

Class News and Notes

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teachers at the Maryland School for the Deaf, Frederick.

'92—**Jennifer (Fraser) Taylor** graduated cum laude with a second bachelor's degree in accounting from Strayer University in Alexandria, Va., on June 28. She also learned that she had been accepted into the Alpha Sigma Lambda National Honor Society, an organization for nontraditional adult students. She plans to become a certified public accountant (CPA) and is preparing to take the CPA exam.

'99—**Dawn Birley** performed in the world premier of a signed opera in Finland. The production of Fredrik Pacius' *The Hunt of King Charles* is believed to be the first opera in the world performed completely in sign language.

'02—**Artwork by Michelle McAuliffe** was chosen for the Conner Contemporary Art Gallery's ACADEMY 2008, an invitational exhibit of work by fine art graduates of Washington, D.C. area college art programs. McAuliffe is a recent graduate of the MFA program at The George Washington University, where she created her selected video piece called "First Crush."

'06—On July 21, **Dominic "Nick" Vera** received the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Harvey J. Bullock Jr. Award for Equal Opportunity Achievement. The award recognizes significant contributions to the NIH's Equal Employment Opportunity Program by an executive, supervisor, or manager. Vera won the award for his efforts to raise disability awareness in the Office of Acquisition and Logistics Management.



In Remembrance

'45—**George Singer, E-'45**, passed away on July 13 at his home in Silver Spring, Md. Singer had a 38-year career with *The Washington Post* and was a member of the Columbia Typographical Union for 64 years. He was a member of numerous deaf organizations and civic groups.

'50—**Betty (Kahn) Dowdy** passed away on February 2.

'60—**Dixie Ann Brandenburg, 72**, passed away peacefully at her daughter's home from complications of a stroke.



From the desk of... Suzy Rosen Singleton, E-'88

Dear Gallaudet Alumni,

Our alma mater is a unique jewel because it is the only liberal arts university in the world meeting the comprehensive needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. Gallaudet is indeed the Hope Diamond of multi-faceted excellence for our students due to the bilingual emphasis of its programs. Now, the University has embraced another critical facet by creating an Office of the Ombuds, an internationally recognized practice that ensures transparency and institutional integrity.

As an alumna and a native user of American Sign Language who has practiced disability law for 15 years, I am honored to have been charged with the responsibility of launching this new office in January 2008 and serving as the ombuds.

What is an ombuds, you may ask, and how does an ombuds help further excellence at Gallaudet and serve as a resource for you as alumni?

First, a bit of background. The first historical record of an ombuds dates to 1809, when the Swedish Parliament appointed an ombuds to resolve problems in the absence of the country's king.

Dixie was privileged to serve two full-time missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was recently called to serve as a church service missionary at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. Funeral services were held in Salt Lake City and interment was in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif. She was predeceased by her husband, Joe Brandenburg.

Offices of ombuds have proliferated over the years, and today there are at least 200 educational institutions in the United States alone where ombuds offer their services as a conflict management resource.

Gallaudet is guided by its mission, vision, strategic goals, and objectives. One of the five strategic goals Gallaudet developed to implement its vision was to "create and sustain a climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administrators for the full range of human diversity, educational backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives." This goal mirrors the sixth of the 14 accreditation standards for educational and institutional quality established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). In the April 1 MSCHE monitoring report, Gallaudet reported that the Office of the Ombuds is one of the committed resources intended to meet this strategic goal.

The Office of the Ombuds is a place to seek help in resolving almost any University-related concern or issue. The ombuds may help untangle issues, generate options, and develop action plans. Additionally, the ombuds may provide third-party intervention services such as facilitation, mediation, or shuttle diplomacy. The ombuds may identify systemic trends based on issues brought to the office holder's attention, and provide recommendations accordingly. For the first year, the scope of the office is limited to students, but the door remains open to other members of the campus community—faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, parents, applicants, respondents to identified concerns, and other individuals as appropriate.

An ombuds can promote accountability and effectiveness by preventing or resolving conflicts, which may in turn enhance productivity and institutional integrity. An ombuds may conduct a host of activities, such as educational training and workshops, as well as give feedback

to the administration through reports and meetings, which protect visitors' confidentiality.

The credibility and integrity of the ombuds are invaluable in ensuring the office's effectiveness and value to the University. Hence, the ombuds is a member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), and adheres to the four fundamental tenets in the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice: independence, confidentiality, neutrality, and informality. The IOA tenets mandate that the ombuds is independent in structure, function, and appearance.

The IOA tenets also require that the ombuds keeps all communications with visitors in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given express permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm. Further, the ombuds must be designated to be neutral and cannot commit to any role which could create a conflict of interest. However, it must be emphasized that neutrality is not tantamount to being neutered! The ombuds can and shall serve as an effective and positive change agent and as an advocate for fairness in procedures and policies. Finally, the ombuds serves as an informal resource, and only supplements, rather than replaces or duplicates, any formal campus procedure.

The use of the ombuds' informal "off-the-record" services may be preferred by the visitor because of the assurances of confidentiality and the interest in protecting sensitive relationships. Further, having both formal and informal conflict resolution options helps to ensure effective early intervention and resolution of potentially cumbersome and easily avoidable legal disputes.

What does this mean for you as alumni? Perhaps you may want to take advantage of this new resource to communicate informally about any issues or concerns you may have regarding Gallaudet. (Check ombuds.gallaudet.edu for the list of the various ways you may contact the ombuds.) Moreover, the Office of the Ombuds has been established as one of the innovative ways to strengthen the University's legacy as a much revered bilingual institution of higher education, and these modern changes do enhance and elevate the status of alumni in general. ■

'64—**Peter Hernandez, E-'64**, passed away on June 8 in Las Vegas, Nev.

'68—**Dennis Emmendorfer** passed away suddenly on July 2. He is survived by his wife, Loretta, '70, two daughters and one son, and his sister and two brothers.

'95—**Cynthia (Quintana) Skjeveland** died in Sioux Falls, N.D., on July 6 following a courageous battle with brain cancer.