

AU faculty awarded service learning grants

1/19/04

With the goal of getting Alfred University students more involved in the community, AU is awarding grants of \$3,000 each to faculty who are developing curricula that incorporate service learning. "Service learning is a way for students to learn more about the needs of the community; to foster civic responsibility among students and to enhance their academic program by giving them an opportunity to apply the principles they've learned in the classroom," said Dr. Robert K. Bitting, associate vice president for academic planning and research. Working with community partners, the faculty members will either prepare new courses or rework existing courses to incorporate the concept of service learning, Bitting explained. Recipients are: Dr. Carl Boehlert, assistant professor of materials science in the School of Engineering. He and his students will introduce use of the scanning electron microscope to explore the subatomic structure of materials and organisms to area high schools students through a service learning program entitled, "Life Beneath the Naked Eye." Dr. Michele Hluchy, professor of geology and chair of the Environmental Studies Program, who will be working with area schools to implement GLOBE - Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment - and Forest Watch programs, with AU students enrolled in a required Research Methods in Environmental Studies serving as the resource people for the area schools. Dr. Kerry Kautzman and Dr. Ariana Huberman, assistant professors of Spanish, will lead a group of AU students to Costa Rica for two weeks this spring, as the conclusion of their class entitled "Sustainable Futures and Service Learning in Costa Rica." Third in a series of Global Perspectives courses in the Division of Modern Language (previous courses have taken students to Paris and Madrid), this course will give students an opportunity to learn about the history and contemporary culture of Costa Rica, and then spend two weeks at the Monteverde Institute, a research institute that promotes the value of social justice. During their stay in Costa Rica, AU students will be expected to complete at least 15 hours of community service with the Institute's research projects, clinics, laboratories and schools. Dr. John Seibert-Davis, assistant professor of communication studies, who will offer a course entitled, "Community Radio at Alfred." He and students will use the resources of the campus radio station, WALF, to develop a biweekly community affairs radio program. Modeled on "Need to Know," a community news and information program broadcast on WXXI-TV, the public television outlet in Rochester, NY, the program would provide "in-depth coverage of local and regional community affairs," filling a void in the area, according to Seibert-Davis, who found that there are few, if any, non-commercial alternatives in the Southern Tier. He envisions a 30-minute local news and affairs show to be broadcast every two weeks on the WALF-FM station. Each would feature student-written and -produced pieces. Dr. Robert Maiden, professor of psychology and director of the Gerontology Program at AU, who will incorporate a service learning component into the foundation course for the Gerontology Program, "Adult Development and Aging." Students will be required to spend about two hours a week working with a community service agency that serves the elderly, including the Allegany County Office for the Aging, Meals On Wheels, Adopt-A-Grandparent Program, Caregiver's and the Alzheimer's Support Group, as well as area nursing homes and hospitals. Students will be required to write up and present papers on their field experiences. Mark McFadden, coordinator of Career Counseling Services at the AU Career Development Center, will offer a course, "The Role of Leadership in the Context of Community Service and Social Change." The course is an outgrowth of a Careers in the Common Good Symposium and Career Fair that the Career Development Center offered for the first time last year. Those taking McFadden's course will volunteer to work in the community service agencies, and will also help to organize this year's Careers in the Common Good Symposium and Career Fair. The symposium last year brought local and regional leaders as well as several alumni to campus to talk about their careers in non-profit agencies and public service. This year's symposium will expand on that, and will also offer Ande Diaz, assistant dean of undergraduate students at Princeton University and author of the Harvard Guide to Public Service, as a keynote speaker. She is considered a national authority on public service and an outspoken advocate for service learning.