

Alfred University to offer degree in art history

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Alfred University's School of Art & Design has offered art history courses since its founding in 1900, but it now offers a major leading to a bachelor of science degree in art history. Joseph S. Lewis III, dean of the School of Art & Design, said the program offered by AU is markedly different from "90 percent of the art history programs in the country," including those offered by other New York state colleges and universities, because it is studio-based. Students majoring in art history at AU will have to go through the same portfolio-based admissions process as those entering the bachelor of fine arts (BFA) program in the School of Art & Design. Additionally, they will have to successfully complete the School's 16-credit Foundations program, plus an additional eight credits in studio art. That is what makes the art history major at AU a professional degree, rather than the liberal arts degree offered by most competitors, explained Dr. Gerard Edizel, professor of art history and chair of the Division of Art History. To complete the art history major, students will also have to complete two years of a foreign language and 16 credits in the Division of Human Studies in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at AU, in addition to their coursework in art history. Edizel said there are current students at the University who will likely apply for admission to the art history major; he anticipates the first degrees could be offered within two years. The School of Art & Design has offered a minor in art history since 1994; there are currently approximately 25 students each year who earn a minor in art history in addition to their BFA degrees. It will be possible for a student to obtain both a BFA and a BS in art history, he said, although it may take an additional three or four semesters to complete the requirements. Edizel noted art history at Alfred University "is nearly as old as the modern discipline itself," which began to emerge as a field of study in the 1800s. When the New York State School of Clayworking was founded at Alfred University in 1900, art history courses were introduced to the curriculum. The School of Clayworking evolved into the New York State College of Ceramics, which now comprises the School of Engineering and the School of Art & Design, and art history continued to be a requirement for completion of the bachelor of fine arts degree. "The hustle and bustle of studio activity surrounds us as we teach," said Edizel. "Art history at Alfred University is, and has been, an integral part of our studio education." The University received confirmation the bachelor of science degree in art history has been approved by the New York State Education Department. The degree program had earlier won approval from the Alfred University Board of Trustees and the State University of New York (SUNY), which is necessary because the School of Art & Design is part of Alfred University's state-supported College of Ceramics. Edizel said the program has also received preliminary approval as a professional program in art history from the National Association of Schools of Art & Design; final approval will be considered after the first students graduate with the degree.