

What Is Gallaudet University?

Gallaudet University is a bilingual (ASL and English), federally chartered university in Washington, D.C.. It is a world leader in education and research for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students who use American Sign Language (ASL).

Timeline of Gallaudet's History

1856 – The Gift of Land

- Amos Kendall, a former postmaster general, donated land and funds to create a school for Deaf and blind children in Washington, D.C.
- This school would eventually become Gallaudet University.

1857 – Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind

- The school officially opened with just a few students.
- It focused on elementary and secondary education.

1864 – College for the Deaf Founded

- President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill into law allowing the school to award college degrees.
- This made it the first college for Deaf students in the world.

1864 – Edward Miner Gallaudet Becomes President

- Edward Miner Gallaudet, the son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, became the first president.
- He believed Deaf students could achieve high-level academic success.
- He supported the use of sign language in education.

1894 – Blind Students Transferred

- The school became a Deaf-only institution, and blind students were moved to a different school.

1954 – Name Changed to Gallaudet College

- In honor of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the school was renamed Gallaudet College.

1986 – Becomes Gallaudet University

- Congress officially granted it university status, recognizing its academic growth.

1988 – The “Deaf President Now” Movement

One of the most important events in Gallaudet’s history—and in Deaf history overall—happened in 1988:

- The university had never had a Deaf president, even though it was a Deaf school.
- When a hearing woman was chosen over two qualified Deaf candidates, students and staff protested.
- This became known as the “Deaf President Now” (DPN) movement.
- After a week of peaceful protest, the board chose Dr. I. King Jordan, the first Deaf president of Gallaudet.

DPN was a turning point in Deaf civil rights and helped increase recognition and respect for Deaf leadership worldwide.

Gallaudet Today

- Gallaudet offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in many fields, including Deaf education, interpreting, linguistics, psychology, and more.
- It uses a bilingual approach: American Sign Language (ASL) and written/spoken English.

- Students come from all over the U.S. and more than 25 countries.
- The university is also a center for Deaf research, advocacy, and culture.

Why Is Gallaudet Important?

- First and only university designed for Deaf students
 - Major influence on Deaf education, ASL research, and Deaf rights
 - A place where Deaf identity, language, and culture are celebrated
 - Birthplace of the Deaf President Now movement
 - A symbol of Deaf empowerment and pride
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Summary Chart

Year	Event
1856	Amos Kendall donates land for the school
1864	Lincoln signs the charter to grant college degrees
1864	Edward Miner Gallaudet becomes president
1954	Name becomes Gallaudet College
1986	Gains university status
1988	Deaf President Now movement
Today	A global center for Deaf education and culture