

Against all odds, deaf students staged a protest demanding a deaf person assume the highest leadership role at Gallaudet.

Learning to Rise Up from the Deaf President Now Protest

 Leah Geer Zarchy
Sacramento State Deaf Studies

Background

Gallaudet University, named after Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, was founded in 1864 as a grammar school for deaf and blind children. It remains the only liberal arts university specifically designed for deaf students. It is a bilingual university, officially recognizing American Sign Language (ASL) and English as instructional languages.

"Deaf people are not ready to function in a hearing world."
— Jane Spilman, Chairperson, Gallaudet Board of Trustees

Impetus

- President Jerry C. Lee announced his resignation, sparking a new Presidential search
- Members of the campus community were ready for a deaf president to lead the university
- Two of the three finalists were deaf
- The Board selected Dr. Elisabeth Zinser, a hearing individual, to become the next president

Protest demands

1. Zinser's resignation and appointment of deaf president
2. Spilman's resignation as Board of Trustees Chair
3. Reconstitution of BoT to have at least 51% deaf members
4. No punitive measures for students/faculty involved in protest

Discussion

- Deaf students knew another hearing president couldn't serve their best interests
- They recognized injustice — picking a hearing president despite qualified deaf applicants
- Rather than accept the status quo, deaf students ROSE UP, gaining international attention, to fight for their community's rights to self-govern

 @leahcaitrin



OF THE QR CODE
FOR MORE INFO 

The content in this poster and the supplementary materials were originally intended for interactive workshop presentation at the Multicultural Education Conference at Sacramento State. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the content has been modified to fit this format.

