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IN FOR THE LONG RUN!

Written by Rachel Burton

Gallaudet University has a 12 percent graduation rate. Black educators are angry that they have a 42 percent graduation rate. The average graduation rate is 46 percent. Why are we continuing to accept this blatant oppression of deaf students? Dr. Jane Fernandes was Provost of the University for six years. Throughout these years, the graduation rate increased by only one percent.

This was an issue brought up at the 8 PM rally tonight, Friday, October 6, 2006. The rally began with student leaders Noah Beckman, Layota Plummer and Tara Holcomb recapping what happened at the Board of Trustees meeting they attended. Not all members were present – Beckman says that, “only 11 or 12 members were there. The chair, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, was not even present.” Beckman was given only five minutes for his narration – not even enough time to begin expressing the students’ concerns. He had brought along Holcomb for her to explain her first-hand account of the Department of Public Safety’s assault on students. The Board refused to let her talk – but after the third attempt, Holcomb defied them and stood up to speak her mind. She explained that the Board’s body language and facial expressions during her speech was horrible. “I saw some of them rolling their eyes, and even laughing at me,” Holcomb said.

After the meeting concluded, the three leaders were shocked to find out that while they were speaking to the Board of Trustees, the Chairwoman, Brueggemann, was speaking to the media and telling them of the Board’s decision that Fernandes will remain as the selected President. Brueggemann also went on to congratulate and express gratitude towards the campus security team. Holcomb said that she was heartbroken, and felt like all her actions thus far were worthless. However, when she came back to Hall Memorial Building, the throes of students waiting for an update lifted her spirits again – she is ready to fight again.

“I am personally ready to withdraw from the University. I know many of you are too, right?” Holcomb said. Many hands shot up in the air to affirm her statement. Sources say Plummer and Beckman are ready to withdraw as well, if this chaos continues to be ignored by the Board of Trustees.

“I do not want to attend classes in an environ-

ment where I am paranoid about being assaulted by the Department of Public Safety,” Plummer said.

“The Student Body Government is here for you. We are prepared to do anything you want. If you want a hunger strike, we will do it. If you want to sit in at the front gates, we will do it. If you want to withdraw, we will do it. We are always here for you,” Holcomb said.

Donalda Ammons then took the stage and expressed her grievance at the University taking away the alumni’s database of around 15,000 email addresses worldwide, so she cannot contact them and keep them abreast of news.

“This does not mean we will give up, though! Tent cities are being set up in California, Wisconsin, and Texas – and more to come,” Ammons said.

Business Department Professor Bernard Brown then announced that he has cancelled all classes for next week, and is prepared to cancel classes until the two demands are met. “I come to you with a heavy heart. The three priorities of the faculty are the safety of students, the health of students, and a safe learning environment,” Brown said. He feels that these three issues are not being resolved, and will work with other faculty members to encourage them to follow suit and cancel classes until demands are met.

A discussion then ensued about whether to leave the Hall Memorial Building to regain strength and energy by resting and eating good meals over the weekend, or continue to lock down the building and stay here throughout the weekend. After much discussion, the room was asked to split up with people who want to stay on one side, and people who want to leave on the other side. More than two-thirds of the group strayed to the side that supports the continuation of the lockdown of Hall Memorial Building.

It has been decided. We will not give up. We will remain in this building until we are heard. We are tired of being ignored. This is a climate of disgrace, and it MUST STOP.

UNITY FOR GALLAUDET!