

DR. ROBERT DAVILA DELIVERS CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

May 20, 2004

Rochester, N.Y., May 20—Deaf education leader and Syracuse University alumnus Dr. Robert R. Davila told SU graduating students that, “Empowerment is knowledge acquired through education” during the convocation address at the School of Education’s recent commencement ceremony.

Dr. Davila, vice president emeritus of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and former CEO of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) received a Ph.D. in Educational Technology from Syracuse in 1972. At that time, he was, to his knowledge, the only deaf graduate student in the United States receiving access services (a part-time interpreter) during some classes. Such services, which also include notetaking and captioning, have been commonplace since the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

“Where there were only a few persons with disabilities studying in higher education institutions 30 years ago, today there are literally thousands and the number is growing every year,” he said. “University communities are rightfully and wisely more diverse now, and those institutions engaged in public service, including Syracuse University, are doing much better to reflect the face of America.”

Widely known and highly respected for his dedication and accomplishments in education, Davila is the first and only deaf person to have held the post of assistant secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education. He also is the first deaf person to have held these positions: headmaster of the New York School for the Deaf; president of the Council on Education of the Deaf; president of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf; and president of the Conference of Educational Administrators Serving the Deaf. He currently serves on the National Council on Disability and as the chair of Studies in Technology and the Adult Learner at National University in La Jolla, Calif.

In addition to his Ph.D., Dr. Davila has a bachelor’s degree in Education from Gallaudet University and a master’s degree in Special Education from Hunter College.

NTID is the first and largest technological college in the world for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. One of eight colleges of RIT, NTID offers educational programs and access and support services to its 1,100 students from around the world who study, live and socialize with 14,400 hearing students on RIT’s Rochester, N.Y., campus.

Web address: <http://www.rit.edu/NTID>

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