

## **Fierer Chair Enhances Growth of AU's Life Sciences Program**

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Alfred, NY -- For Dr. Joshua Fierer, a member of Alfred University's class of 1959, his \$500,000 gift to the University to create the Norman and Evelyn Fierer Chair in Life Sciences allows him to honor two of the most important influences in his life – his parents and Alfred University. For Alfred University, the gift allows it to enhance its growing Life Sciences Program. The first recipient of the chair is Dr. Alan Goldstein, professor of Biology and director of the Molecular Life Sciences Program. "This gift allows me the opportunity to recognize the most significant influences in my life," said Fierer. "For most people, the greatest influence in their lives is probably their parents. For me, the next most significant influence on my life was definitely Alfred University, and I am pleased that I can assist the University in its efforts to achieve national excellence." After graduating from Alfred, Fierer attended medical school at Downstate Medical Center and then completed residencies in surgery at the University of Rochester, and in pathology at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. He taught at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the School of Medicine at Creighton University, and retired in 1986 after an eight-year term as professor and head of the Department of Pathology at University of Illinois at Peoria. From his years in higher education, Fierer said he gained an appreciation of the effect that a large gift can have on a program and an institution. "Most of us have charitable impulses," he said, "but I am convinced that it is better to make a single gift, one that really does have an impact, rather than several smaller gifts to many institutions." Fierer's gift plays a catalytic role in the growth of AU's Life Sciences Program, said Goldstein. "Right now, there is a revolution going on in the field of biology. At different times in history, different areas of knowledge will play a transcendent role in shaping human destiny and at the millennium, most people would agree that molecular biology is one of these areas," said Goldstein. "I feel incredibly lucky to be a biologist at this time, and I want to convey that to my students. But right now, I am in one of the fastest moving fields the world has ever seen. To remain current, and to give our students what they need, we literally have to change our curriculum every year, and that takes resources, such as those that Dr. Fierer's gift will bring to the department." "At the college level, we can't just talk about science," said Goldstein. "Students need to engage in experiential learning. This gift contributes significantly to our ability to have a research program and an inquiry-based instructional curriculum at the undergraduate level." Over the past 20 years, biology has become a quantitative science," he stressed, "and that requires high-tech instructional laboratories and instrumentation that are much more costly. But when the goal is academic excellence, there is no choice. If students don't have lab experience, they are not really getting a Life Sciences education." It is not enough, Goldstein said, to have students doing rote experiments; real research teaches them much more. "Science educators at every level now realize that inquiry-based learning is much more effective, but for faculty members to teach research at the university level, they must know how to do research." Goldstein's lab has funded research projects from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and IMC, Inc. "This summer alone, I have five students in my lab, doing real research, and learning what it is to be a molecular biologist," said Goldstein. "That, in turn, will help them in their decision-making about their careers, and whether they really want to be scientists. It will also provide them with a tremendous competitive advantage should they decide to pursue a career in this area." "This 'Golden Age' of biotechnology is certainly going to continue for at least the first half of the 21st century," said Goldstein. "Alfred University has to be ready, because many of the nation's best and brightest students will be going into careers in the Life Sciences. Josh understands that, and has shown his tremendous insight in a very significant way by creating the Norman and Evelyn Fierer Chair in Life Sciences." "I'm delighted that Dr. Goldstein is the first recipient of the Fierer Chair," said Fierer. "When we established the chair, we agreed that the recipients were to be faculty members and researchers with national stature, and Dr. Goldstein certainly fits that description." "I think the fact that we were able to appoint Dr. Goldstein speaks to the achievements of Alfred University in having faculty members of this caliber," he added. "With the salary line freed up by Dr. Goldstein's appointment to this chair, Alfred University should be able to recruit additional faculty to further strengthen its program in this very critical area."