



## **Davila supports right of students to protest**

*In a radio interview broadcast on KCPW radio in Salt Lake City, Utah, Gallaudet President Dr. Robert Davila expressed support for students' right to protest. Here is a full transcript of the radio interview (the underlined sentences show the short version of the interview, which is also available as an audio file):*

*Audio file posted on KCPW Web site on February 2, 2007:*

LARA JONES (host): So, I wanna start at the beginning and talk about Gallaudet University, if you can just explain to us. Give us a primer on what Gallaudet is.

ROBERT DAVILA (voice of interpreter): Sure. Gallaudet University was established during the time of the land grant colleges in the middle of the Civil War period, and it has been in operation almost 150 years [*interpreters says "140 years"*]. And its mission is to provide quality, college-level education to deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Many years ago deaf people did not have the opportunity to go to college at any place except Gallaudet University. That was the situation in my case. But now many colleges are required to provide access to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and that's part of the Americans with Disabilities Act's requirements. But Gallaudet [*interpreter says: GOLL-yoo-det*] continues to be the premier institution serving deaf and hard-of-hearing people, because of our long tradition and our long history and the quality of our programs.

JONES: Now Gallaudet has been in the news of late for some controversy of its own. You are the new president. What kind of image do you want to paint as the president?

DAVILA: Well, first of all, I graduated from Gallaudet myself and I was quite concerned over the protests. But I think that that is very much a part of young people--their feeling of empowerment and their feeling of their own rights--their feeling of the right to voice their own opinion even when those opinions may

disagree with the opinions of others. And so I have no problem with that right to protest. But the protest created some unsettled--an unsettled atmosphere around the campus, and so I'm now in a place wanting to establish a more consistent environment and wanting to bring those disagreeing groups together and get Gallaudet moving in the right direction in the future. But for now it will be business as usual, and we are also now in the process of establishing some new buildings. I'm very excited that the new building will be called the Sorenson Language and Communication Center, where we will be doing extensive research into communication methods, as well as sign language, and providing deaf people with various opportunities to develop communication skills in other areas as well. And so we will attract scholars to do research from all over the world. So we're very excited about that and we're very fortunate to have such strong support from Sorenson Media and other affiliate communication centers. Sorenson Communications is really very much at the front of that effort to support our university and we appreciate that very much.

JONES: And of course, Sorenson Communications, a Salt Lake City-based firm and a sponsor of the Deaflympics which are in town [*host speaks with professional radio voice*]. And I believe Gallaudet is sponsor as well. Let's talk about the Deaflympics and the athletes that are here to compete. If you're not a member of the deaf community or somehow have a family member who is deaf or hard of hearing, I don't think it is on most people's radars. But now with the Deaflympics in town in Salt Lake City, I think that's going to change here, at least. Tell me about the deaf athletes at Gallaudet and those people that are in town from your university.

DAVILA: Well, I'm actually here for two reasons. I'm first here because I want to be involved in the American Deaf olympic movement. I was an officer of the American team when we went to Yugoslavia in 1969. So I have had involvement myself and have always been interested in those olympic sports. And I'm interested in those also because I have these contacts with Sorenson Communications and other people here in the area. And as well I need to tell you that sports have always been a kind of glue to bring people together, and it allows us to share common interests as well as competing with one another. And so it is a social center of much of our deaf community activities. And so every time you have a large event that involves sports and athletics, then you'll find that there are many people there. So we're so fortunate

to be here in Salt Lake City, because we find it a perfect place for that.

JONES: What sports will deaf athletes be competing in during the Deaflympics?

DAVILA: Well, all types of winter sports. There are skiing. There's also hockey. Well, I don't even know the name of all the winter sports [*light-hearted tone of voice*] to be honest, but you will actually find the same events with us as you find in all winter games around the world.

JONES: So this is my ignorance showing through about deaf athletes and what that sense--I'm trying to think of--I can't ski, and I can hear. How much harder it might--must be for a deaf athlete. Or am I putting something into that equation that doesn't exist?

DAVILA: Well, sometimes when you lose your hearing after birth, sometimes you do lose a sense of balance, and that can make it difficult to ski and do things like that. But you certainly can train yourself to re-acquire that sense of balance and to be able to then participate in sports. I did that myself when I was involved in sports as a young man, because I had no sense of balance before and it was difficult for me to do that, but I succeeded in competing. But nevertheless, there are many other things that deaf people do the same as hearing people do. Really, there's no difference in that. And so one thing about these games that we have here in Salt Lake City is that we have many students that are involved and many young people who are involved competing that are still students in the higher grades of high school and college. There are many college students who are competing as athletes and that are here in town now.

JONES: I think I may be giving the impression that's it's a collegiate competition. It's organized just the way the Olympics [is]--Is it not?--with country teams?

DAVILA: That's correct, yes. That's correct. Actually, we do not use the term "Olympics." You'll notice that the word itself is a trademark of the international movement--

JONES: Alright, I wanna get you in trouble--[laughter]--

DAVILA: --Yeah, so we call it "Deaflympics". Mm-hmm. "Deaflympics," which basically we replaced the "O" with the word "Deaf", but basically we're able to do that--

JONES: They let you get away with that?

DAVILA: --Yeah, it still equates with that same love for competition and with this wonderful opportunity for us to be able to interact with people from other parts of the world and then to share so much now with the Web and the Internet. It's so easy to contact. Really you can keep contact with anyone around the world. But then to come here live in Salt Lake City and be able to talk with people. For example, this morning I met several people that I know from other countries in Europe whom I had met in the past and I was able to see them here in Utah.

JONES: Well, I saw a bunch of folks walkin' around town the other night and the jackets said "Russia" on the back. And it took me a second and I went, "Oh. Yeah, the Deaflympics are in town." What about Olympic pins? That was a big craze during 2002, and I've got my Olympic jello pins. Are there Deaflympic pins? Or does that kind of culture around Deaflympics [sic].

DAVILA: Oh, yes. Yes. You will find that same thing that happens in the sign language community. The things that are in the hearing community are also in our community. So you can see that I have a pin myself that I'm wearing--

JONES: Alright, so I'm gonna hafta trade a pin, huh?--[*Laughing*]--Can we trade pins? I've got an NPR pin for ya.

DAVILA: ---[*Laughing*]--Well, I look for a good deal.

JONES: [*Laughing*]--[*Hand clap*]... Well, so one of the things that strikes me about the Deaflympics--[*Laughing*]--He's gonna give me his pin right now--[*laughing*]

DAVILA: Well, no, I do need to tell you--

JONES: Mm-hmm.

DAVILA: --that this pin that I'm wearing is actually a very special pin. It is not one that I would be able to exchange for other--

JONES: Not even for two NPR pins?--[*Laughing*]--

DAVILA:--[*Laughing*]--Well--

JONES: We'll have to make a deal.

DAVILA: --I want to invite the community of Gallaudet together. So, I actually at Gallaudet established this "Team Gallaudet," and that's what my pin says. And that is for anyone in the Gallaudet community that wants to commit to work harder to make the university the best in the world--Although it already is--Anyone who wants to make it even better gets this pin from me.

JONES: One of the things that I--strikes me as not a member of the deaf community is what--how this builds a sense of universality in the deaf community, the Deaflympics, to meet with other athletes from other countries who are deaf as well and making these strides in sports.

DAVILA: Ah well, actually we really do have a big interest in supporting abilities. And so, thus, we have all types of different social events, not only the sporting events. We also have the World Federation of the Deaf, which includes many countries from all over the world, where we come together to share information about civil rights, about legislation that we are able to promote in our respective countries and many things that we have to unite us, and so that we can advocate for the rights of people around the world. We also have the summer games for the deaf. That's another movement. It's been a larger movement than the winter games, because obviously not all countries enjoy snow [*light-hearted tone*] like we do here in Utah. So we do have the summer games as well. So there are all different types of competitions around the world, where people who have the same interests are able to come together. We have a motion picture competition. And so there are so many things

you could lose all of your time if you are always focused on the many social events that we have.

JONES: So how many medals for team USA at a Deaflympics?

DAVILA: Well, the USA team does look very good. We have brought in many young people from colleges. Some serve on their own college teams. We have some people that have been skating and skiing and doing these things all of their lives. And so one important side effect that you have from this gathering is that sign language is actually not international. Americans have a specific sign language that we use in this country that isn't used in other countries. So just like spoken languages differ from country to country, so do sign languages differ from country to country. But deaf people--for example, a deaf person from the United States and one from Russia, are able to communicate better than two people who were able to hear. Deaf people are able to do better communicating, because we're able to use body language effectively. You can act out ideas that you want [to communicate]. You can pantomime various things, and you're able to get your point across to other people who don't use the same sign language, much like you can't do in spoken language. But you do have to understand that sign language isn't universal.

JONES: And just to close, I wanted to touch upon Sorenson Communications again, because they're also hosting the 16th Winter Deaflympics Expo--more than 65 exhibitors, deaf entertainment and artworks by leading artists and students. They seem to really have partnered throughout the deaf community in the United States. What brings Sorenson to this community and Gallaudet to Sorenson?

DAVILA: Well, Sorenson is one of the leading technological companies that provide communication access to deaf people through video relay services, through that effort. And so I believe that Sorenson controls a large part of that market around the market. And so it's possible for deaf people to make phone calls through a video camera, which Sorenson actually provides to them. So I'm able, for example, as a deaf person, to dial a number and then get a sign language interpreter on a television screen and sign to that interpreter the same way I'm signing to an interpreter here in this room, who's using their voice to express my ideas. So that person on--that interpreter on my video screen can place a phone call for me and speak to that

person--I can speak to that person through them. Sorenson is a great provider in that. And so, it's part of their investment in us also to support and provide advocacy to deaf people. And we certainly do appreciate that.

JONES: I was doing some research for this interview and I noticed that you, President Davila, have entered the blogging era.

DAVILA: Yes, yes. They call them "vlogs" now. Use the "V" [*interpreter says: Use the "P"*]

JONES: The video blog! That's right, the "vlog"--[*chuckling*]

DAVILA: Yes. Yes, and I do that weekly. I find that that is the best way for me to communicate to people on the Gallaudet campus, and it's able to be picked up by people all over the world. [As] a matter of fact, today I was at lunch, talking with a young man from Germany, and he was telling me some things about myself that I had said last week, that he had watched on my vlog--[*chuckling*]  
--So I was really amazed by that.

JONES: That'll keep you on your toes!

DAVILA: Yes. So, Sorenson Communications really has done a wonderful thing in supporting people who are deaf. And they--It's really a large part of their investment in service to deaf people. We appreciate that.

JONES: Well, if--if listeners would like to get more information about Gallaudet, what's your Web site?

DAVILA: Yes, that is [www.gallaudet.edu](http://www.gallaudet.edu).

JONES: And I can barely spell "Gallaudet," so we should let folks know [how].

DAVILA: Yes, that G--A--L--L--A--U--D--E--T.

JONES: Well, President Davila, thank you so much for your time and I hope you

enjoy your time here in Salt Lake City.

DAVILA: Oh, I'm certain that I will. Thank you very much.

JONES: And now about that pin--

*[Abrupt end of audio file]*

*[End of interview]*

<http://www.kcpw.org/article/2840>

AUDIO:

[www.gallyprotest.org/0020207davila.MP3](http://www.gallyprotest.org/0020207davila.MP3) (long version, 17:07)

[www.gallyprotest.org/020207davshort.mp3](http://www.gallyprotest.org/020207davshort.mp3) (short version, 4:26)

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posted by Gallaudet Protest Legal Issues | [10:03 PM](#)

1 Comments:

**Jim Casey said...**

Kudos to Bob Davila. He did all the right things, instead of taking the Diversity Fellows' plan to the Gallaudet Board of Trustees, he will present them to a representative group of faculty, staff, students, and teachers and challenge them to create an action plan that is owned by the community, and is sustainable and measurable in terms of performance and outcomes. He is the absolute right man to lead Gallaudet University.

Jim Casey

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