

Gladys Brooks Foundation Grant to Create Multimedia Writing Center at AU

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Alfred, NY - A multimedia classroom to connect Alfred University writing students to each other and to the world beyond will be created with a \$100,000 grant from the Gladys Brooks Foundation, New York, NY. The facility, to be located in Seidlin Hall, will be used by students in the English and Communications Studies divisions, as well as students from throughout the University who use the services of the Writing Center to improve their skills. During the summer, the classroom will be used by Elderhostel participants, students enrolled in the Higher Educational Opportunities Program, and those attending summer school classes. "The classroom this grant will allow us to build and equip is an important addition to the facilities for our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences," said AU President Edward G. Coll, Jr. "Today's students are accustomed to using computers in their day-to-day lives, but they may not realize their potential in the liberal arts. For that reason, it is important that we continue our efforts to integrate technology into all our curricula." "The use of technology in writing is now a way of life," noted Dr. William Hall, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "We are grateful to the Gladys Brooks Foundation for providing our students with an opportunity to see the wonderful things we can do when we bring writing and technology together." One of the first uses of the "technology-smart" classroom will be to teach English 101, the University's basic composition course. "With the software we will have available, students will be able to expedite the revision and feedback process," said Dr. Allen Grove, assistant professor of English. The software "allows multiple students to create and respond to comments on a paper," either their own or someone else's. "It makes the editing process explicit and allows the entire class to see and respond to specific editorial suggestions." Too often, he said, students use the computer as a typewriter, without understanding all the resources that will assist them in their work. In the future, Grove will be developing English courses that "focus on the ways in which technology is changing literature, and the relationship between computers, books, and readers." As an example, he points to the "Hypertext Frankenstein" project developed at the University of Pennsylvania. A CD-ROM contains both the 1818 and 1832 versions of the novel, and students can instantaneously switch between the two to see the differences. There are additional resources available, too, including passages of contextual material that add to the students' understanding of the work. If, for example, a student clicks on the reference to Milton's "Paradise Lost" in Frankenstein, the text of "Paradise Lost" appears. "It will really change the way we read literature, giving us extensive historical, critical, and textual resources" instantly, said Grove. "Depending upon what links students follow, they may have a very different reading of the work." The new lab will allow students to have real-time discussions with classmates, authors, faculty and students, regardless of their location; allow students to access each other's work for collaboration and peer review; train students to generate story ideas, conduct on-line research, edit and publish; allow students to use on-line discussion groups relevant to their specific classes; facilitate the teaching of new courses that focus on electronic texts; allow the University to initiate shared programs with area elementary and high schools; and allow faculty to create web pages to promote out-of-class discussions with students. The lab will also be used for on-line tutoring through The Writing Center for students from throughout the University. The room will be equipped with 20 workstations and seven faculty workstations, all networked together. In addition, there will be projection equipment, a document camera, a VHS recorder/player and an electronic smartboard so that all class participants may view the same document at the same time.