

Diversity Statement & Guidelines
Board of Trustees
May 2002

The Gallaudet University Board of Trustees hereby adopts the following statement on diversity.

Preamble

Gallaudet University is a unique institution. Chartered by the United States Congress in 1864 with the mission of offering higher education to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, it has since become a global leader of a distinctive community. Gallaudet's charge is even more important now. Just as the population of the nation has changed and continues to change, so too the population of deaf and hard of hearing individuals has changed and continues to change. Deafness is diverse and dynamic. Deaf and hard of hearing persons include people of all experiences and backgrounds.

Given its mission, Gallaudet University has a responsibility to an increasingly diverse deaf and hard of hearing population. Although every university must address diversity to survive, Gallaudet University must be prepared to do more. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals were long denied equal opportunity, solely because they were deaf or hard of hearing. Such injustice was often compounded by further discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and other aspects of personal identity.

Building upon more than a century of traditions, Gallaudet University will take an active role in providing genuine equal opportunity to all deaf and hard of hearing persons. Gallaudet not only acknowledges the problems of the past and responds to the practical circumstances of the present, but also understands that our shared future is guided by basic principles of fairness, mutual respect, and commitment to each other. The University will continue to strive to make its ideals concrete. Gallaudet will reach out, in the United States and around the world, to deaf and hard of hearing persons everywhere. Deafness knows no borders.

Gallaudet University as an institution embraces diversity. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are best served by reaching deeply and widely into their experiences. Just as they seek to be heard, so must we listen to those with different views and beliefs. A university especially has an obligation to be a place where all views can be shared freely and any belief can be discussed respectfully, allowing the exchange of ideas to flourish. Accordingly, Gallaudet will integrate diversity into every aspect of its operations.

This statement on diversity is only part of an ongoing process in which all members of the university participate. Gallaudet's excellence and survival depends on respecting, honoring and using the wealth of its diversity. The guidelines below are designed to frame university-wide efforts on diversity.

Guidelines

The Gallaudet University Board of Trustees recognizes that the pursuit of excellence is intertwined with a commitment to diversity at all levels. To advance toward excellence with diversity, we instruct the administration to implement these guidelines which address three broad areas of action: 1) student diversity and learning; 2) faculty diversity and teaching, research and service and 3) a strong, safe and just campus community. The Board of Trustees expects that the administration will use these guidelines and will develop additional means of accomplishing these goals.

- The Gallaudet student body will be reflective of the different ways that deaf and hard of hearing individuals live in society. The University will actively seek to recruit students of color, and students with different communicative pursuits as well as other dimensions of diversity and will endeavor to provide a supportive environment on campus for all students.

- In the next century, deafness as a condition will change. Our plans for the university cannot be limited to within our national borders; we must broaden our outlook to include deafness on a global scale, to welcome individuals from societies outside the US and around the world.

- The education of young deaf and hard of hearing children has always been a part of Gallaudet University's mission. Gallaudet will continue to promote students' fundamental skills including communication, literacy, science, mathematics and technology competence. Gallaudet is also committed to contributing to the well-being of our students, including strong emotional lives, an appreciation for cultural diversity, a sense of safety and justice, and support for their different life goals. The University is responsible for creating environments that nurture the development of young children into adults, and will recruit and support teachers whose skills make these environments possible.

- Gallaudet faculty will be recruited on the basis of excellence in scholarship and teaching. The University will endeavor to support the activities of faculty members toward this goal in a variety of ways, including but not limited to: creating post-doctoral fellowships for young deaf and hard of hearing scholars; providing institutional support for faculty research and for relationships with research bodies within and outside of the university; promoting professional development, including efforts to improve pedagogy; and recognizing academic service toward these goals.

- Gallaudet's commitment to excellence and diversity should extend to the recruitment and retention of students; selection and professional development of faculty and administrators; and the development of a pool of potential deaf and hard of hearing candidates for faculty positions at Gallaudet and elsewhere.

- Gallaudet recognizes that its students and faculty are supported by a broad network of staff and other support personnel, and will endeavor to promote diversity among all staff and support personnel, as their influence and reach into all aspects of the campus are broad and meaningful.

- Gallaudet recognizes a responsibility to gather and evaluate data showing both the progress that has been made and the work that is still to be done. Gallaudet will focus especially on generating data about the deaf and hard of hearing that does not exist elsewhere.