

Press Release

Monday, October 22, 2007

## CHE removes contradictory Fernandes quote from print version of article

Commentary:

The Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE) has removed a quote from Jane Fernandes from its online version of the October 16 article wherein Fernandes was directly quoted as saying that "current leadership embraces the use of ASL in a more monolingual context." Fernandes made the claim in a written interview with CHE reporter Paul Basken in an e-mail interview on Monday, October 15, 2007. The new form of the article is appearing in the October 26 print version of the CHE.

Fernandes' claim was obviously contradictory. It is impossible to characterize Gallaudet's [recognition of the general bilingual context at Gallaudet](#) as being "a more monolingual context." (For people unfamiliar with Gallaudet, it helps to know that ASL does not have a written form. All written work at Gallaudet is done in English, also all the textbooks are in English. Fernandes' claim was a definite faux pas on her part, which cannot now be undone.)

Two headings were also changed for the print version of the article: "Criticism of Academic Performance" in the original online article was changed to: "Academic Performance", and also the heading: "Controversy Over Deaf Culture" was changed to: "Deaf Culture".

The Chronicle is calling the print version a "new form" of the article and is not saying that Fernandes' quote was contradictory, but that it was cut for reasons of size limitations in the printed journal.

Here is the new form of the article below, with the old version below that:

NEW PRINT VERSION:

Link:

<http://tinyurl.com/3bzsrq>

From the issue dated October 26, 2007:

## **A Year After Turmoil, Gallaudet Sees Progress and Problems**

By PAUL BASKEN  
Washington

One year after student-led protests forced Gallaudet University to rescind a presidential appointment, some measure of calm has returned to the nation's only liberal-arts university for the deaf.

It is less clear, however, whether that calm will endure.

Gallaudet was visited earlier this month by a team from its accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which in July had placed the university on probation after finding it was out of compliance with eight of the organization's 14 standards, including those regarding leadership, integrity, and student retention. The protestors who ultimately succeeded in getting a presidential appointment rescinded may now be facing a more formidable opponent: an accreditor.

The accreditation team left the campus last week saying that Gallaudet had moved into compliance with only one of those standards: that concerning admissions criteria. Gallaudet still has "a long way to go to fully resolve all concerns of the commission," the university's interim president, Robert R. Davila, said in a letter to the institution following the visit.

But perhaps even more troubling, the visiting team warned Gallaudet that the central premise underlying recent revisions in its curriculum and mission statement - a strengthened emphasis on the use of American Sign Language - may be flawed.

The accrediting agency advised the university to "research and verify" as quickly as possible that there is a sufficient number of students who want to pursue a bilingual education in English and American Sign Language, Mr. Davila wrote.

That advice ties directly into the controversy that led Gallaudet's trustees last October to rescind their appointment of Jane K. Fernandes to become the university's new president.

"The protesters objected to my vision that Gallaudet needed to become an inclusive deaf university, where all kinds of deaf people are valued and respected," Ms. Fernandes told *The Chronicle* in an e-mail message. "The new mission seems to be aimed at creating the opposite kind of university - an exclusive one catering to those who grow up using ASL as their native language."

### **Deaf Culture**

Last year's demonstrations, one of the biggest disruptions of an American college campus in recent years, consisted of several weeks of student-led blockades, hunger

strikes, and takeovers of university buildings. The protesters cited a series of grievances with Ms. Fernandes. Most of those stemmed largely from the protesters' belief that she was an insufficient guardian of deaf culture, which in their view centers on the use of American Sign Language as the primary means of communication. That culture faces growing challenges in the wider world because of technological advancements such as cochlear implants and digital hearing aids. In the year since Ms. Fernandes's appointment was withdrawn, university leaders selected Mr. Davila to head the campus on an interim basis and made plans for giving students an extensive role in selecting a permanent replacement for I. King Jordan, who stepped down as Gallaudet's president at the end of last year. The university also brought aboard six new trustees and a new board chairman in the past several weeks.

And Gallaudet revamped its general-studies curriculum and rewrote its university mission statement for the first time in a decade to reflect the changes. The key change in the mission statement, the university said in August, is its "conscious declaration that Gallaudet University is a bilingual university, embracing both American Sign Language and English."

Students until recently have had to cope with professors with little knowledge of American Sign Language, said Brian K. Riley, a university graduate who helped organize the protests. "ASL was definitely not encouraged" under Mr. Jordan's leadership, he said.

That problem is now being remedied with the new mission statement and curriculum approach, said H. Dirksen Bauman, a professor in the ASL/deaf-studies department.

"The new mission is one which will commit the institution to supporting faculty members to increase their ASL proficiency and to do so with the recognition that it is directly tied to academic rigor and learning outcomes," he said.

That change in favor of American Sign Language is being incorporated into all courses, the university's provost, Stephen Weiner, said. Both students and faculty members "will have that understanding, so that will reduce the number of misunderstandings and the frustration," Mr. Weiner said.

### **Academic Performance**

Both the accrediting agency and a review panel from the federal government, which provides more than two-thirds of Gallaudet's \$150-million annual budget, have criticized academic performance at Gallaudet.

Universities need the approval of an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Education Department for their students to remain eligible for federal financial aid. Gallaudet students are eligible while the university is on probation.

In its main area of success to date, Gallaudet has raised its admissions requirements, Mr. Davila said after last week's visit. The accreditors told the university that the tougher admissions standards will mean a "stronger and more successful university," even if it causes a temporary drop in enrollment, he said.

Gallaudet reported a fall undergraduate enrollment of 1,080, down from 1,103 last spring and 1,206 in the fall of 2006.

When detailing the eight failing standards earlier this year, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education put problems with setting a mission and goals at the top of its list.

"There is great fragmentation within the Gallaudet community regarding its mission, leading to concerns about the mission's viability," it said at the time. "In particular, Gallaudet tries to be 'all things to all people' within the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, an aim that may not be viable."

### **Disputing Who's to Blame**

The university's past and present leaders are still trading charges of responsibility for the lingering turmoil. Gallaudet's previous leadership, which included Ms. Fernandes as provost, had been warned since 2001 about the need to meet updated standards from the accrediting commission and yet failed to act, said Carol J. Erting, the university's interim dean of the graduate school and professional programs.

The accreditors, when they received a five-year status report from the university, "took a look at it in May of 2006 and said, 'Um, what have you been doing?' basically," Ms. Erting said.

Ms. Fernandes disagrees, saying she and other administrators "took the recommendations of the MSCHE very seriously. We worked diligently on comprehensive responses."

Ms. Fernandes said that as provost, she had tried to balance English with American Sign Language, and now watches as the current leadership seems to focus too heavily on ASL.

That's a mistake, Ms. Fernandes warns. Deaf students need to learn American Sign Language for their cultural identity, but need to learn English to become "gainfully employed" and otherwise succeed in the outside world, she said.

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<http://chronicle.com>

Section: Money & Management  
Volume 54, Issue 9, Page A27

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Here is the old online version of the article:

From the Chronicle of Higher Education:

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

## **A Year After Protests, Gallaudet Sees Progress, but Key Dispute Remains**

By PAUL BASKEN

One year after student-led protests forced Gallaudet University to rescind a presidential appointment, some measure of calm is returning to the Washington, D.C., campus of the nation's only liberal-arts university for the deaf.

It's less clear, however, whether that calm will endure.

Gallaudet was visited last week by a team from its accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which in July had placed the university on probation after finding it out of compliance on eight of the organization's 14 standards, including those regarding leadership, integrity, and student retention.

The accreditation team left the campus last week saying that Gallaudet had moved into compliance with only one of those standards-that concerning admissions criteria.

Gallaudet still has "a long way to go to fully resolve all concerns of the commission," the university's interim president, Robert R. Davila, said in a letter to the campus following the visit.

But perhaps even more troubling, the visiting team warned Gallaudet that the central premise underlying recent revisions in its curriculum and mission statement-introduced in response to the commission's criticisms and the student protests-may be flawed.

The accrediting agency representatives warned "that because Gallaudet's mission focuses on bilingual education, with the assumption that sufficient numbers of students want to pursue a bilingual education, the university should research and verify this as soon as possible," Mr. Davila wrote.

That warning, about the wisdom of increasing Gallaudet's emphasis on American Sign Language, ties directly into the controversy that led Gallaudet's trustees last October to rescind their appointment of Jane K. Fernandes to become the university's new president.

"The protesters objected to my vision that Gallaudet needed to become an inclusive deaf university, where all kinds of deaf people are valued and respected," Ms. Fernandes told The Chronicle in an e-mail message on Monday. "The new mission seems to be aimed at creating the opposite kind of university—an exclusive one catering to those who grow up using ASL as their native language."

### **Controversy Over Deaf Culture**

Last year's demonstrations, one of the biggest disruptions of an American college campus in years, consisted of several weeks of student-led blockades, hunger strikes, and takeovers of university buildings. The protesters cited a series of grievances with Ms. Fernandes. Most of those stemmed largely from the protesters' belief that she was an insufficient guardian of deaf culture, which in their view centers on the use of American Sign Language as the primary means of communication. That culture faces growing challenges in the wider world, because of technological advancements such as cochlear implants and digital hearing aids (The Chronicle, November 10, 2006).

In the year since Ms. Fernandes's appointment was withdrawn, university leaders selected Mr. Davila to head the campus on an interim basis and made plans for giving students an extensive role in selecting a permanent replacement for I. King Jordan, who stepped down as Gallaudet's president at the end of last year. The university also brought aboard six new trustees and a new board chairman in the past several weeks, winning praise from student-protest leaders.

And Gallaudet revamped its general-studies curriculum and rewrote its university mission statement for the first time in a decade to reflect the changes. The key change in the mission statement, the university said in August, is its "conscious declaration that Gallaudet University is a bilingual university, embracing both American Sign Language and English."

Students until recently have had to cope with professors with little knowledge of American Sign Language, said Brian K. Riley, a university graduate who helped organize the protests. "ASL was definitely not encouraged" under Mr. Jordan's leadership, he said.

That problem is now being remedied with the new mission statement and curriculum approach, said H. Dirksen Bauman, a professor in the ASL/Deaf Studies Department.

"The new mission is one which will commit the institution to supporting faculty members to increase their ASL proficiency and to do so with the recognition that it is directly tied to academic rigor and learning outcomes," he said.

That change in favor of American Sign Language is being incorporated into all courses, the university's provost, Stephen Weiner, said in an interview on Friday. Both students and faculty members "will have that understanding, so that will reduce the number of misunderstandings and the frustration," Mr. Weiner said.

### **Criticism of Academic Performance**

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Universities need the approval of an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Education Department for their students to remain eligible for federal financial aid. Gallaudet remains eligible while on probation.

In its main area of success to date, Gallaudet has raised its student admissions requirements, Mr. Davila said after last week's visit. The accreditors told the university that the tougher admissions standards will mean a "stronger and more successful university," even if it causes a temporary drop in enrollment, he said.

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When detailing the eight failing standards earlier this year, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education put problems with setting a mission and goals at the top of its list.

"There is great fragmentation within the Gallaudet community regarding its mission, leading to concerns about the mission's viability," it said at the time. "In particular, Gallaudet tries to be 'all things to all people' within the deaf and hard of hearing community, an aim that may not be viable."

After last week's inspection visit, however, the accrediting agency warned of the possibility that too few students may want a bilingual education. The agency representatives based that concern in part on evidence of a poor overall "campus climate," Mr. Davila said in his letter.

### **Disputing Who's to Blame**

The university's past and present leaders are still trading charges of responsibility for the lingering turmoil. Gallaudet's previous leadership, which included Ms. Fernandes as provost, had been warned since 2001 about the need to meet updated standards from the Middle States commission, and yet failed to act, said Carol J. Erting, the university's interim dean of the graduate school and professional programs.

The accreditors, when they received a five-year status report from the university, "took a look at it in May of 2006 and said, 'Um, what have you been doing?' basically," Ms. Erting said.

Ms. Fernandes disagrees, saying she and other administrators "took the recommendations of the MSCHE very seriously. We worked diligently on comprehensive responses."

The university's descent into probationary status instead is related to the protests over her appointment as president, Ms. Fernandes said. "The resulting complete disruption to the academic enterprise," she said, caused the Middle States commission, "as well as other groups, to closely scrutinize all aspects of the university."

Ms. Fernandes said that as provost, she had tried to balance English with American Sign Language, and now watches as the "current leadership embraces the use of ASL in a more monolingual context."

That's a mistake, Ms. Fernandes warns. Deaf students need to learn American Sign Language for their cultural identity, but need to learn English to become "gainfully employed" and otherwise succeed in the outside world, she said.

The accreditors therefore are correct to ask Gallaudet whether it will find enough deaf students who will want to be educated in an environment dominated by sign-language, she said.

"Obviously this relates to the future demographic pool of deaf students in which currently 80 percent attend public schools, and 20 percent attend separate residential

schools. Each year increasing numbers of deaf infants receive cochlear implants," Ms. Fernandes added. "Many of these children will grow up without needing ASL and without exposure to it."

Current university leaders said they're confident that Gallaudet graduates will be able to find whatever jobs they want. Education Department statistics suggesting Gallaudet has a graduation rate of only 40 percent are misleading, Mr. Weiner said, because of the unusually large percentage of students who continue in graduate school rather than enter the job market.

"We don't have all the answers yet," Ms. Erting said, "but there's an engagement here that I have never seen in my 30 years of being at Gallaudet."

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SCREENSHOT OF OCT. 16 VERSION OF ARTICLE (Click on image to enlarge):

[http://gallyprotest.org/october\\_16\\_2007.gif](http://gallyprotest.org/october_16_2007.gif)