

Phi Beta Kappa chapter installed at Alfred University

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ALFRED, NY Alfred University joined the ranks of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most widely recognized academic honor society, with the recent installation of a University chapter. Dr. John Churchill, executive secretary of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, presided over the ceremony in the University's Howell Hall, formally installing the Alpha Gamma of New York chapter at Alfred University. Dr. Churchill said that throughout the long evaluation and application process it was evident that students at Alfred University are "being drawn into a wonderful world of learning." The University now has the authority to induct its top students in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences into the prestigious academic honor society. Alfred University began the rigorous process of applying for Phi Beta Kappa membership several years ago. Hundreds of hours of research and writing went into the process. Dr. Don J. Wyatt, the Phi Beta Kappa Foundation trustee who chaired the Committee on Qualifications that visited the University two years ago, said evaluators were impressed with Alfred from the start. "It took merely minutes perhaps only seconds for the members of our team to become fully convinced of the genuineness of the commitment to excellence in liberal learning that is everywhere in evidence here," said Dr. Wyatt, a professor of history at Middlebury College in Vermont. The Alfred University chapter is one of only eight accepted for membership in Phi Beta Kappa this year, said Dr. Churchill. Founded in 1776, the society has only 270 chapters nationwide, while there are nearly 4,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. Sixteen current or retired Alfred University faculty and staff members who had earned Phi Beta Kappa status at their own undergraduate institutions were previously named charter members of the Alfred chapter. Eight additional foundation members were sworn in at the installation ceremony. Among them was Dr. Marvin Bell, a 1958 Alfred University graduate who is the Flannery O'Connor Professor of Letters at the University of Iowa. Dr. Bell, a poet and essayist, delivered the keynote address at the ceremony. Dr. Bell recalled his time as a student at Alfred, when he found the range of liberal arts and science courses "seductive." He counts himself as one of many students who "found their passion and their values at Alfred and built their lives around them." Also named foundation members were: Dr. Andrew L. Call, University medical director and a local physician. Dr. Elizabeth Ann Dobie, associate professor of art theory at Alfred University. Dr. Paul Strong, Kruson distinguished professor of English at Alfred University. Dr. G. David Toot, professor of physics and director of the Stull Observatory at Alfred University. Dr. James R. Varner, Kruson distinguished professor of ceramic engineering at Alfred University.