

McGee accepts post as LAS dean

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Alfred University's oldest college will have a new dean. Dr. Mary McGee, who has been associate dean of the faculty and dean of students at Columbia University School of General Studies since 2000, will join AU as dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, effective July 1. In announcing McGee's appointment, Dr. Suzanne Buckley, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, said "Dr. McGee is an inspired choice for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She will bring her many talents and experiences as a teacher, scholar and administrator to the leadership of our largest college. All of us involved in the selection process are very pleased she accepted the appointment." McGee says she welcomes the opportunity to join the faculty as dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at a time when the administration and faculty are eager to explore and support innovation in pedagogy and curriculum. "Alfred University has a reputation for faculty members who care deeply about teaching and I am excited to partner with these dedicated scholars, especially as we work towards building and strengthening interdisciplinary programs. "One of my first goals is to start a serious conversation about and review of the curriculum. While reaffirming the core values of a liberal arts education, we want to make sure that the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' curriculum prepares our graduates to be informed and responsible citizens, able to thrive in a world that is changing rapidly due to technology and globalization." McGee notes that while her energies will focus primarily on faculty and curriculum development within CLAS, she expects to collaborate with Alfred's other colleges as "we continue to build traditions of excellence for our students at Alfred through programming and creative use of resources." McGee is known for her commitment to teaching and to developing programs in support of strengthening teaching, said Buckley, and she has a wealth of experience with academic program development; interdisciplinary and dual-degree programs; and creation of academic support networks for students. A graduate of Georgetown University with a B.A. in sociology, McGee earned master's and doctoral degrees in the history of religions from Harvard University. A scholar of South Asian religions, she has been on the faculty of Harvard College, Vassar College, and Columbia University, where she currently teaches in the Department of Religion. Her teaching and publications in religious studies focus on issues relevant to gender, ethics, and ritual; among her on-going research projects is a study of Hindu temple architecture in the United States, with a particular focus on temples in New York State. A recipient of two Fulbright awards and grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, McGee's scholarship has also been recognized by grants from the Ford Foundation, the Charlotte Newcombe Foundation, and the International Federation of University Women. She is on the editorial board of the journal Religion and has served on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the American Academy of Religion, having chaired its Committee on International Connections for six years. In her present position, McGee oversees the academic curriculum and advising for 1,250 undergraduate and 450 post-baccalaureate premedical students enrolled in the College of General Studies at Columbia. She is responsible for the overall management, budget, operation, supervision and staffing relating to academic advising, academic support services, and student activities at the College. Previously, McGee directed the Dharam Hinduja Indic Research Center at Columbia University and was director of the Program in Asian Studies while at Vassar. "The LAS Dean Search committee is thrilled and excited that Mary McGee has accepted the position of dean of our college," said Dr. David Toot, professor of physics and chair of the search committee. "Our search brought in a large number of well qualified candidates. However, Prof. McGee has a combination of background, scholarship, teaching and administrative experience, and personality that seems an ideal next step for us. She will be an important addition to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and to the University. We are eager to begin working with her." Buckley commended the LAS dean's search committee for its work, which began more than six months ago and resulted in four finalists visiting campus. Members of the search committee, in addition to Toot, were Ellen Bahr, assistant librarian at Herrick Library; Dr. Jean Cardinale, associate professor of biology; Dr. Eric Gaze, associate professor of mathematics; Dr. Allen Grove, associate professor of English; Dr. Chris Lauback, assistant professor of school psychology; Dr. Mary Drach McInnes, associate professor of art history in the School of Art & Design; Dr. Gary Ostrower, professor of history; and Dr. Robert Stein, assistant professor of political science.