



June 19, 2008

President Davila:

Hello, I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome to Bob's Vlog once again. Today, I have three seniors from the Model Secondary School for the Deaf. This Friday, the MSSD Class of 2008 will graduate. Please join me in congratulating these people on their success. You know that graduating from high school is an exciting time and I'm looking forward to learning about the students visiting with me this morning and knowing their plans for the future.

I'm honored to have with me today, Rikki DiMaria. She is the senior class president. She is from Vermont and was here for the full four years at MSSD. Also with me is Ryan Hastings. He is the graduation speaker. He is from Massachusetts and transferred to MSSD from the American School for the Deaf two years ago. The third person I have here is Lateefah Patterson, a senior who earned the right to attend the GLOBE 2008 learning expedition in South Africa based on her research project. She is also the valedictorian of this year's graduating class and is a transfer student from New York.

GLOBE stands for, “Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment,” GLOBE. It is a worldwide hands-on elementary and secondary school based science and education program. GLOBE’s vision promotes and supports students, teachers, and scientists to collaborate on inquiry based investigations of the environment and the Earth system, working in close partnership with NASA and the National Science Foundation’s Earth System Science Projects in study and research about the dynamics of earth’s environment.

GLOBE began operations on Earth Day 1995. Today, the international GLOBE network has grown to include representatives from 110 participating countries and 138 U.S. partners coordinating GLOBE activities that are integrated into their local and regional communities. Due to their efforts, there are more than 40,000 GLOBE-trained teachers representing over 20,000 schools around the world. GLOBE students have contributed more than 18 million measurements to the GLOBE database for use in their inquiry-based science projects. GLOBE brings together students, teachers and scientists through the GLOBE schools network in support of the student learning and research. That’s a very impressive achievement on the part of Lateefah. I’m really proud to have her here today.

I want to start by talking to the students and asking some questions. I have one question I want to ask all three of you. I’ll start with you, Ryan Hastings. How do you feel about graduating? How is it? Are you excited?

Ryan Hastings:

Awesome. You know after 13 years, from kindergarten to twelfth, plus a fifth year, I feel like it's really time to start a new chapter in my life. I'm ready and excited for it.

President Davila:

Wonderful. What about you, Lateefah?

Lateefah Patterson:

There are only three days left to graduation and I'm excited and nervous. I know once I graduate, I have to be prepared for the real world. That's just amazing to me.

President Davila:

I understand that feeling. And you, Rikki?

Rikki DiMaria:

Of course I can't really describe it, but I feel nervous and, at the same time, so excited for this.

President Davila:

Oh, wow! Okay, but I also have another follow up question. Tell me a little bit about your plans after graduation. What are they?

Ryan Hastings:

I'll go to Gallaudet in the fall and will major in something related to medicine, perhaps, specifically athletic training – and on the side, during my free time, I'll also play baseball for the Gallaudet team.

President Davila:

And Rikki, please share with us some ideas about your plans after graduation.

Rikki DiMaria:

I'm going to Gallaudet in the fall and I want to get a master's degree in social work, and I wouldn't mind working with deaf people.

President Davila:

I surely look forward to seeing you here also. That's great.

Lateefah, I have three questions for you because of your success with the GLOBE program. I hear that you will be doing something very exciting after graduation. Tell us. Explain a little bit about that.

Lateefah Patterson:

On June 20 I'll graduate, right, then that same night I'll fly to South Africa for two weeks. The trip is two weeks, not the flight! For the first week I will be with the GLOBE program, and the second week I will enjoy seeing and learning about South Africa, its history and background. I'm not going alone to South Africa. I'll go with another

student from MSSD who graduates this year, Kelsey Wessman, the Earth Systems science teacher from here at MSSD, Ms. Ellsworth, and from the Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD) Mrs. Huckleberry and two other boys there, Tyler Crace and Joshua Self. We all worked together researching comparisons of “green up” of the Earth in the same locations, I mean the same latitudes of Indiana and Washington, D.C. So, we basically compared two different kinds of trees, the crab apple and the silver maple. That’s why GLOBE selected us because they felt it was amazing that both schools worked together to research the same trees and that both had the same latitude. We studied which trees, those in Indiana or in Washington, D.C., would first burst into bloom based on geography and location.

President Davila:

Wow, that sounds really exciting! Those are wonderful plans. It’s good to know that you will be with some of your classmates and some people from the staff of MSSD and other schools. Wonderful. Can you tell me how you were selected for that important responsibility?

Lateefah Patterson:

Before we participated in GLOBE, Kelsey and I worked on our research. Then we got an award from NTID. Then Indiana joined us to do comparisons of the two types of trees. Then we wrote up the research and it was really hard work! We had to put it all together,

including graphs and everything, and type it all up. Then we sent the report to GLOBE and we waited. On July 1, it was announced that we had been selected to go to South Africa and we were so excited, but also it involves the other school coming too. I'm looking forward to that.

President Davila:

I imagine there's a lot of preparation you have to go through before you arrive there. What are you doing to get ready for that?

Lateefah Patterson:

Now we are working on the Power Point because we have to present our research, basically a summary of what we did, so that's what we're doing now. We'll do that presentation in South Africa.

President Davila:

Wow. I'm sure that this experience will influence your decision about what you want to do in the future. Has that happened?

Lateefah Patterson:

Well, that may influence my decision in the future because some day I may be a scientist. I haven't decided.

President Davila:

Well, I really hope that happens. That's really wonderful. It's good to have goals and I think you have started off very well. I'm happy and

proud of your achievement. Good. Tell us a little bit about what you envision for the future for yourselves. What do you plan to do, your goals, your career and how you're preparing for that? Tell me a little bit about that.

Rikki DiMaria:

I envision myself as maybe a social worker or a school counselor. I want to work in a school for the deaf in the future.

President Davila:

That's good. You have a decision and you are following up on that. I think that's a wonderful way to begin. That's good. Ryan, tell us a little about yourself.

Ryan Hastings:

In the future, I want to work in the medical field, maybe as an athletic trainer or go to med school and maybe become a doctor. I'm interested in that.

President Davila:

That's amazing. That's really a wonderful thing that young people now can dream like anyone else and reach the place where they want to go. Many things are now possible. That's good. But I also want to know, and ask a follow up question to Rikki and then Ryan. How did you decide to select social work?

Rikki DiMaria:

I've always liked working with people. I like helping people and I realized that since a lot of deaf people need help, I'd do social work and counseling.

President Davila:

That's good. It's related, obviously. Ryan, how about you?

Ryan Hastings:

Last year, as a senior, I had a requirement for my senior project to select a research topic and write a 10-page product. I selected athletic training because I like both sports and medicine combined. I wanted to see if this would be a good career in the future for me. I spent a full year researching, all of last year, and yes, that interested me a lot and it also increased my interest in medicine.

President Davila:

That's a wonderful way to explore possibilities for the future and then make a decision. Many people later on may find new challenges or new interests and make changes. That's okay, but it's important to have something to guide your planning. That's wonderful. I'm very proud of that. Rikki, how are you preparing yourself for that major?

Rikki DiMaria:

As senior class president, I had a lot of responsibilities because I worked together with different seniors of different backgrounds and adults, too. And I realized, yes, I want to work with people.

President Davila:

I really think that's important because social workers must really love interacting with people, relating to and helping them, reaching out to them and so forth, and you've already demonstrated that you are interested in doing that. That's a good beginning. I congratulate you on that. What about you?

Ryan Hastings:

I grew up playing sports. Athletics made me interested in wanting to do something with sports and, then, I got interested in medicine too. So, the two are combined in athletic training. That made me want to take AP classes in high school – to prepare me for college with challenging courses. I feel I can and I'm ready to move forward with my major.

President Davila:

That's good, and I want to ask one question to the three of you. How has MSSD helped to prepare you for the point where you are now, close to graduation and preparing for college and other events down the road? How has MSSD helped you to arrive here?

Rikki DiMaria:

MSSD has offered many things, like student development organizations. I've been involved in a lot – as a peer mediator, a peer health advocate (PHA) and junior NAD. Also I was class president, so I worked with many different people.

President Davila:

That's good. I want to ask you, Ryan, how did MSSD help you?

Ryan Hastings:

I transferred in from my old school. At the old school, I'd go home on weekends, so I was still with my parents. Here, I'm independent. On weekends I have to be on my own. I have to wash my clothes. I have to budget my money. I have to manage my time for homework and classes and everything so that I'm prepared for college. So, I got ready for my future by being independent, more independent than I was.

President Davila:

That's an interesting view, but obviously it worked for you. I'm happy to hear that. Lateefah, I want to ask you also, how did MSSD help you to have this great achievement of being selected for GLOBE and chosen to go to South Africa?

Lateefah Patterson:

MSSD helped me with a lot of things. I was happy that I was involved with GLOBE, too. That will enrich my experience for the future. And, when I first transferred to MSSD, I was a lot more quiet and shy and stayed to myself, but later on I became more social with other people and more involved in things. I was involved with sports, in track in the fall and with dancing in the winter. I was involved as a peer mediator. I liked that. I like to interact and to listen to people, too. Also, MSSD provides AP courses and I was happy to be able to join those. I learned a lot from those classes.

President Davila:

You have a wonderful list of things that you mentioned. I'm happy to hear all of that. Ryan, you will be the graduation speaker. That's a wonderful honor and achievement. What will be the focus of your speech?

Ryan Hastings:

I will focus on the Class of 2008 and their future. I want to encourage them to take risks. Risks don't have to be bad. There can be good risks. That helps you take action to move up in your future. So I'm telling them to take risks and be yourself.

President Davila:

I think that's a great theme. You're right. I agree with your view. Sometimes we just have to try, no matter how hard or how risky

things may be because the result that comes of it is a good one.
That's wonderful.

Lateefah, you are valedictorian. That's also a great honor. Suppose new freshmen coming in the fall to MSSD approach you and tell you that when they are seniors, they want to be like you. They want to be valedictorian. What advice would you have for them to help them reach that goal?

Lateefah Patterson:

If you want to be valedictorian when you are a senior, if you want to make it, then you have to set goals for yourself. And then, during school you have to work and study hard. Of course, you have to balance that with fun, too. And, I think it will be much easier if you get along with peers, and teachers and faculty. I think it's most important to stay optimistic and strong, no matter if bad things happen to you. If you stay positive, you are more likely to be successful.

President Davila:

That's good. That's very good advice. It's been really inspiring to hear your plans for the future. You've explained something about your experience as MSSD students, and now you are nearing the time when you will go to college. You are taking on more personal responsibilities for yourselves. I am sure you will be successful because you are already demonstrating good characteristics, and

good habits of independence, and being in activities and all of that. That's wonderful. My advice to you is to keep that up.

I think we will close our program by saying to our audience that I'm really inspired to be here on this campus and see students like we have seen today because we really have a strong commitment to helping young people to be the best they can be and to maximize their potential. That is demonstrated in these three people who have done very well. I think it will be exciting to be with them for a few more years when they are students, and I wish them the very best after graduation. Thank you very much for joining us today. We will be visiting with you again soon. Thank you. So long!