

# THE CHARLOTTE W. NEWCOMBE FOUNDATION

## 2011 Conference Notes – Newcombe Scholarships for Students with Disabilities

Gallaudet University      March 31 - April 1, 2011

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### March 31 – Welcome reception and CWNF update

#### *Tour of House One*

- Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, President of Gallaudet University, welcomed the group warmly, conducted a brief tour of House One, the historic President's residence on campus, and then hosted a lovely reception for twenty-eight conference participants and four interpreters. Two of Gallaudet's Newcombe Scholars, Kayla Castro and Poloko Qobose, attended the reception and spoke with enthusiasm about their internship experiences, which were supported by their Newcombe Scholarships.

#### *Welcome Dinner*

- Dr. Hurwitz addressed the group following dinner at Peikoff Alumni House (Ole Jim), summarizing Gallaudet's role in serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Gallaudet's mission, according to Dr. Hurwitz, is to provide a strong academic experience for all students while facilitating the transition into productive careers. Dr. Hurwitz spoke about challenges faced by Gallaudet's staff in meeting the individual needs of students, and about special programs available at Gallaudet to help students expand their horizons through internships and study abroad.
  - Tom Wilfrid provided an update of Newcombe Foundation activities via a PowerPoint presentation and introduced the conference agenda. Participant folders included a chart summarizing the Foundation's data detailing CWNF funding, scholarships awarded, and growth of the Newcombe-endowed fund for each institution in the Newcombe Scholarships for Students with Disabilities (SWD) program. Also included were the conference agenda, a list of participants, a *Fact Sheet - March 2011* that highlighted overall data about the Newcombe Foundation and the SWD program, a summary of the section of the report titled *What 2009-10 Student Letters Tell Us* that focuses on letters from students with disabilities, and *Excerpts from letters of 2010-11 Charlotte W. Newcombe Scholars*.
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### April 1 - Campus Tour, ASL culture workshop, Group Discussion

#### *Gallaudet Campus Tour led by Patrick Baker, Visitor Center Coordinator*

- Peikoff Alumni House, "Ole Jim"
- College Hall, including artifacts from years past in the President's outer office
- Chapel Hall, including a wall of portraits of past presidents
- Daniel Chester French's statue of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet teaching young Alice Cogswell the first letter of the manual alphabet stands near the entrance to the Gallaudet campus. This statue represents the moment Gallaudet began Alice Cogswell's education, beginning the chain of events that led to the founding of American's first permanent school for the Deaf three years later, and to the establishment a half-century later of what is now Gallaudet University.
- The James Lee Sorenson Language and Communication Center, which was designed and built with Deaf culture in mind. The three-story building features a soaring atrium where students on all three floors can see a "speaker" on the ground floor. The abundance of natural light and a non-reflective floor surface provide an environment that enhances visual communication and decreases glare. The atrium is furnished with a large horseshoe-shaped bench for congregating; this shape is optimal for Deaf individuals, as all seated in this formation can communicate with ease via ASL.

#### *ASL Culture – Interactive Workshop*

- Riccardo Ferracuti's PowerPoint presentation on Deaf Culture Awareness included a brief description of American Sign Language, its history, its correlation with spoken language, and an ASL demonstration.

## Group discussion

### *General*

- Patricia Tesar, Director of Gallaudet's Office for Students with Disabilities (OSWD), reports that GU is totally committed to inclusion. While students with multiple handicaps often feel isolated at other campuses in the area, those served through OSWD receive a great deal of support and benefit from creative problem solving.
- Tom Wilfrid was impressed while attending the May 2010 inauguration of President Hurwitz that the common bond of Deaf Culture seems to supersede perceptions of difference based on racial and ethnic background.
- Bill Welsh (Penn State) and John Bennett (Temple) told the group about Scott Stoffel, a 2001 Temple University graduate who majored in electrical and computer engineering and graduated magna cum laude despite sensory impairments from a rare genetic disorder. Stoffel's senior project was a palm-read Braille device designed to help people who are deaf and blind with dull fingers like his own to communicate better. (Source: The New York Times 5/27/01)
- One participant reported difficulty in navigating the hierarchy and structure of her institution for the benefit of students with disabilities. Most others agreed that forming relationships and providing opportunities to witness the successes of students with special needs works well to get the attention of administrators in the "chain of command."

### *Administration of Newcombe Scholarship programs*

#### Temple University, John Bennett

- Temple is now in its second year of operating Newcombe Scholarships with the current policy that provides the opportunity to award either Newcombe Tuition Scholarships or Newcombe Support Scholarships. John reports that the revised policy has served Temple well:
  - Every student who registers with Disability Resources and Services (DRS) receives information about Newcombe Scholarships. John states, "We emphasize that Newcombe funds should not be considered the sole source of financial support, and that students need to explore longer term sustainable solutions. We ask, 'What's your long-term plan?' By investigating resources and meeting with the right people, students *do* come up with a reasonable plan. Seeking out funding is a life skill they learn in the process of applying for a Newcombe Scholarship."
  - Temple's selection committee reviews student applications every month. Committee members include John Bennett, Wendy Kohler, a representative from financial services, a counselor from Vocational Rehabilitation, and a longtime DRS staff member. Temple spends all available Newcombe funds annually, reporting \$0 carryover into the following academic year.
  - Students applying for technology awards are required to work with a university technology advisor, who then reports to the selection committee regarding the wisdom of purchasing special equipment. Recently Temple has invested substantially in inclusive technology initiatives, which has dramatically reduced students' need to make applications for Newcombe support scholarships for literacy software - an expense that previously amounted to almost 20% of student requests for support.
  - Awards are applied to student accounts directly. Checks are issued directly to students only under exceptional circumstances, and receipts are required.
  - An increasing number of students are applying for Newcombe Support Scholarships to cover expenses related to internships. In 2009-10, nine students had summer internships, and in 2010-11 that figure has increased to ninety-five.

#### Edinboro University, Bob McConnell

- Most students who receive Newcombe Scholarships at Edinboro also have intensive needs and require attendant care services. Because the expected family contribution for these individuals is often \$0, the vast majority of money goes to tuition scholarships and is credited to student accounts. The university is considering increasing tuition dramatically in the future and voc/rehab funding is expected to decrease.

The selection committee redirects students with less intense need to other scholarship programs at the university.

Penn State University, Bill Welsh

- This fall the Foundation split the cost of a student's FM system with voc/rehab. Item II.D. of the policy states that no more than half the cost of major items should be covered by Newcombe funds, and that Foundation staff approval is required for use of Newcombe Scholarship funds for more than half the cost of major items (\$1,000 or more).

McDaniel College, Mark Rust

- Last winter Mark inquired as to whether Newcombe funds could be used to fund a position for a tutor in the English lab of McDaniel's Deaf Education Program. Tom Wilfrid told him no, but pointed out that Newcombe Support Scholarships could be awarded to individual students to cover a fee (if charged to all student users) for English lab services. The end result is that Newcombe funds can contribute indirectly to the partial funding of a position that provides needed services to students.

Long Island University, Diana Volcker

- The office of Student Support Services (SSS) has developed a good working relationship with the Financial Aid office. The Newcombe selection committee has access to data about each applicant's aid package, and considers "how students are doing in relation to who they are and where they came from." SSS personnel can direct students to other funding sources such as a dean's scholarship.

### *Finding matching donors for endowed scholarship funds*

Penn State University: Bill Welsh and Eric Reinhard

- Penn State has established six jointly named Newcombe endowed funds since 2001. Most of these matching donors are simple folks who have a connection to the university's Office of Disability Services (ODS), and who want to make a difference in the lives of students.
- In order to maintain the active relationship with the Newcombe Foundation among the many development officers at all twenty-four campuses, the Newcombe Scholarship Program is mentioned at bi-monthly meetings and the central office maintains momentum by running stories about Scholars online. These efforts serve to keep the needs of students with disabilities prominent, so when the topic comes up in conversations with donors, development officers throughout the institution think of Newcombe.
- The university has set aside \$100 million to establish a Trustee Matching Scholarship Program, matching 5% of each eligible fund's principal beginning in the first year that contributions are made to establish the fund. One jointly named Newcombe fund has qualified to participate in the Trustee Matching Program; the university has pledged to make annual additions to the spending account for this scholarship equal to 5% (\$2,500) of the initial combined pledge (\$50,000).
- Tom Wilfrid added that the Trustee Matching Scholarship Program is a unique commitment by the Board of Trustees at an institution with resources. Of most value to other funded institutions is the idea that if donors would like to establish an endowed fund that is consistent with Newcombe Foundation guidelines, the Foundation will consider matching any reasonable contribution. The first priority of the Foundation's Trustees is to see the support for students with disabilities grow. To the extent that Newcombe funds can be an incentive to focus on the needs of this population, or to build scholarship support for these students, the Trustees are eager to have that happen. The Foundation welcomes joint naming of endowed funds that are established with equal contributions from the donor and the Foundation.

### *The Newcombe Foundation's website*

Tom highlighted several recent innovations:

- A ribbon on the **Home Page** now highlights the Foundation's 2010 receipt of the *James L. Fisher Award for Distinguished Service to Education* from CASE. A link on that ribbon leads to a description of the award and the video that was used to introduce the Foundation at the July 19 CASE awards luncheon in NYC.
- Within the **Scholarships** section's subsection on **Students with Disabilities**, the left-hand bar has an entry titled **Information for Currently Funded Institutions**. This links users to a page listing key upcoming dates in the program's calendar and to a list of Newcombe-related documents to download in pdf format.

Already posted on that page are these 2011 Conference Notes, the previously distributed Conference Notes from 2009, and the full report, *What Student Letters Tell Us: The Impact of Newcombe Scholarships on Mature Women Students and Students with Disabilities (2010)*.

- Institutional feature articles are added periodically to the **Spotlight** section. All involved with Newcombe Scholarships programs are encouraged to read each installment, including those pertaining to programs for mature women students. Additional features are always welcomed, both from institutions that are not yet represented on the site and from any that would like to highlight a second area of service to students with disabilities.

#### *Encouraging community among Newcombe Scholars*

- The idea of using Facebook as a means of communicating with Newcombe partners interested many participants. Concern was expressed about access, security, and control. Bill Welsh and John Bennett said that they have used Facebook for a variety of purposes and have had no problems. This idea will be further investigated.

#### *CWNF report about student thank-you letters*

- Tom Wilfrid encouraged everyone to read the recent report analyzing what students told the Foundation about the impact of Newcombe Scholarships in the 377 thank-you letters received from Newcombe Scholars during 2009-10. It can be viewed and /or downloaded via [http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current\\_swd.html](http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current_swd.html). The data make it clear that although students truly appreciate the financial assistance afforded by the Newcombe Scholarships, the personal affirmation, encouragement and recognition that comes with this award is invaluable to their success.

#### *Value of conference / Future conferences*

- Tom Wilfrid encouraged all attendees to provide feedback to the Foundation (either immediately or at any later time via email or telephone) about the value of the conference to individuals and institutions, and to offer any ideas/suggestions about future conferences.
- The next conference will be held at The Pennsylvania State University, hosted by Bill Welsh and colleagues during Penn State's Disability Awareness Month in October 2012.
- John Bennett has offered to host a conference at Temple University in conjunction with what would be the 13th Annual Disability Symposium at the University of Pennsylvania in April 2014.