



May 21, 2001

Ms. Jean Avnet Morse  
Executive Director  
Commission on Higher Education

Dear Ms. Morse:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit an institutional response to the final report from the Middle States Association evaluation team. The members of the evaluation team, chaired by Dr. Earl S. Richardson, visited the campus April 8 – 11, 2001. I am very impressed with the ability of this team, in a short time, to define clearly several key areas of concern for Gallaudet University. Overall I found the report to be generally balanced and supportive of the University's ongoing efforts to meet current and future challenges.

Two of these challenges include the special topics of technology and student assessment and outcomes, selected as areas of focus for our Self-Study. In addition to addressing these, the evaluation team made inquiries into other areas impacting the University including, Organization, Administration and Governance; Faculty; and Planning and Resource Allocation. When I received the final report from the evaluation team, I circulated it widely on campus in order to solicit input to help with the development of the institutional response. Many areas in the report did not generate any significant response from the campus, and I will not mention them in this letter. Some areas, especially Organization, Administration and Governance, did generate a number of very strong responses. I am including below, therefore, information based on comments received regarding some of the topics addressed which seem to have the most potential to impact the future success of the University.

#### Organization, Administration and Governance

The campus community in general agrees with the MSA team that the recent administrative restructuring reflects a model for the streamlining of decision-making. Also the notion that the "convoluted" faculty governance structure could benefit from a serious discussion about streamlining is one with which many faculty members could agree. However, the statement in the report that the current faculty governance system "undermines the legitimate authority of the President, Provost, Vice President and deans" has elicited a sense of shock and incredulity. Several faculty members expressed the view that it would be helpful to know the basis for making this statement. The interrelationships of the Board, administration and Faculty are always in the process of being further refined and the comments of the MSA team on the issues of organization, administration and governance may be a useful catalyst in helping us to revisit some of our structures.

Early in my presidency I established a Task Force on University Policy made up of representatives from the Board of Trustees, the University Faculty and the administration. One outcome of this group was to decide areas of responsibility/authority for each of the discrete groups in a system of shared governance. Another very important outcome was the agreement by all parties that Gallaudet will operate within a system of shared governance. Much institutional progress has been made since that time, and shared governance has become the basis of faculty-administration decision making. In light of the MSA team's observations, now may be an opportune time to reconvene a body to examine how the University can respond to change more nimbly. While there is irony in suggesting yet another deliberative group, if it does its work quickly, this could lead to a very positive outcome.

#### Faculty

With regard to the suggestion that we consider special opportunities and incentives to deaf faculty seeking graduate degrees, the campus community certainly agrees. The educational advancement of deaf and hard of hearing faculty is and will continue to be Gallaudet University's highest priority. The University must seek multiple ways to achieve this goal. The evaluation team may not have been informed about one program that helps to address the issue of recruiting future deaf and hard of hearing faculty to Gallaudet University. The President's Fellows Program was designed to strengthen the numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students pursuing graduate study. Now in its third year, the program recruits deaf and hard of hearing students pursuing graduate degrees at other universities, offers them teaching experience at Gallaudet, and pays them a stipend with the goal of recruiting them to Gallaudet when they complete their graduate training. To date, there have been three fellows, one of whom just accepted a tenure track appointment in the History department.

#### Curriculum

There is widespread agreement with many of the suggestions in the section on curriculum. The report has sparked anew an interest in reducing the current general education requirements and making First Year Seminar a required course. The campus community agrees wholeheartedly that we must make English reading and writing development a high and ongoing priority for students. As a result of the MSA final report, there is an interest in reviving an old idea about merging the Tutorial Center and English Works! The "honorable exit" concept is one that many people endorse and are becoming motivated to work on concretely.

On the other hand, computer literacy is embedded throughout the First Year Seminar curriculum and many other courses. A recent headcount revealed that 65% of our students are using Gallaudet's online collaboration system, known as GDOC. There does not seem to be a demand for creating a separate, required technology course.

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In addition, the MSA report did not mention the existence of our Writing Enhanced Curriculum, which provides training to faculty members interested in making their courses writing intensive. This is a current strategy we use to stress literacy for students.

### Technology

Without doubt, keeping up with the fast-paced and fast-evolving developments in technology is a challenge. We will continue to review and revise Gallaudet's Information Technology Plan as needs are identified. The team correctly recognized a new sense of cooperation and integration between Academic Technology and Information Technology Services. Much progress and many improvements have resulted from this continuing collaboration among these units.

The MSA evaluation team appropriately acknowledged the attention being given to PeopleSoft and our network infrastructure. Another example of our institutional commitment to technology that was not mentioned in the final report is our new building. Gallaudet looks forward to the completion of the new Student Academic Center and the potential it promises for teaching and learning in technology and related fields.

### Enrollment and Student Services

The campus community is impressed with the depth and understanding of the evaluation team surrounding the issues of enrollment and the recruitment of students. In response to the length of time it takes students to graduate, a preliminary assessment of historical student data indicates that the average number of grading periods for those who graduated from Gallaudet between 1986 and 2000 was 12.36 for Bachelor of Arts graduates and 12.69 for Bachelor of Science graduates. These grading periods are defined as semesters and summer school sessions. We believe this is comparable to other open-admissions institutions.

### Assessment and Outcomes

Gallaudet is embarking upon an ambitious data collection, self-evaluation and planning program called Action-Results, Assessment, Planning (A-RAP). A-RAP will help meet most of the concerns or issues raised in the report. The campus community has been involved in the development of the plan and has established targets to achieve the strategic objectives. As we send you this letter today, the Office of Planning is conducting a three-day action planning retreat for eight selected targets considered extremely important to student success and reaching out to new students. The targets include retention, enrollment, student internship experiences, distance education, diversity content in co-curricular programs, integrating library services into the curriculum, student technology skills, and tying curriculum assessments to the program review process. The action plans will be considered a blueprint for prioritizing the use of university resources.

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The Office of Planning is working on the development of a data warehouse that will allow for institutional data to be stored in a central location. Historical student data from 1986 to 2000 was recently converted into the warehouse, and the A-RAP process is the first step in helping to define institutional data. The University added a director's position to the Office of Planning for this purpose and the future technology budget has money set aside for the data warehouse.

I would like to comment finally about the eloquently written postscript. Coming from eight respected academicians in higher education institutions, the postscript provided the campus with a sense of inspiration and an affirmation of the important work we do. We are grateful for these closing comments and have shared them with several key bodies involved with Gallaudet University.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make an institutional response to the final report. The reaccreditation process has provided us with both the opportunity to reflect upon our work over the past decade and a springboard for future planning. The campus of Gallaudet University is keenly aware that the evaluation team has challenged us to address issues that go far beyond the scope of our Self-Study itself, through which many of the other issues were raised. We will continue to work on these issues and look forward to sharing our progress with you in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

I. King Jordan  
President