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Oct 03, 2016 By **Andrew Greenman, '10** Share   

On September 29, 2016, Gallaudet hosted an event in honor of **Ron Burdett, '70**, as a room in the Sorenson Language and Communication Center (SLCC) was named after him – the Ron Burdett, '70, Seminar Room, which is located on the second floor of the building. The announcement was made at a ceremony that took place in the SLCC atrium.

Burdett has worked at Sorenson Communications for a number of years and the company made a donation to Gallaudet in honor of Ron's years of service.

At the ceremony, Burdett was recognized for his work as a professor and dean of Deaf Studies and Special Services at Ohlone College as well as for his service as president of the California Association for Post-Education of the Disabled (CAPED), which oversaw 107 community colleges, eight California state universities and three universities of California.

President Roberta J. Cordano gave opening remarks, honoring Burdett's work as an alumnus of the University.

"I am so impressed at the turnout here and everything that you had invested in Sorenson," said Cordano. "You are the face of Sorenson, and you obviously have given a lot to the deaf community. It means a great deal that a room in this building is being named after you."

After retiring from Ohlone in May 2004, Burdett served as director of the Southern Utah Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs under the state Division of Services to the Deaf and hard of hearing. In 2006, he joined Sorenson Communications as vice president of Community Relations.

Having served Sorenson for nearly 11 years, Burdett's responsibilities include building and maintaining positive relationships with people and key organizations within the deaf community, as well as working extensively with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that Video Relay Services (VRS) are functionally equivalent to the communication technologies hearing people use and that VRS continues to benefit the deaf community.

Burdett often ran into heavy questioning from the FCC, asking why services for the deaf were more expensive compared to services for those with other disabilities.

"I had to emphasize that deaf people require ongoing service, with dedicated interpreters who are available to interpret at any time," said Burdett. "I pointed out that, for example, wheelchair ramps or braille signs were a one-time expenditure, with occasional repairs or maintenance, but that deaf people required continuous access. Using that example with the FCC helped them to understand the necessity of VRS services."

As a member of Sorenson Communications' executive management team, Burdett provides a critical deaf perspective, a key component in Sorenson's early and ongoing success as a market leader. Ron introduced Sorenson Video Relay Service® (SVRS®) to the deaf community, a culture he already understood and cherished, explaining how VRS technology worked for more than a decade.

Burdett traveled all over the United States to meet with deaf communities. On a pegboard of an U.S. map, he has kept track of where he has traveled for Sorenson by putting pins on cities he has visited.

"It is going to be difficult not working for Sorenson anymore when I retire at the end of this year," said Burdett, adding that he plans to continue working for Sorenson on a part-time, contracted basis. "I just can't keep away," said Burdett, laughingly.

Burdett recognizes Gallaudet as a focal starting point of his leadership and success.

"Like so many students before and after me, Gallaudet offered me many opportunities to learn, lead and pursue my goals," said Burdett. "Being immersed in the academic environment prepared me for my career, as well as extracurricular activities, where I met a diverse contingent of people. I didn't know it then, but this really prepared me for my future community relations work at Sorenson Communications, through which I have met thousands of deaf people."

"With his many accomplishments as an educator and administrator, to his years of outreach with Sorenson, Ron is an inspiration to us all," said Cordano. "Ron embodies advocacy, equality, and inclusion and is a role model for our emerging deaf and hard of hearing leaders. Advancement for the deaf community hinges upon the dedicated efforts of many people like Ron. I wish him many years of health and happiness."

At the event, **Martin Price, '90** and a colleague of Burdett, also recognized the inspiration that Burdett gave the community. "I saw how kids at schools you visited were enthralled with your humor and wisdom," said Price. "You took customer concerns seriously and were persistent in showing your love to everyone."

The ceremony was attended by Burdett's friends and family members, who surprised him at the event. Former presidents Dr. I. King Jordan and Dr. Robert R. Davila were also in attendance.

Burdett is married to **Joyanne Burdett, '70**, and lives in the St. George area of southern Utah.

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