

GALLAUDET ELIMINATES DR. GLENN ANDERSON AS CANDIDATE FOR UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

National Black Deaf Advocates
Position Paper, 2006

“The real question is whether you mean to make good to us the promises of your constitution.”
– Frederick Douglass

Introduction

On April 13th, the Gallaudet University Presidential Search Committee announced the selection of three finalists for the position of University President. The finalists were: Dr. Jane Fernandes, Ronald Stern, and Stephen Weiner, Ed. D.

The announcement that Dr. Glenn Anderson was eliminated as a candidate sent a resounding shockwave throughout the Black Deaf Community and other communities of color. This wave has quickly reverberated to include non-minorities whom are aware of Dr. Anderson’s tremendous achievements and contributions to the deaf community.

Dr. Anderson

Dr. Anderson has served on the Board of Trustees of Gallaudet University for a period of 16 years. In this distinctive position, he also served as Chairman of the board. Dr. Anderson along with other members of the Board of Trustees were essentially responsible for supervising the president of the University I. King Jordan. Dr. Anderson’s duties also included meeting with congressional representatives and Presidents as well as appearing before federal legislative bodies on behalf of Gallaudet.

Dr. Anderson is a fully tenured Professor and serves as the Director at the University of Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He has been with the University of Arkansas since 1982. In addition to his work on behalf of Gallaudet, he serves on the Board of National Black Deaf Advocates. Dr. Anderson has over 35 publications to his credit and has presided over more than 150 workshops including the International Congress on Education of the Deaf and at the World Federation of the Deaf.

Within the framework of its strategic goals, Gallaudet University has made public its strong commitment to diversity and inclusiveness. Clearly, the April 13, 2006 announcement of the finalists for President falls far short in its efforts to publicly communicate to the University’s stakeholders, on and off-campus, that the Presidential Search Committee is strongly committed to diversity and inclusiveness in its search process.

By failing to respond to inquires and concerns regarding the process, the PSC has opened the door to accusations of “racism, favoritism, and concerns of white privilege.” We believe, at this time in Gallaudet’s history, the underlying message that emanates from the Search Committee’s announcement has damaged the University’s credibility and reputation in the eyes of its many stakeholders throughout the nation. It sent a very public message to the students and people of color that if a person of Dr. Anderson’s esteemed leadership, education, accomplishments and caliber is deemed unqualified, that they have little hope of succeeding.

Beyond the Issue of Race

This issue is not about an African American that did not make it as a finalist. It is about a highly qualified applicant, with a proven record of service and educational credentials that was bypassed for an individual with lesser qualifications.

In a formal resolution, Gallaudet University Board of Trustees acknowledged that Dr. Anderson “brought to the Board a broad understanding of issues in higher education, dedication to addressing diversity issues, commitment to strengthening undergraduate education, excellence in research and scholarship, outstanding leadership qualities, and strong ties with constituencies both on and off campus...”

The overriding issue here is; why a man who was entrusted to successfully lead the Board of Trustees for a period of 16 years is not qualified to serve in the position that he supervised. Additional controversy has risen regarding the position announcement indicating the desire for the applicant to **possess** a terminal degree, which Dr. Anderson does have but that another finalist lacks.

Gallaudet has vested considerable time and money in addressing the issue of diversity. Indeed at least three of the University strategic goals address the issue of diversity, inclusiveness and multiculturalism. It is paradoxical that the Presidential Search Committee has managed to eradicate both Strategic Goals # 5 and # 6. These goals state: Gallaudet promotes an environment where every member of the community is included, valued, and respected. Moreover, that Gallaudet University nurtures and strengthens its position as a global educational and cultural center for people who are deaf and hard of hearing and demonstrates its commitment to diversity by reaching out to deaf and hard of hearing people everywhere.

This is about remaining unswerving in commitment to the University’s strategic goal of inclusiveness and diversity, not only diversity in hearing and communication modes but also including racial diversity.

Lastly, the process of selection and elimination is shrouded in secrecy. Giving argument that the procedures were structured to be favorable to some candidates and less favorable to others. People of color are long past the days of plantation mentality where the decisions of the Master are unquestionable.

Conclusion

NBDA along with a growing constituency are shocked at the actions of the Presidential Search Committee for excluding Dr. Anderson as a finalist. We believe his exceptional experience and education makes him well qualified to become a finalist for the position of Gallaudet University President. NBDA is requesting that the Presidential Search Committee re-examine Dr. Anderson’s qualification and add him to the list of finalist as well as afford him the opportunity to address the campus community.

Actions

NBDA is working with several other organizations to get our voices heard by the Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees at Gallaudet.

President Thomas Samuels has established a team to work on public relations. This team will shortly announce a press conference

A formal appeal is being made to the Board of Trustees and Presidential Search Committee to add Dr. Anderson to the finalist roster.