communication. Furthermore, the ADA helped video relay services to flourish, breaking down more barriers to employment of deaf people. Our graduates are entering a world where employers are learning that familiar technology – well beyond the constraints of email – exist and can remove barriers to working with deaf and hard of hearing employees. This technology allows employers to concentrate on hiring and work practices that can, if used properly, significantly reduce barriers to employment and advancement. However, it is the existence of stereotypes which are much more difficult to erase.

These technologies do much more than simply allow people to communicate with one another; social media in particular, provides tools for people to be considered as equals on the Internet. The stereotypes that exist when people

encounter each other face-to-face disappear when they interact with one another in this medium. Take for example a deaf intern who is not readily able to participate in impromptu hallway conversations with co-workers and thereby misses out on the social lubricant that helps the gears of work run smoothly. Through textual communications and social media however, the deaf intern is able to forge a bond with fellow co-workers through common shared interests whether it be sports, clothes, the arts, and even music. It is through this social lubricant conducted through the electronic medium that will further facilitate the face-to-face interaction between this deaf intern and fellow co-workers in ways that were simply not possible before.

**HELP COMMITTEE QUESTION: What practices can be replicated across higher education for better inclusion of individuals with disabilities to better prepare them for the workforce?**

Gallaudet serves as a living example of how an institution of higher education can specifically address the needs of students whose abilities are different from that of a large segment of our population. Our programs are specially designed to serve this population, as is wisely mandated by the Education of the Deaf Act. At Gallaudet, inclusion happens in the fullest sense in that our students face no barriers in participating in all aspects of university life. It is through this collegiate experience that our students gain the knowledge and confidence necessary to succeed once they earn their degree and depart the world of academia.

At the same time, we are very well aware that this kind of experience is a “once in a lifetime” opportunity. Hence, we provide all the tools to prepare them for inclusion in the larger world of work. This is done through internships, offering of consortium courses, participating in classroom activities that engage outside participants and the neighboring community, having them compete against their non-deaf peers in events such as mock trials to see how they measure up, and so on.

Gallaudet University serves as an example of a public-private partnership that truly works. It is through the investment of Federal dollars and the prudent management of these resources that we are able to provide a program that meets the national mission. It is in this spirit that the Federal government should consider how this type of arrangement can be expanded to serve others with disabilities in higher education settings. Just like the fact that not everyone who is deaf chooses to go to Gallaudet, not everyone who has a specific disability would choose to go to a certain college. But imagine if you will, for example, that blind college students could choose to attend an institution that had the Federal support to develop an environment that minimizes or removes barriers for blind people. These blind students would not have to spend a great deal of their time worrying about accommodations that are rightfully theirs. Rather, they would be better able to focus on their educational experience, knowing that access is readily achievable anywhere, anytime.

It is also important to recognize that Gallaudet is pleased to offer a strong research base at our university. Another of the goals of our strategic plan is to become: “the epicenter of research, development and outreach leading to

advancements in knowledge and practice for deaf and hard of hearing people and all humanity.”

We want to lead in research which will lead to better understanding of deaf and hard of hearing people, ultimately resulting in better employment. One example is the Visual Language, Visual Learning (VL2) program at Gallaudet. Funded by a competitive grant from the National Science Foundation, this program, one of six Science of Learning centers, conducts cognitive scientific research into how deaf people develop language and literacy, in order to better understand how everyone, deaf and hearing, learn visually. Understanding how a minority processes the world can benefit society, as evidenced by VL2. This concept could be replicated for higher education for other populations; analysis of their capabilities could provide information about the human experience.

### **Final Comment**

In many ways, today’s Gallaudet students possess greater awareness and confidence in succeeding in the world of work as compared to past generations of students. When I stand on the stage in May 2012 performing what is indeed the greatest joy of any university president, the conferring of degrees, I will be handing degrees to many undergraduate students who were born after the passage of the greatest civil rights legislation for people with disabilities in the history of our nation. These students have grown up in a world where the paradigm of having a disability is not an abnormality to be ashamed of, but a difference to be embraced and valued. They are what I call the ADA generation. This ADA generation is not

reserved exclusively to those who are considered disabled by others, it is a generation of all young Americans who share the same hopes and desires to achieve the American dream. This is why I am confident that although barriers continue to exist, the future has never been brighter for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. I have been fortunate to be in a profession where I talk to young adults on a daily basis and get a glimpse into the future of our country and I know that the ADA generation will help forge a more equitable workplace for disabled people as they advance into positions of leadership.

The Gallaudet Middle States Accreditation report in 2000 states that many institutions say that they have mission, but Gallaudet truly has a mission. We accept deaf and hard of hearing students with a broad range of academic experiences and abilities. Unlike other institutions that accept students within a narrow bandwidth of academic skills as indicated by their standardized test scores, our top students scores are as much as twice as high as those in the low end of the range. Those who are not as fortunate as others and have scores that reflect it, have experienced low expectations from others, received substandard education, and encountered barriers on a daily basis that impede their learning opportunities. Because of Gallaudet's unique mission, we have the programs, the people, and the tools to help these students succeed and find employment. At the end of their Gallaudet experience, each student that stands on the stage with me and receives their degree is equal to another, regardless of where they started at Gallaudet. Each one will enter the world with a hard-earned college degree that is their license and pathway to gainful employment. This is Gallaudet's mission and one we accomplish well.



As was written by President Lincoln 150 years ago, the government exists to “...to lift artificial weights from all shoulders, to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all, to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance, in the race of life.”

This is just as true today as it was when Lincoln penned these words in 1861. Gallaudet is proud to be a partner with the United States government in providing the foundation for success that each student require in order to have meaningful careers and fulfilling and enriching lives.