Welcome to Diversity Works!

The WSU Diversity Works newsletter continues to serve as a vital link to the university's faculty and staff as it disseminates valuable information about the programs, projects, and special events across campus and throughout the community.

The newsletter also serves as a catalyst for featuring important curriculum innovations, emerging student leader profiles, and noteworthy programs that give voice to the total WSU experience. This edition is no exception as we prepare for the 5th annual diversity conference slated for Oct. 3 in the Shepard Union Building. Dr. I. King Jordan, president of Gallaudet University, will deliver our keynote address.

Most of you will remember Dr. Jordan's appointment as the nation's first deaf president of an institution of higher education in 1988. In particular, you may recall that the nation's eyes were on Gallaudet University as deaf students forcefully occupied university buildings and took to the streets of Washington D.C. in protest upon learning that the school had chosen a hearing person as president when two of the top three candidates were deaf. Conceding to the students' request, Dr. Jordan was appointed as the institution's first deaf president in the university's 125 year history. Gary Olsen, at that time the executive director for the National Association of the Deaf, spoke for many when he said, "we need a president in this time and age who is sensitive, understands, exemplifies and advocates for the deaf, not just by rhetoric, but by being a living example."

Dr. Jordan’s visit is an illuminating reminder that the nation’s (as well as Utah's) deaf community is rarely "heard" and is underrepresented in a variety of societal systems and community leadership opportunities. We should all take council in Jordan’s statement, "Deaf people can do anything except hear." We all would do well to remember that fact.

Deaf people have always known they could do everything hearing people can, except hear.

In March 1988 the hearing community received that message loud and clear when Dr. I. King Jordan was appointed the first deaf president of Gallaudet University.

Weber State University faculty, staff and students will learn about Jordan's experiences firsthand at the third annual diversity conference on October 3, 2003.

During the week of March 6-13, 1988, the students of Gallaudet protested the university's selection of a hearing president when two of the three final candidates were qualified deaf Gallaudet alumni. The peaceful demonstrations later became known as the "civil rights movement of Deaf people" and resulted in the resignation of Dr. Elisabeth Ann Zinser after only two days in office and the instatement of Dr. Jordan, who has served as president of Gallaudet since 1988.

Dr. Jordan grew up in a small town outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Navy in 1962 and served four years until he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident. Only 21 years old, this accident resulted in his profound hearing loss.

Jordan did not let his disability stop him from achieving great things and helping those whose silent struggle went mostly unnoticed. He received a B.A. in psychology from Gallaudet in 1970 and went on to receive a master's degree in the same subject from the University of Tennessee in 1971 and a Ph.D. in 1973.

He returned to Gallaudet as an assistant professor and was named dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1986. Two years later, he was named president of the university.

He continues to be an advocate for deaf, hard of hearing and disabled people all over the world. A recipient of many awards and honors, Jordan was recently appointed to the board of directors of the Greater Washington Board of Trade.

- Becky Oleson and Jennifer Compton Lee, University Communications

"The problem is not that the students do not hear. The problem is that the hearing world does not listen."

- The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson

Dr. I. King Jordan, keynote speaker
Diversity Calendar
FALL 2003

JUMP START MARSHALL WHITE
A volunteer program for WSU students to participate in community service and reach out to youth in the inner city community. Call the Diversity Center at 626-6379 for information.

COMMON GROUND:
A monthly forum to focus on education, information and diversity resources on and off campus. Snacks will be served and feedback is encouraged. Diversity Center SU 240

TASTE FOR DIVERSITY:
A monthly performance and food sampling to provide informal exposure to the world of diverse foods, dance, arts, etc. Noon-1 p.m. Diversity Center SU 240

SESSIONS@UB240:
Set up like a coffeehouse series, visitors and on-campus staff can take the microphone each month and bring an eclectic mix to the diversity of music, art, poetry and history.

RELIGION AND ETHICS FORUM:
A weekly forum to explore the religious diversity of WSU’s campus community, nation and world. Hosted by the Diversity Center every Tuesday from 1-2:30 pm, in Watts Bldg. 218

STOP THE HATE:
A national program that has become a model for change across the nation to send the message of zero-tolerance as it relates to hate and hate crimes.

INTERFAITH READING GROUPS:
Open to students, staff, and the community, this group meets to explore the diversity of religious books. Books are provided based on participation.

AT PRESS TIME, SOME DATES AND TIMES HAD NOT BEEN FINALIZED. PLEASE CALL THE DIVERSITY CENTER AT 626-6379 FOR DETAILS ON UPCOMING EVENTS AND TIMES.

Submit your calendar items for the spring issue of Diversity Works! via e-mail to kedwards@weber.edu

WEB ADDRESSES
The Diversity Center: www.weber.edu/Diversity
Services for Students with Disabilities: www.weber.edu/ssd
Services for International Students: www.weber.edu/sis
Services for Multicultural Students: www.weber.edu/sms
Nontraditional Student Center: www.weber.edu/nontrad
Services for Women Students: www.weber.edu/sws

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Send submissions and comments to mail code 4025; e-mail kedwards@weber.edu, or call ext. 6571.

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WSU invites high school juniors and seniors to attend a one-day conference on overcoming barriers to getting into college. Motivational speakers encourage students to plan for college, and students learn about the activities and other benefits of college life. WSU staff show the way to apply for admission, financial aid, and scholarships. About 15 scholarships are awarded to students who attend the dinner.

Don't Miss WSU's 5th Annual Diversity Conference
Featuring keynote speaker
Dr. I. King Jordan
Friday, October 3, beginning at 9 a.m.
Join us for the keynote speech and workshops
For more information contact Forrest Crawford at ext. 6196 or Sandra Powell at ext. 6103
The majestic mountains and picturesque landscape of Weber State University's main campus in the foothills of Ogden serve as an inspiration and source of beauty to many students, faculty and staff members who work and study here, but for the physically disabled, getting from one building to the next is an uphill challenge—literally.

Just ask Colt Mortenson, a sophomore at WSU who is president and student representative of the university's services for students with disabilities office.

"The biggest physical challenge is getting up and down the hills on campus," says Mortenson, who was born with cerebral palsy. Although he has full use of his arms, Mortenson's condition affects his motor skills and blood circulation to the lower half of his body. When he's not getting to and from classes on campus, Mortenson uses forearm crutches; he uses a wheelchair to navigate longer distances. "During the winter it's even more difficult because there's more ice on the roads, and it's difficult for me to get the grip I need to navigate the campus safely."

He says the physical challenges pale in comparison to the social discrimination he's encountered throughout his life.

"I had a tough time in elementary school because I couldn't do the same things as the other kids," he says. "In junior high I used a wheelchair to get around at lunchtime, and I felt bad because I couldn't carry my own tray."

Once he began dating, he realized the challenges had only just begun. "In high school, I can remember going out on dates and wanting to be a gentleman," he says. "I wanted to open the door for a girl; I wanted to impress her. But everything was so awkward. It would take ten minutes just trying to get the door to open."

Most of the time, Mortenson says his dates would try to make the awkward situations a little more comfortable by making jokes. It was a coping tactic he eventually learned to adopt for nearly any social situation.

"It's embarrassing, but you learn to make a joke out of it. That's all you can do," he says.

Compared to his experiences in elementary, junior high and high school, Mortenson says college life at WSU is much easier. "I think my attitude has changed," he says. "In high school, image is so important. It's important in college, too, but now school seems to be more about learning. Life is easier because my image is no longer my main focus."

Mortenson says he chose to attend WSU because the campus is relatively small and the buildings are close together. "Basically, Weber appealed to me because it was close to home and I could maneuver around the campus faster," he says. "I didn't want to deal with getting to and from classes on a bigger campus."

As the student representative for other WSU students with disabilities, Mortenson leads the charge to resolve concerns of other disabled students on campus. He says some of the most common complaints he receives about the university are the small spaces in campus bathrooms and able-bodied students and faculty who overuse the elevator, which causes a delay for those who need it. "If I could write up a bill, I'd ask people to take the stairs so the elevators were always available for the people who need them," he says.

Jeff Morris, director of services for students with disabilities, says the same problem exists with parking on campus. "There are a number of areas of concern relating to the issue of disabilities on this campus, but hopefully, our policies and procedures deal with most of those," he says. "But a big issue for our students with physical limitations is parking. The larger parking stalls with clearance for doors and lifts are critical for students in wheelchairs; I think it is reasonable for people who have disabled parking permits but minor impairments or injuries to use standard stalls if at all possible. There are limited disabled parking stalls available and it is unfortunate when people with little or no need for them make life that much more difficult for those students with serious impairments."

Those issues are more than just minor irritations, Mortenson says. But overall, he's glad he came to WSU. "I think I've been received rather well here," he says. "Things are definitely better here than they would be at a large university. The small classes are great, and the smaller campus makes it easier for people to approach me."

Mortenson uses his sense of humor to connect with classmates. "Sometimes people will look at me and the first thing they see is my wheelchair. They don't know what to say to me, but if I can make a joke to make them feel more comfortable, then I feel more comfortable around them, too. My disability will never go away, which means there will always be challenges, but I'm learning that there are ways to make life easier."

—Becky Oleson
University Communications
Guidelines for Interacting with Deaf Individuals

To the hearing community, the reason for distinguishing between "deaf" and "Deaf" may be unclear, but it makes a world of difference to those who identify with the term on a daily basis. Below are some basic guidelines for communicating, respecting, and embracing deaf individuals, courtesy of Holly Nelson, Disability Specialist/Educational Interpreter at WSU.

Use of Descriptive Terms:
- "deaf" refers to the physical condition.
- "Deaf" is a cultural title. (i.e. Deaf American)
- The only other socially acceptable term is "hard-of-hearing."
- "Hearing Impaired" is still commonly used, but is not appreciated by the Deaf community.

Basic Communication Strategies when Talking One-on-One with a Deaf Individual:
- Face the individual while speaking.
- Do not cover face while speaking.

Communicating Through an Interpreter:
- Speak to the Deaf individual rather than the interpreter. (i.e. say "Where did you attend school?" NOT "Ask him where he attended school.")
- Talk as normally as you would to anyone. When using an interpreter there is no reason to speak slowly or change your speaking style. Doing this actually makes the interpreter's job harder.
- Don't ask the interpreter if they understand;

If they don't they will ask for clarification.
- Use feedback when conversing with a deaf individual. If they do not receive signals that you understand, they may stop and make sure you do.

Attention Getting: To get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand.

Applause: Because Deaf individuals cannot hear the audience applause, it is more appropriate to use the Deaf culture "applause," by waving hands in the air. Although a Deaf speaker will see the audience applause (clapping), it will be more appreciated if those who know use the Deaf "applause."