

**NTID: A Message From One President
to Another**

by

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Presentation to NTID Community

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INTRODUCTION

NTID faculty, staff, administration, students, National Advisory Group members, and others who are not from any of these groups: greetings and thank you for being here today. I know how busy all of you are and there are so many other places you could be right now. I hope these remarks are useful and will stimulate an enriching discussion among our most distinguished panel members.

The First Trip To Rochester

I am completing my 15th year, as you all know, at RIT. On our airplane journey to RIT from Hawaii for our initial set of interviews, Carolie and I spent most of the trip attempting to learn a little bit about deafness. Carolie was excitedly engaged in a book on deaf history and culture. I was experimenting with a book that dealt with American Sign Language. Carolie was enjoying her learning experience very much and, as I recall, I was pretty confused and perplexed.

Why did we spend our first trip to RIT in that fashion? Honestly, it was because the aspect of RIT that intrigued us the most was NTID. We had never heard of NTID before becoming acquainted with RIT. However, I had some early acquaintance with deafness.

Vincent

Growing up, one of my uncles on my mother's side had a sister who had a son – his name was Vincent – who was deaf. He was a few years older than I. I remember him well. We would have large family get-togethers and Vincent was always an integral part of them. Since I first knew him when I was very young growing up, it was always natural to see him there and to interact with him. I wish now – thinking back – that there was an NTID for Vincent in those days. On the other hand, since I am the first member in my large family to attend college, even if NTID were in existence, it probably would have been beyond his reach. Again, I think if only Vincent were born in a different time, how different it might have been for him and his family.

First Deaf Curriculum at the University of Hawaii

My second experience with deafness was much more recent. King Jordan, the current president of Gallaudet University, had visited a year before our initial Rochester trip to sign a university-to-university partnership with the University of Hawaii. I was president of the system of ten campuses on four islands and simultaneously Chancellor of the research campus at Manoa. One of our community colleges, Kapiolani Community College, was very excited about introducing a program in sign language interpreting. It was Hawaii's way to recognize and support individuals who were deaf in Hawaii. Since Hawaii is relatively isolated from mainland United States – the nearest land after you leave Hawaii (San Francisco) is 4 ½ - 5 hours away by airplane – this program had a real purpose and served a real need. I was extremely pleased with the concept because I saw the need it could fill and the people it could help. While King Jordan came over to sign the agreement, the groundwork had been laid by his predecessor at Gallaudett, Dr. Jerry C. Lee. In short, I had just enough acquaintance with deafness to be intrigued by the concept of NTID.

I tend to be experientially and analytically motivated. Carolie, on the other hand, is often motivated by instinct. As she read about deaf history and culture, she became enthusiastically inquisitive about learning more and, in fact, being part of the deaf community, if that were feasible. As you all know, it certainly has been feasible. Carolie has been an active member of the Board for the Rochester School for the Deaf, having served as its President from 2004 to 2005. She also has a better record than I in attending NTID extracurricular functions and has formally taken several ASL courses.

How did we prepare ourselves over the years to be part of the life of NTID?

Camp Mark 7

The first summer after Carolie and I moved to Rochester, we spent a week in an ASL immersion environment as live-in students at Camp Mark 7 in the Adirondacks, Old Forge, New York. My memory is clear in that regard. As we drove up that first night late in the evening (it was 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.), I asked Carolie to stay in the car while I went to the Reception Desk to find out where we would be staying. She asked if I needed any help, since she was more advanced than I, even at that time, in sign language. I said, "No problem". About 3 minutes later, I came back urging her to come forward and help me communicate who I

was and what I wanted to do. Once she was by my side, things went very smoothly.

I remember the first day. Absolutely no words could be spoken. Everything had to be sign language or – if you were in a real bind – you could write on a piece of paper. I remember that first night when Carolie and I finally got back to the bedroom at around 10:00 p.m. I immediately said, “Oh boy, now I can talk. I have never been quiet for so long in my entire life.” (Parenthetically, I note that my parents tried to get me to speak almost from the day I was born, and I have not been able to stop talking ever since, as many of you, to your chagrin, are well aware.)

Instead of voicing her response, Carolie shook her head and wrote me a note which said, “No talking.” So I spent that week not saying a word to my wife. Now that I think about it, at least from her point of view, it was probably not all bad.

However, I will make a confession right now before all of you. I did cheat. During coffee breaks, I would disappear into my car and I would call anyone I could think of – just to talk. It was not that I needed to hear anyone so much as it was for me to feel I still could communicate fluently. Of course, I did not know that many people in Rochester yet, so I am sure at least some of them thought it rather strange that I would call at odd times for apparently no real reason except to chat about something that was probably pretty irrelevant.

How did we gain the courage to spend a week in total ASL immersion?

Sam Holcomb

That is where Sam Holcomb, who was then an Assistant Professor of the American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Department at NTID, came in. Sam, who was deaf since birth and whose parents and brother are deaf, became my personal instructor. After a couple of weeks on the job in September of 1992, Sam and I would meet every morning at 7:00 a.m. at Liberty Hill for 1 – 2 hours of one-on-one tutoring. Carolie would sit in, absorbing much more than I. There were times when I had an unavoidable morning meeting – Sam accused me of deliberately scheduling these meetings so I could avoid him – and Sam would spend the time one-on-one with Carolie. She is a much more proficient signer than I, and I attribute a good deal of it to her work with Sam during these times.

To answer the question of how we generated the courage for ASL immersion in the following summer the answer is easy. Sam said to do it.

An interesting side point that I would like to share is the following. Several weeks ago, we celebrated the 10th year anniversary of Margaret's House, the RIT Child Care Center. One of the individuals who spoke to the group was Amy Holcomb. She was a graduate of Margaret's House, attending about the same time Carolie and I were learning sign language. Her daughter is now attending Margaret's House as a legacy student. Amy was a beautiful youngster and is an equal beautiful adult. Were it not for NTID, Sam and Barbara Ray would not be at RIT, their daughter and granddaughter would not be "graduates" of Margaret's House, and Carolie and I would not have had the pleasure of knowing them all. Sam's brother Thomas Holcomb, by the way, is a nationally known scholar, an RIT alumnus with a Ph.D. degree from the University of Rochester, and is a former member of NAG.

What does all this reminiscing have to do with my message to the next RIT president? I think it has a lot to do with it.

UNIQUE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Mr./Ms. President, the NTID community is unique in all of higher education. Of the approximately 4000 universities across the country and among universities, in fact, around the world, there is not one that has a fully organized, comprehensive college serving the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students the way that NTID does here at RIT.

In addition to its uniqueness, you will find, Mr./Ms. President, that this community is extremely vibrant, creative, and caring. It readily welcomes newcomers. It cherishes the opportunity to participate in the life of RIT and the activities that go on outside of RIT.

You can learn a lot about a culture that may be foreign to you. You can embrace and be embraced by it. You can contribute to it and make it better, and it can help make you better as a person and as a professional doing the job of the RIT president. You will find that the NTID family is brilliant intellectually and has a keen sense of humor.

I have found that while the culture is caring and respectful to others, individuals within it can be aggressive and extremely competitive. When one

realizes that the deaf culture exists within a larger hearing culture which often does not understand – and in some cases does not even care to understand – the characteristics of deafness, then obstacles and challenges are created which require an appropriate blend of aggressiveness and competitiveness.

My experience has been one of interacting with caring and respectful individuals who are brilliant, with a keen sense of humor, and –fortunately – appropriately aggressive and competitive when the situation (as it often does) warrants it.

Personally, Carolie and I have learned and gained a lot from our deaf friends and colleagues. You, as RIT's next president, have the same opportunity to learn and to contribute.

NTID PROFILE

Mr./Ms. President, you will come to know NTID well. NTID has 1,250 students. Fifteen years ago, 25% of these students were cross-registered in each of the other 7 colleges of RIT, majoring in mathematics, engineering, science, business, photography, and so on. Today, 45% are cross-registered. In addition to the 12 Associate Degrees awarded directly by NTID, NTID offers a Master of Science in Secondary Education, which is a program to prepare individuals to teach deaf students in mainstream schools. Four years ago, NTID initiated a Bachelor of Science degree in Interpreting Education. The NRS scholar that Carolie and I are sponsoring this year, Andreana Paoletta, is one of these students. She is a delightful individual with whom we had lunch two days ago. She is hearing, grew up with a number of deaf friends who motivated her to become an ASL interpreter. Her best friend and roommate at RIT is deaf, as are most of her friends at RIT. Her fiancé has learned sign language because of her. She has just accepted a full-time job at RIT as an interpreter.

Mr./Ms. President, NTID has a 95% placement rate for its graduates within one year in jobs related to their major field. There are 7000 NTID alumni around the world.

The NTID student body is national and international. Students come from all corners of the United States. For example, in 2006, 73% of the American students come from outside of the State of New York. They come from 47 states. In addition, 3.7% of the 2006 NTID students come from 12 foreign countries.

SCHOLARSHIP

NTID has some of RIT's top researchers. In the last three years, for example, NTID has published 189 books and articles and received \$23 million in foundation and government grants to support its scholarship. I do not include PEN-International here.

Recently, for example, Marc Marschark just received a \$1 million National Science Foundation grant to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and Harry Lang has completed his sixth book, which is a biography of former NTID Vice President Bob Davila. (Harry's book, which he co-authored with two others, will be available in late spring 2007.)

NTID has a significant global outreach. It is the model for deaf education within higher education internationally. For example, the NIPPON Foundation in Japan has generously committed to replicating the NTID model of education for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals internationally. Specifically, the Foundation has provided \$7.1 million so far to replicate the NTID model in Japan, China, Russia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Czech Republic. NTID is working with a sister university in each of these countries to help them implement the NTID model at their university. Former NTID dean Jim DeCaro is leading this effort.

In the field of art, NTID has an outstanding art gallery (the Dyer Art Center) to display the work of deaf (and hearing) artists. One of my favorite paintings, which currently occupies one wall in my office, is the work of deaf artist Chuck Baird, an NTID and College of Imaging Arts and Sciences alumnus whose work is displayed around the world. I have, with his permission, reproduced a number of smaller copies of the work and have notecards featuring it available for gifts. To me, the striking painting represents RIT, diversity, and deafness, all in one image. I look forward to showing it to you, Mr./Ms. President.

STUDENT LIFE

Mr./Ms. President, if you think NTID is great so far, you are just scratching the surface. The NTID student body has its own highly organized and effective Student Congress, an elected student body which represents the NTID students. It also has its own fraternities, sororities, and clubs. We have just completed a \$6 million CSD Student Development Center at NTID to enhance the sense of community at NTID.

Moreover, and most importantly, NTID student life extends comprehensively across the entire campus. For example, NTID students are integral members of hearing community clubs, fraternities, and sororities. In some instances, NTID students form their own deaf/hard-of-hearing organizations, and in other cases, they participate as members of primarily hearing organizations.

And NTID students rise to leadership positions. Do you know that the current President of the RIT Student Government is NTID student Liz Sorkin? Liz is a Film and Animation major. Did you know that two years ago, the student chosen, from the more than 3000 graduating students, to speak for and represent the entire student body at RIT's graduation ceremony was Stephanie Schubert? Stephanie was a 4.0 imaging science major within the College of Science. Like Liz, she is deaf.

Did you know that perhaps the best athlete in all of RIT's history was NTID student Matt Hamill? He majored in Electromechanical Technology. He was a heavy weight wrestler who was undefeated for four years in Division III and suffered only one or two defeats in his Division I matches, and those were at the hands of the NCAA Division I champion. Other NTID students have starred on the baseball, basketball, and other intercollegiate teams.

QUALITY THROUGH DIVERSITY

The most important way I know to build quality in an organization is to select students, faculty, and staff from the largest pool of individuals possible. When one selects from a pool of white males, one can select the best from that pool. If one expands that pool to men and women, often there will be a woman who is better than the best man that you can get, and you have improved the quality of the operation by expanding the pool in that fashion. When you expand the pool to people of color, often there will be a person of color who will be better than the best Caucasian woman or male that you would otherwise have been able to recruit. Again, the quality of your operation is enhanced.

Finally, when you expand the pool of the people from whom you select to include men, women, people of color, and deaf individuals, you now have the possibility of finding a deaf individual who may be better than any of the others that you might have selected. Quality is enhanced through diversity.

Mr./Ms. President, NTID provides opportunities for people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to receive a quality education at an outstanding university. As a consequence, NTID makes it possible for deaf people of considerable talent to realize their potential and, in this way, be incremental to the talent pool available. From a point of view of self-interest, by enhancing the quality and quantity of the candidate pool, the entire country benefits. There are resulting economic advantages of efficiency and competitiveness from which we all prosper.

Moreover, from a social point of view, there is the innate satisfaction that comes from knowing you have helped other human beings achieve their full potential so that they can be everything that their innate abilities, motivation, and work ethic make possible. What better way to go to bed at night than knowing that you, as president, have participated in this wonderful endeavor?

CATEGORY-OF-ONE

One of the reasons you came here, Mr./Ms. President, was to help RIT achieve status as a Category-of-One university. It could take 10 years to reach that status for the university as a whole.

However, I hope by now you will realize that, more than any other single program at RIT, NTID has placed us solidly on this path. Right now, RIT is clearly a Category-of-One university when one considers NTID in all of its dimensions, some of which I have alluded to already. No other university can compare to NTID in terms of its scope of activities, accomplishments to-date, and potential for the future. NTID is the most positively distinctive and differentiating feature on the RIT map. NTID is a firm building block for RIT's march towards Category-of-One status.

However, Mr./Ms. President, no job would be any fun without challenges. And, of course, RIT/NTID has its share. Let me turn to these next.

ACROSS CAMPUS INTEGRATION

As I have indicated already, NTID is very integrated in RIT as a whole. The 121 interpreters (plus four managers and one director) have a presence at almost every RIT function throughout the year. Major events when internationally-known individuals are on campus, graduation and convocation ceremonies, and events which fill up the Field House and our various auditoria sometimes will have a dozen or more interpreters hard at work. At the other end of the spectrum,

individual (one or two) interpreters typically are present at one-on-one meetings or small group meetings across the campus involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators. In between these large group and small group interactions, we have sign language interpreters and note takers in each class in which there are one or more deaf students.

Many hearing students take sign language courses in order to better communicate with their classmates. In fact, the very first thing I did when I organized the Office of the President was to ask for two deaf student assistants to work with the staff in the office. I benefited from the fact that my Administrative Assistant at the time knew sign language (that was Cathy Whittemore) as does my current Assistant (Karen Barrows). Immediately, the two secretaries who serve the Office of the President took sign language courses so they could communicate with their student assistants.

The Office of the President shares space with four other administrative officers, each of whom has their own Administrative Assistant. Guess what? All of the other Administrative Assistants on the 7th floor of Eastman Building started taking sign language courses so they could communicate with the deaf students on the floor. Of course, now that the Administrative Assistants knew sign language, the vice presidents and others reporting directly to the President on the 7th floor starting taking sign language courses. Nothing makes me more proud than to see everyone on the 7th floor interacting with our deaf student assistants. In fact, three days ago, I walked into the office of Lisa Cauda, our Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. She was in the midst of a dynamic conversation with Alan Hurwitz – with no interpreter necessary or present. You have the opportunity, Mr./Ms. President, to share a similar experience.

Having said all of this, more can be done. It is true that Campus Safety officers, Student Affairs personnel, and other individuals in other divisions across the university are required to know sign language in order to do their jobs. It is also true that a number of people who are not required, as part of their jobs or coursework, to learn sign language nonetheless elect to learn it. Nonetheless, more work – structured and non-structured, formal and informal – can be done to more fully connect and integrate our deaf and hearing communities. This is a work-in-process and unfinished business that I leave for you. You have a good start, but there still is ground to cover.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION AND DEAF CULTURE

NTID is committed to the concept of total communication. American Sign Language, Cued Speech, Signed English, C-Print, oral communication, and other forms of communication are all welcome and supported at NTID. The increasing occurrence of cochlear implants, continually improving technology to facilitate communication among individuals who are deaf, and the increasing number of deaf students who are mainstreamed in K through 12 education, offer challenges – which I believe are good challenges – to the early days of NTID.

It was simpler when the options were less. For some people, deaf culture was more precisely defined and, therefore, easier to navigate. Today, there are many more bridges between the deaf and hearing cultures and, on balance, I believe this is a tremendous benefit.

At the same time, it can bring about controversy around the issue of what is “deafness”? At one extreme, the answer is that there is no such thing as deafness because, with cochlear implants and other supportive devices and protocols, people (many, most, all) who are deaf can integrate fully and easily with the hearing community and, in fact, are considered part of the hearing community. For example, if someone wears eyeglasses, does that put them in a different community from those who do not wear eyeglasses? The analogy is if someone has a cochlear implant, does that put them into a community which is different from those who do not have cochlear implants? For people who raise these questions, they do not see or accept a separate deaf culture.

At the same time, we know there are many individuals who have grown up deaf and come from a family history of deafness. For them, and properly so, deafness is a separate culture and the deaf community is distinctive. They do not want to lose the history, tradition, and distinctiveness of the deaf culture which focuses as much as possible on the attributes and advantages of deafness.

Mr./Ms. President, you will have to come to your own conclusion on this most sensitive issue. For my part, I see it fairly simply (although I recognize I certainly am not qualified to speak authoritatively on this topic). For example, if an individual in the United States is born into a family of Italian immigrants, does that individual have to adopt the Italian culture only or the American culture only? I think not. The best – but maybe not the easiest – choice is to be part of both cultures simultaneously. Where it is appropriate to celebrate and enjoy, in this case the “Italian” culture, one can do so. Where it is appropriate to identify primarily

with the “American” culture, one can do that as well. In the process, a “blended” culture emerges which, in my view, captures the best of both.

We also have the example of the Amish people. Some individuals growing up in an Amish community continue to live in that community upon reaching adulthood, and that is their primary culture. At the same time, they have to exist in a non-Amish world and adapt to that culture as well. In this case, they are primarily Amish culturally, but have a working competence in the overall American culture.

A second individual can leave the Amish community and live in the American community. The individual can still return to his or her Amish family, participate in their celebrations, and retain many of their values and customs while, at the same time, living in a non-Amish community and raising his or her family in the mainstream American culture.

Finally, there could be the example of the member of the Amish community who leaves the community and never returns to it, totally immersing himself or herself in the mainstream American culture. That person is not necessarily a bad person. In fact, that person could be brilliant and possessing of the highest moral and ethical values. He or she just chooses one culture over another.

These are difficult questions. I do not know that you, Mr./Ms. President, need to be conclusive or definitive. Leaders in the deaf community still struggle with these questions. However, you do need to be aware of the issues.

This leads to the current most unfortunate situation at Gallaudet University. Some people attribute the difficulty to the cultural issue I have just broached. Others say it has nothing to do with that. I certainly cannot offer a judgment in that regard. However, I can offer you my best advice on a related topic which may be the most crucial element – at least in my judgment – to your success as the next RIT president. That element is the concept of shared governance. But first allow me to discuss the Gallaudet situation as an example.

GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

Perhaps the lesson of Gallaudet University is to try as hard as you can to never find yourself, Mr./Ms. President, in the position that Gallaudet president King Jordan and his Board find themselves today. They have made a decision as

to who will be the next president after King Jordan; this decision is totally rejected by a significant number of Gallaudet's students, faculty, and alumni.

The students have picketed and boycotted the university, and, as a consequence, have closed it down for days. The annual homecoming event which draws alumni and parents from all over the world to Gallaudet was cancelled several days before it was to occur. Well over 100 student protestors have been arrested. Students, faculty and staff have marched on Congress. Dozens of tents have been erected on the campus and around the country (including at RIT) protesting the decision. It is now reported that the Board of Trustees itself is split on what to do next.

These events pain me greatly since I identify so closely with the situation. King Jordan, who for 18 years has done a magnificent job as the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, in his last few months in office has had to preside over the situation I have just described. Unfortunately, as is often the case, his great contributions probably will be overshadowed by these recent events, and he will be remembered by many in these most negative and devastating terms.

The Gallaudet situation has been a front page and lead TV story for weeks. So many people are grieving. The grievants are not only students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni of Gallaudet. Hearing and deaf people who have no direct Gallaudet experience are also disconsolate. They have a love and affection for deafness and the deaf culture (however that is defined), and are saddened by the tremendously negative blows that this important institution of higher education is now enduring.

Mr./Ms. President, your vice president and dean for NTID, Alan Hurwitz, has spoken with me numerous times expressing the concern and real hurt he feels personally for everyone that is going through this at Gallaudet, and for every value that has been so carefully nurtured at Gallaudet and is now at risk. He truly grieves.

The current president of the RIT Student Government, Liz Sorkin, has spoken with me several times in a most concerned and pained fashion. She is upset. She is hurt. She is confused. Why is this happening? Importantly – and this is what troubles her most – what should she do?

She asked me what I could do and what RIT could do to help. For example, could we intervene in some way?

I responded that RIT as a whole or I could not intervene because we do not have all of the facts on both sides of the issue. Even if we had that information, it would not be appropriate for me or for RIT as a whole to intervene in the internal affairs of another academic institution. If that institution were to invite us to serve as counselor or mediator, RIT or I would be happy to do so. But in the absence of that request, it would be professionally improper for us to attempt to intervene.

I also advised Lizzie that, as an individual, she could take whatever action she felt was appropriate. I advised her, first of all, to be sure she had as much factual information as possible so she could make a decision which she truly felt was thoughtful, appropriate, and useful. If she wished to involve the RIT Student Government, she had to be sure that she had its authorization for such involvement. If she wanted to involve the NTID Student Congress, again, she had to be sure she was authorized by the Congress to speak for it. If she chose to act alone, certainly she could, since RIT fully supports freedom of speech and expression.

Lizzie asked if she could set up tents to express concern. I said she could engage in this or any other form of expression she wished on the RIT campus so long as the activity did not interrupt the educational activity of other students on campus, did not endanger the safety of individuals, and did not destroy property. She could consult with Vice President and Dean Hurwitz, Campus Safety, Facilities Management, and Student Affairs to receive appropriate guidelines. Once she had decided what her best course of action was, and assuming she followed these guidelines, I indicated that I would support her 100% in whatever she decided to do.

As you know, one of the things that Liz and her colleagues devised was the creation of orange and blue ribbons. Orange signifies RIT. Blue signifies Gallaudet. And the two together signify solidarity and mutual support. Liz sent hundreds of these ribbons to the student leadership at Gallaudet and distributed others to RIT student leadership so that they could all be worn at the same time at both places.

I will not get into the reasons that have been offered to explain why the students and faculty at Gallaudet feel as they do. Nor will I discuss the rationale for the Board of Trustees and King Jordan taking the actions and making the decision they have made. Nor will I discuss the statements of the president-designee regarding her resistance to resign. Obviously, I, like all of you, are watching these developments closely.

SHARED GOVERNANCE: THE KEY TO PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESS

The most important message I have for you, Mr./Ms. President, is, by all means, seek to avoid situations such as this. Shared governance is the key.

As I often describe it, shared governance is a commitment by the leaders at RIT – starting with the president – to be sure, whenever an important decision is to be made regarding an individual or a group, to inform the individual or group that a decision of significance for them is about to be made. Simultaneously with this announcement is a request for input regarding the direction the decision should take. In this way, the individuals affected by the decision have the opportunity to shape the decision. It is incumbent upon leaders to listen carefully to the advice provided. Next, after gathering all the input and performing the appropriate analysis with the relevant groups accountable for the decision, the leaders then inform the individuals affected by the decision what form the decision is likely to take, and give those affected one last chance to provide input. Again, the input is listened to and considered carefully.

At the end, the individual that will be held accountable for the decision makes the decision. Hopefully, most of the time the decision made will be favored by the majority of the people affected. There will be times, however, when the decision-maker undertakes action which a majority of those affected oppose. Hopefully, this will not occur too frequently.

However, although a majority of the people affected may not believe the decision is the right one, they will tend to support it – or at least not seek to undermine it. They will likely behave in this fashion because they know they were given the opportunity early on to influence the decision, they understand why the decision is being made (even though they may not agree with the reasoning), and they know that the decision has actually taken a different (and presumably better) form than it might otherwise have if they had not been given the opportunity to make input.

Mr./Ms. President, I found that I have not always been a popular president on a number of decisions made with a number of people. I also know that shared governance has led to better decisions than would otherwise have been made. In fact, there have been times when I have reversed myself totally and completely; even though I thought I knew everything beforehand, I found out that I really was not that well informed, that I had not thought it through as fully as I thought I had,

and I was thankful that I was able to avoid an error. Avoiding the error certainly improved the life of the university. Making the same decision but modifying it because of the input made for a better university. And even if I did not change my decision much from when I started, having people accept it and not undermine it made for a better university.

Coming back to the Gallaudet situation and certainly not making any value judgments, since I am not in a position to do so, I can raise some questions. Did they follow shared governance as I just described it? Were they as open in terms of listening and engaging in conversation, discussion, and debate as they could be? Did they share, from the very beginning and throughout the process, all of the information that was appropriate and relevant? I do not know the answers to these questions. I would just offer, Mr./Ms. President, that by attempting as hard as I could for 15 years to follow this philosophy, things have worked out fairly well.

Of course, there were times when I did not consult individuals affected by a decision because I made a judgment that the individuals concerned did not really care that much about the decision (it really was not that important to them); and I was wrong and I had to apologize. And there were times when I went ahead with my decision despite the advice not to, and while I received solid support from all those affected, it turned out to be the wrong decision; again, I apologized. I believe that most of the time shared governance enables us either to make the right decisions or put ourselves in a position to recover from those decisions that were not so good.

Mr./Ms. President, everyone has their own style. I would suggest that you consider this approach. I will point out that this approach was used when Bob Davila was hired as the first deaf Director of NTID and the first Vice President for NTID. My commitment to the search committee, composed of a number of individuals who were deaf and from NTID, was that we would look for the best qualified person, deaf or hearing. I asked them to support me fully if the best person, in my judgment after all the information was in, was a hearing person. I also promised to give full consideration to every qualified deaf candidate. We had a meeting of the minds on those guidelines. Bob Davila clearly emerged as the best individual. He happened to be deaf.

When Bob announced his retirement and we had to conduct another search, I informed the search community and the NTID community that as an organizational efficiency measure, I was going to combine the positions of Vice President and Dean. Again, we would seek the best person available, hearing or deaf. The

search committee agreed to support my decision, which ever way it turned out, and I agreed to give every qualified deaf candidate a full hearing. The best person clearly in this search was Alan Hurwitz. He happened to be deaf.

Mr./Ms. President, the most important tool you will have in order to be an effective leader is the trust of the people you lead. I submit that shared governance is perhaps the single best way for you to achieve that. You will receive the benefit of the doubt because this is a caring community at NTID and at RIT.

However, you will have to earn their trust. Once earned, you can climb mountains. You can move RIT from good to great. You can help RIT achieve its status of a Category-of-One university.

CONCLUSION

Mr./Ms. President, I have said my job as president at RIT is the best job I have ever had. I have said that the best place that Carolie and I have ever lived is the Rochester community. These statements are true and genuine.

Much of the reason for our great love of this university and community is because of the unique existence of NTID and the deaf community of which it is a part. You are very fortunate to have NTID as part of your responsibility and opportunity. If you use it well, it will use you well. In many ways, what happens at NTID – its programs, outreach, students, faculty, staff, administration, and National Advisory Group – can help make this the best job you have ever held, just as it did for me.

Congratulations and good luck.