



27 March 2008

President Davila:

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome again to *Bob's Vlog*. Last week, Gallaudet was closed for spring break. We know that many people took off to different places to enjoy their break. Some young people went to beaches in the south where it was warm, basking in the sun and enjoying themselves. Others stayed here because they had to catch up on their homework, their required coursework, and so forth. Others involved themselves in community service activities to help other people. Whatever these different groups or individuals did, I hope they have all come back feeling rested and ready for the remaining six weeks of the semester. Also, I need to let you know that a number of our faculty and staff did not leave, but stayed on campus working very hard to get ready for our Middle States Commission on Higher Education review visit scheduled this coming April 14 and 15. That requires a report to be given to MSCHE by April 1. So, we're actively working to complete our report and be ready to submit it very soon. Later, I will have more information to share with you about that MSCHE visit which is already scheduled. I am looking forward to that. Other people on campus have also been busy planning for a variety of activities that are

focused on student needs, for example, planning special events. We have a number of events happening between now and graduation on May 16. And, we also have a number of lectures, speeches, and visiting guests coming here to share their experiences and knowledge with students. So, there are many things on our calendar between now and the end of the school year. We encourage you to look at our website and read our *Daily Digest* email that is sent out every day to get more information about what is happening on campus. That's the best way, really. To know what is happening on campus at any time, look at the *Daily Digest* every day.

Now, I want to focus this morning on a very special purpose. Recently, I went to a meeting of the presidents of the 15 colleges and universities here in the Washington, D.C., area that make up the *Consortium of Colleges and Universities*. That consortium was established in 1964, and was really intended to give the local college members an opportunity to share information, help each other, share ideas, and solve group or community problems or issues. That group meets monthly, and I go and learn a lot about what is happening at other colleges and universities. At a recent meeting, a very important topic was discussed that had to do with campus emergency preparedness. You know what happened before at Virginia Tech University and at Northern Illinois University. Those were awful emergencies where many students were severely hurt and some died. Colleges are trying to find ways that they can prepare themselves for a response to that kind of terrible event, if that were to

happen. So, this morning I am very pleased to have with me Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens. She is chair of Gallaudet's Crisis Leadership Team. That team has representatives from different groups on campus that come together and meet regularly to look at how Gallaudet can become more responsive to emergencies, problems, or issues that we may face that could be potentially dangerous to our students. Dr. Batten-Mickens has a lot of experience in matters related to group security, and is also executive director of Gallaudet's Department of Public Safety. She has been working at Gallaudet for eight years, and for the last three years has been director of our Facilities division as well as DPS. It's really a pleasure to welcome Dr. Batten-Mickens. She does not have a name sign, but she is known to us as Mel because like me, Bob, her name has only three letters. So she goes by the name Mel.

Mel, I'd like to welcome you to this edition of Bob's Vlog.

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

Thank you.

President Davila:

We are here to have a discussion with you and to give our audience as much information as possible about how Gallaudet is preparing itself to respond to emergencies if such terrible things should happen in the future. And I want to ask you some questions, but first I want to welcome you to *Bob's Vlog* and have you meet our audience.

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

Thank you. Thank you for asking me to join you.

President Davila:

We are very happy to have you here. First, I would like to begin by asking you, can you tell us about the communication system development that you have overseen on campus, especially with regard to communication in times of an emergency? How do you go about communicating with so many young people here on campus?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

The good thing is that we work with ITS, Information Technology Services, and working with them has helped us to develop a *Gallaudet Alert* system. All of the Gallaudet emails automatically receive that “subscription.” Then when we have an emergency, our communications office at the center distributes the information to anyone who sets that up on their email. Plus, we encourage people to set up their BlackBerries, cell phones, any communication unit they have then, when there is an emergency, we can communicate specific information to them. Also, we have the *D.C. Alert*. We work with the D.C. Emergency Management Agency to set up what they say are “neighborhoods.” Click on the University’s name when you go to *D.C. Alert*— and that information is on our DPS website. You can select that “neighborhood” information and then find out specifically what is happening around Gallaudet. Or, even if you live in D.C., you

can select your specific area. So, the communication technology is one part of the communication. We are always evaluating a variety of different kinds of communication – visual communication, adding message boards, and communicating over the TV system - so we are incorporating many different kinds of ways to communicate.

President Davila:

It's wonderful to know that we are now moving ahead in trying to set up a system that will work successfully if it's needed. Also I want to ask you, what are we doing to create more effective communication to the campus from outside - for example, Homeland Security, the Fire Department, the police in the Washington, D.C. area, or others from the outside - trying to reach Gallaudet? They are talking to or addressing a group of people, most of whom are deaf. What are you doing to improve their ability to contact us?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

It's a very important and wonderful question. As public safety officers, we are building bridges to communicate more about how to communicate with our community. It's a different approach, so we're working with MPD, the D.C. Fire Department, and Homeland Security. We meet with them once or twice a month to communicate what's happening here. We invite them here to tour the campus. We've set up a variety of training programs. The officers who are first responders go to the national incident information management system training just to get some exposure to a variety of emergency

situations and how to handle that. We are working with the Department of Health's Emergency Services. Our Field House is set up on a list to be a strategic national stockpile for medicine if there is an emergency, so we are working with a variety of groups in D.C. And then next, on the federal level, we have contacts with the JTTF, that's the Joint Terrorism Task Force, with the FBI. So, we communicate a variety of things – a variety of information is shared with departments and agencies outside to understand how we communicate with the community. It's a time for us to learn more about what they're doing and what we're doing here.

President Davila:

That's very good to know also. Tell us about the evacuation plan that we have in place. How do you describe how it works, and how are you communicating that to everyone?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

Okay. There are a variety of different levels of evacuation. For example, if there is a fire in a building, we focus on that building. We communicate over email, TV, and pagers. Information is shared with floor captains. Those are volunteer people who help us in times of emergency. That would be one level. Those people would be communicated with to tell them what is happening, what to do, and then follow up messages. If it's a larger building or a building evacuation, those people are told specifically what to do - and then a quick message about where to go on campus, maybe the Field

House or the Conference Center, depending on the situation. If it's a larger issue where we need to evacuate the campus, then we work closely with D.C., with their response plan, which is the framework to help us leave D.C.

President Davila:

It's good that you are preparing our campus to face an emergency. That's really a high priority for all colleges and universities all over the country right now. I mentioned before that I was at a meeting of the presidents of the colleges of the consortium and I could see clearly that nothing is a higher priority than that. Also for us here at Gallaudet, it is especially important to know what to do and how we can prepare to deal with an emergency. What do you see as being the responsibility and the need for all members of our campus community to know and be able to do in case that happens?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

In working with the consortium chiefs and emergency managers - we also meet monthly, the same as the presidents do - we have time to share information, what's working and what's not working. So, we primarily encourage people to focus on setting up an emergency plan individually and then communicating that plan with your co-workers, your friends, and your family. Set up a time to understand what your building is about at work, what's happening in your area, your surroundings, and your neighborhood. Communicate more about yourself - if you have a special health concern, communicate that with

your neighbor. It is more about taking time to understand what's happening around you. People in the community can help us as an extra set of eyes to see what's happening. Public safety officers can't be everywhere all the time, so we are setting up and building more *Team Gallaudet*. It really is vital for people to understand that they can help us help them, more and more every day.

President Davila:

That's good to know also. As you know, we are planning to participate in the same type of training as other colleges and universities. The first step in that training is to establish a tabletop exercise, followed by a full simulation drill under "real" conditions. What do you see us learning from this experience, and maybe you can expand on and explain a little bit more about that process?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

The activity planning is a large process for planning the strategy and what the expectations are. I believe the most important part of that is for the outside community to understand how to communicate inside Gallaudet. So the communication part, I believe, is going to be very important to learn how to do that. The planning - it takes six to eight months to plan that. You have to script out everything. You include MPD, the variety of consortium public safety, the Department of Health, Homeland Security, the D.C. Fire Department, a variety of agencies outside to support because you are not going to know what's going to happen. Inside, we'll work to set up the tabletop to

include faculty, staff, students, the Crisis Leadership Team, and you. It's very important, and I appreciate the time that you are taking to discuss this because people only think about emergencies when it is an emergency. So if we plan and have discussions about the situation before, it will help us when a situation hits.

President Davila:

Thank you, Mel. Lastly, let's talk a little bit about our students and their parents and families at home. What is the plan to communicate with parents in the event of an emergency? What are some things that students and families themselves can do to better prepare themselves?

Dr. Meloyde Batten-Mickens:

The parents and alumni also can set up, or sign up, or register for the *Gallaudet Alert*. Also, DPS works closely with PR, our Public Relations, to communicate more official documents about situations. There are mailers that go out. Students themselves can just communicate with their parents to let them know that they are okay, because there may be a situation where they have to stay in place, say, stay in their dorms. Just communicate with their parents, say "I'm okay. The university is letting us know what is happening." Sometimes the information is not shared as quickly as most people would like, but just remember that there is a large group of people in the background working to develop communications that are important, specific, and accurate. What we tend to do is set up the

first message with a time and a date, or the #1. Follow-up messages may have the time, the date, and #2 because different pagers or emails arrive at different times, so a person may receive a message late and ask, “What’s that?” So, communicating more, reviewing the messages, and just being a little patient when a situation is in crisis.

President Davila:

Thank you, Mel, for joining us today. You have shared with us valuable information. We want our audience, we want our parents, families, and students to know that preparing for emergencies and responding to the needs of our students is the highest responsibility and priority we can have on this campus. We continue to look at how we can improve our ability to improve communication, to head off problems, to protect our students, and to do things that will save us from a lot of concern later on. So, we will continue to work on this.

I want to thank everyone for joining us today. I really feel much more comfortable about the way that our University is developing so much focus on different issues and different areas that are all important to the safety, to the welfare, and to the future of our students. So, thank you for joining us. If you have any questions or anything, feel free to write to us and we will respond. Thank you very much for joining *Bob’s Vlog* today. I’ll see you again soon. So long!