

GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Committee on Academic Affairs

February 7, 2019

Academic Affairs Highlights

Carol J. Erting, Provost

Shared Governance:

On October 31st, Gallaudet held its third annual Research Expo. This year, presentations and discussions focused on interdisciplinary teaching, learning, and research. The day began with a plenary session that included student research presentations and a keynote address by Dr. Randall Amster of Georgetown University, faculty coordinator for the Core Pathways initiative, part of Designing the Future, an innovative project that engages the Georgetown University community and experiments with new ways to deliver exemplary higher education. The title of Dr. Amster's presentation was "Core Strength: Addressing Complex Problems through Interdisciplinary Engagement." Dr. Ben Bahan, Professor in the Department of ASL and Deaf Studies and co-chair of academic programming for Gallaudet's Creativity Way, concluded the morning plenary session with a presentation about the University's interdisciplinary curricula and the planning that is underway at Gallaudet for emerging interdisciplinary knowledge studios.

Following the morning plenary session, more than 90 faculty, staff and students gathered in the Peikoff Alumni House for interdisciplinary roundtable discussions hosted by the president and the provost. The discussions addressed two complex challenges:

1. Early language acquisition in ASL and English for all deaf children birth to five years of age, and
2. Major redesign of the undergraduate curriculum at Gallaudet that is interdisciplinary, incorporates digital adaptive courseware, and is fully accessible utilizing ASL/English bilingual pedagogy.

Guiding questions were provided for each challenge, discussions were documented for each of the 9 tables, and major points were shared at the end of the day. *The Daily Moth* documented highlights of the Gallaudet Research Expo in this video:

<https://youtu.be/zIAjjFnDhNg>

The themes emerging from these substantive discussions were then used to guide planning for the two-day faculty governance retreat on January 16-17. The retreat included presentations by Dr. Janet Shope and Dr. Nina Kasniunas from Goucher College on Goucher's recent redesign of their curriculum and their restructuring from discipline-based departments to multidisciplinary centers. In addition, Dr. Dawn Whitebread from the Association of American

Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) gave a presentation on integrating global perspectives into the curriculum. The full schedule for the retreat as well as resource materials used can be found at:

<https://my.gallaudet.edu/faculty-governance/faculty-retreat>

Additional activities planned for the spring semester to continue dialogue and sustain momentum around curriculum redesign and academic affairs restructuring include a campus visit by external experts to review our General Studies Requirement (GSR) curriculum, scheduled for February 13-14. In addition, on February 27th, Dr. David Attis from the Education Advisory Board (EAB) will deliver a presentation entitled “Transcending Departmental Boundaries: The Case for Organizational Transformation in the Academy” followed by interdisciplinary faculty roundtable discussions. The provost and faculty leaders are planning presentations and roundtable discussions for March and April to continue to move these initiatives forward.

Academic Programs and Units:

The **Business Department’s Risk Management and Insurance** program continues to generate attention, and was recently recognized with a positive cover story in a leading insurance magazine:

<https://leadersedgemagazine.com/articles/2018/12/untapped-talent2>

Major donor and Gallaudet booster James Maguire was quoted extensively in the article, which, along with a video, highlighted the University’s RMI students and graduates.

The **Department of Government and Public Affairs** held a mock trial which integrated our deaf students with hearing lawyers in a trial setting. Undergraduate government students in Dr. Brendan Stern’s class also developed a clever “get out the vote” video that can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f4fsBDZVqM>

The **Center for Bilingual Teaching and Learning’s (CBTL)** ASL Language Development program continues to expand. During fall 2018, Our ASL Gatherings program averaged its highest attendance at its weekly ASL development opportunities to date. Each session averaged 8.3 participants, a 9.2% increase as compared with fall 2017. CBTL has created and monitored ASL Language Development plans for four new faculty members who are emerging signers bringing the total number of faculty with ASL Language Development Plans to 16. The Classroom Discourse Observation (CDO) analysis was revised to more effectively assess faculty use of ASL discourse in the classroom. The CDO program is also in the process of developing a bilingual resource manual. The CBTL director continues to serve as co-chair for the Bilingual Mission Framework Taskforce and that group work to develop the Bilingual Framework for the University.

Research:

Gallaudet University's **Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)** provides services and support to Gallaudet faculty and staff seeking external funding for research and training projects of benefit to the Gallaudet community and the world. During the recent government shutdown, affected agencies were not issuing new or continuation awards until after the shutdown concluded but fortunately the majority of Gallaudet's grants were approved for continuation well before the shutdown occurred. During FY2016 and FY2017, awards from federal funding plummeted to new lows, \$2,403,912 and \$2,173,043 respectively. Because of the groundwork laid by the OSP and the expertise of Gallaudet faculty and staff, over the past four years, new funding and a more diverse revenue streams in the way of federal, federal pass-through and industry performance contracts resulted in a significant increase to \$4,025,221 (\$3,496,360 in research related awards and \$528,861 in training, scholarships and various other types of awards) for FY2018. This fiscal year, so far, the OSP has submitted 10 proposals totaling \$6,303,958 and has received two awards for \$30,534. With regard to "validating and enriching bilingualism" on campus, the OSP worked with Dr. Deborah Chen Pichler, professor in the Department of Linguistics, to submit a grant proposal and a subcontract proposal to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and University of Connecticut (NIH) respectively. Dr. Chen Pichler's grant proposal to the NIH examines the degree to which early exposure to accessible but non-fluent ASL input from hearing parents can facilitate on-time linguistic development for young deaf children. Dr. Chen Pichler's work with the University of Connecticut, which was also submitted to the NIH, deals with assessing parents' vocabulary, phonological inventory and compares them to patterns a research group has observed for college-aged hearing students learning ASL as second language. The OSP launched its bilingual survey during FY 2017 in an effort to gather questions, concerns, and ideas from the campus community. Based on what we learned, the OSP established the Frequently Asked Questions section of the OSP website in 2018, which is currently in written English and will ultimately be presented in ASL. The OSP FAQs can be found at:

<https://www.gallaudet.edu/office-of-sponsored-programs/frequently-asked-questions>

The OSP, Research Support & International Affairs, the Institutional Review Board, and Graduate School and Continuing Education worked together over the past year to implement a new, integrated research and grants management tool, the Cayuse Research Suite. This joint effort will centralize and improve Responsible Conduct of Research training, proposal development and grants management and the tracking of compliance related training. With the implementation of Cayuse, CITI Human Subjects and Conflict of Interest modules will become more easily monitored and audited.

Dr. Poorna Kushalnagar, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and Director of the **Deaf Health Communication and Quality of Life Center (DHC-QoL)** and Dr. Zachary Featherstone, a postdoc fellow in the Deaf Health Communication and Quality of Life Center, are currently investigating whether early sequential bilingual acquisition and its cognitive correlates contribute to deaf patients' self-efficacy in managing their health later in

life. In a separate but related study, Dr. Kushalnagar is investigating whether the neuroprotective effects of bilingualism against early cognitive decline also holds for older deaf adults.

The **Petitto Brain and Language Laboratory for Neuroimaging (BL2)** team have completed the prototype for an ASL Signing Avatar-Robot-Thermal Imaging Language Learning Tool—the first of its kind in the world—which makes specific patterns (found only in human language) available to young deaf and hearing infants who have no useable access to a natural language. What makes this tool most unique involves the research science discoveries that the Petitto BL2 team first made in order to build the system: The learning tool provides these specific language patterns to young deaf and hearing babies within the specific time window when their developing brains must encounter these language patterns—ages 6-12 months old—in order for them to achieve optimal bilingual and reading success! Further, a specific scientific discovery that has received international attention—as well as the 2018 Best Paper Award from the international journal where the work was published—showed that bilingual infants (ages 6-12 months) exposed both to ASL and English from birth had fundamental structural brain changes to their visual processing and higher cognitive systems. In turn, these brain changes afforded these ASL-English Bilingual children advanced linguistic and cognitive abilities to attend to, and to track information, in the world around them. These remarkable brain changes, in turn, rendered these ASL-English bilingual infants with greater learning and memory abilities, greater language learning, and greater language production abilities. The surprise here is this: The ASL-English bilingual infants-exposed from birth (Group 1) outperformed the other two groups of children under investigation. In this step-wise manner, the ASL-English Bilingual infants (Group 1) performed best relative to, second best, the ASL-only-exposed infants (Group 2), and they performed better relative to the third (poorer performing) infants, English-only-exposed infants (Group 3). These Group 3 babies' performance lagged behind the other two groups of children. These findings are currently being further investigated and are the focus of our exciting new 2019 experiments!

Campus climate, diversity, equity, and inclusion:

Under the leadership of assistant professor Dr. Martreece Watson, the **Department of English** has created **ALLSTAR**, a study lab providing tutoring, mentoring, computer skills and academic support to developmental deaf students of color. ALLSTAR's mission is to strengthen comprehensive learning, to cultivate academic skills, to foster independence, confidence and to inspire lifelong learning of deaf, culturally diverse, students of color by providing mentoring and tutoring services in a collaborative, student-driven, learning environment that promotes student success, college/career readiness, enriching the student experience, providing tools to achieve students' academic and life goals. ALLSTAR's effort supports a rich multicultural and multilingual student body within an American Sign Language and English immersive environment.

On January 18th, Academic Affairs sponsored a **professional development week** presentation by Mr. Eric Deggans, National Public Radio's first full-time TV/media critic. The title of his presentation was "Building Bridges, Not Walls: Decoding Media's Confusing Coverage of Race, Gender and Difference" based, in part, on his book published in 2012 entitled *Race-*

Baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation. Eric Deggans has received numerous awards and honors including the Legacy award from the National Association of Black Journalists' A&E Task Force, an honor that is bestowed on "seasoned A&E journalists who are at the top of their careers." Mr. Deggans made his presentation to a full-house of faculty, staff and administrators. Plans are being made for a return visit to campus to interact with students.

This report has highlighted only some of the many accomplishments within the division of Academic Affairs from October 2018 through January 2019. I want to recognize with gratitude the faculty, staff, students, my administrative team, President Cordano and my colleagues on the Executive Team for their energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to our students and our mission of academic excellence. Our primary focus in Academic Affairs is on student success and our commitment to prepare all of our students for lifelong learning, success in the workplace, and responsible citizenship as members of the global community.