
Gallaudet University Education Unit Conceptual Framework (Philosophy)

Connection is at the heart of Gallaudet's education programs. At Gallaudet we emphasize that all of our professional work in deaf education is embedded in multiple contexts, and promote connections to and among these contexts. These contexts include: **Cultures, Communities, Families, Schools, Universities, and Professions**. Graduates of our programs are able to communicate with, respond to and build on lives in and out of schools to assure that all students learn to their highest potentials.

Deaf/ Hearing Worlds: An important goal at Gallaudet is creating connections among **deaf and hearing worlds**. Candidates at Gallaudet learn that “deaf”, “hearing”, and “hard-of-hearing” are not unitary, separate identities, but are complex and varied in language, communication and learning strengths and needs. Because connections are based in language and communication, these are a key focus at Gallaudet, both for our candidates, and for their students. While at Gallaudet, candidates learn about connections among people through classroom interactions, guest speakers, community service, and clinical experiences. Candidates leave Gallaudet prepared to be allies, advocates, and leaders in deaf education.

Local, National, and Global Perspectives: Gallaudet is an ideal environment for promoting connections among **local, national, and global perspectives**. Students come to Gallaudet from all over the United States and the world, and programs tap into the resources brought by our diverse and international students. We model a focus on “local”, or individual, through a holistic approach in which advisors and program faculty work closely with candidates beyond the classroom to promote personal and professional growth throughout the program. In class interactions, teaching, and content students learn to tap diverse perspectives as a resource for learning. When students leave Gallaudet, they go to an equally varied set of locations, cultures, and perspectives in deaf education. Language and communication, with the use of varied and multiple instructional strategies, are at the heart of demonstrating to and developing in our candidates the ability to teach for and learn from multicultural and global students.

Tradition with Innovation: Gallaudet's education programs also connect **tradition and innovation**. Gallaudet candidates learn from and build on the histories and heritage of multiple deaf communities and their larger cultures and communities. They do so while tapping state-of-the-art resources of the 21st century, including new knowledge in learning, linguistics, performance assessment, and deaf education. Candidates learn to make use of innovations as resources in their teaching, while valuing traditional resources.

Theoretical Practice: Gallaudet's programs teach **theory in practice, and practice that develops theories**. Theoretical practice begins from two foundations: personal/professional characteristics and a strong knowledge base in areas such as linguistics, child development, pedagogy, culture, and learning. We seek candidates with a commitment to becoming excellent professionals. Candidates must also have the power of a knowledge base that comes from both formal (in-class and field experiences) and informal (e.g., campus interactions, community service) program experiences. Theory and practice are woven together in Gallaudet programs enabling graduates to become theoretically-based practitioners.

Reflective Inquiry: At Gallaudet we value **reflection and interactive inquiry**. At the heart of reflective inquiry as an educator is the commitment to the profession, and to deaf education specifically. Reflection and inquiry into one's own practice, as well as the vast uncharted territory in deaf education, is a constant in programs through interactive discussions, case studies, video-taped practice, self-and peer assessments, and interactions with faculty who are breaking new ground in deaf education. A corollary to reflective practice during professional preparation is the commitment to life-long learning throughout one's career. Reflective inquiry and life-long learning allow our graduates to not only tolerate the ambiguity inherent in deaf education, but understand that it is a catalyst for further growth and development.