

Alfred University finds its niche at the intersection of 'impact' and 'opportunity'

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Alfred University exists at the intersection of “Impact” and “Opportunity,” President Mark Zupan told faculty and staff at the opening breakfast to mark the beginning of the University’s 182nd year.

“Alfred University is a wonderful place,” Zupan said. “We offer our students transformative opportunities and we create impact” in their lives and thereby in the broader world, something the University has been “hard-wired to do since the beginning.”

He cited the example of Trustee John Edmond, a 1983 alumnus, who grew up in neighboring Steuben County. As a high school senior, Edmond thought he wanted to be an aeronautical engineer and was applying to Purdue and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Then a new guidance counselor, a graduate of Alfred University, told Edmond, “&You have all the makings of a ceramic engineer.&”

Edmond checked out Alfred University, but it was David Rossington, dean emeritus of the Inamori School of Engineering, who was the “deciding factor,” Edmond told Zupan. Rossington not only came to Edmond’s house to let him know of his eligibility for a Southern Tier engineering scholarship, but he showed up at Edmond’s high school honors convocation to officially present the scholarship award to him.

From that, Zupan said, Edmond realized “Alfred University is a special place with faculty and staff who had a real interest in his personal development.”

Edmond went on to earn a Ph.D. degree from North Carolina State University, and founded CREE Research, one of the pioneers in the development of the LED light bulb. “What a difference David Rossington made!” Zupan said.

Fenna Mandalong, a 2004 alumna, told Zupan a similar story, how one faculty member’s interest in her moved Alfred University to the top of her list of colleges. Familiar with Alfred University since her grandparents both taught at the University Sharon Hoover was a professor of English and Dean Hoover a professor of mathematics Mandalong considered Alfred University as her “safety school” until she came to visit.

She met with Beth Ann Dobie, then a professor of Art Theory and now dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and moved Alfred University to the top of her list of college choices because, as she told Zupan, Dean Dobie “actually cared about my professional development.” Mandalong is now president of Buffalo Recycling Enterprises.

Stories like those Edmond and Mandalong tell are repeated whenever Zupan meets with alumni. The recurring theme he hears is “Someone took an interest in me and that changed my life.”

As a University community, Zupan told the capacity crowd gathered in Ade Hall for the annual event, “We need to be proud of who we are and where we are,” a comment that drew spontaneous applause from the audience.

The University’s “greatest strength,” he said, is “how much we have to offer in a small place,” and the more “we focus on putting the student experience at the intersection of our efforts the better off we will be.”