Two AU professors honored as 'innovative scholars'
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The State University of New York Research Foundation honored 58 of what it calls "New York's most important and innovative scholars and scientists for their accomplishments in medicine, education, literature, genetics, engineering, music, environmental studies, chemistry, computer science and other fields" at a recognition dinner at the State University Plaza in Albany. Dr. Linda Jones, professor of ceramic engineering, and Dr. William LaCourse, professor of glass science, both faculty members in the School of Engineering at Alfred University, were among those selected to receive the honor, from among the hundreds of professionals in the SUNY system.Four of AU's six engineering programs, those in ceramic engineering, materials science, glass science and biomedical materials engineering science, are state-supported, making faculty who teach in those programs eligible for the SUNY awards. "Dr. Jones and Dr. LaCourse have distinguished careers as research scientists on a national and international stage," said Dr. David Szczerbacki, AU's provost and vice president for academic and statutory affairs. "It is only fitting that their level of excellence be recognized. Each has demonstrated a passion for research as well as a capacity to define the cutting edge of their respective disciplines. Significantly, each has a reputation as an outstanding teacher reflecting a commitment to the linkage between basic and applied research and the education of the next generation of scientists and engineers."We are certainly proud of the accomplishments of Dr. Jones and Dr. LaCourse, and congratulate them for this outstanding recognition," Szczerbacki said. "These award-winning faculty members have contributed to the dramatic growth in the importance and volume of research being conducted on SUNY campuses - research leading to scientific breakthroughs," said SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King. "These honorees represent SUNY's world-class faculty that has garnered more than $766 million for 9,000 research projects that are supporting 21,000 jobs in New York State," added King. Jones is one of the country's foremost researchers in high-temperature materials, particularly carbon materials. She was the 1996 recipient of the Griffin Lecturer Award from the American Carbon Society. Principal research areas for Jones, who joined the faculty of the statutory engineering unit at Alfred University in 1991, are novel forms of carbon, including carbon oxidation and diamond oxidation; high-temperature solid gas reactions; environmental impacts of ceramic and glass manufacturing; structural composite materials and fibers; and the role of microstructure, physical properties, and chemistry on oxidation and mechanical behavior. Current research partners include the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research and G.E. - Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory.Author of more than 55 publications in her field, Jones is a member and advisor of the American Carbon Society, as well as a member of the American Ceramic Society, the Society of Women Engineers, Keramos (a national honor society for ceramic engineers) and Phi Kappa Phi. In the classroom, Jones is also recognized as a gifted educator. She has twice won the John F. McMahon Excellence in Teaching Award from Alfred University (1994 and 2001) and the Ruth Berger Rubenstein Memorial Award for Teaching (2000), also from AU. In 1999, she received a State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. A 1980 graduate of Mary Washington College with a B.S. in chemistry, Jones earned an M.S. in 1984 and a Ph.D. in 1987 from The Pennsylvania State University.LaCourse joined the AU faculty in 1970, and has proven himself to be an outstanding educator and researcher over the past three and a half decades. Among LaCourse's research interests are sol-gel processing of glasses and ceramics; chalcogenide glass fibers; mechanical properties of glass; surface modification techniques; glass fiber-composition development; mixed alkali effect; and glass defects and durability. Some of the results of his work are super-strong glasses that can withstand being struck by a golf ball traveling at a high rate of speed, and other glasses that are designed as bone patches that dissolve harmlessly into the body after a bone has healed. A prolific author of research articles in his field, LaCourse also holds several patents on his bone bioreactive glass fibers and for his process for strengthening glasses. He was co-founder of the National Science Foundation's Industry-University Center for Glass Research at Alfred University.Students and his colleagues have repeatedly selected him for teaching awards, including the AU Excellence in Teaching Award and the Kruson Distinguished Professor Award. He is also the recipient of a State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. A Fellow of the American Ceramic Society, LaCourse is also a member of the National Institute of Ceramic Engineers; the Ceramic Education Council; the Ceramic Association of New York; and the Society of Glass Technology. He is a member of Keramos and Phi Kappa Phi national honor societies.LaCourse, who is also a talented musician and the announcer for AU home football games, received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in engineering and materials science from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and his Ph.D. degree in materials science from Renssalaer Polytechnic Institute in 1969.