

Drawn to Diversity program earns award from national Student Affairs group

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Alfred University's Drawn to Diversity program is the recipient of a 2009 Bronze Excellence Award from NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Association). The NASPA award was given in the International, Multi-cultural, Cultural, Gender, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender), Spirituality, Disability and Related category. Dan Napolitano, director of student activities in the University's Center for Student Involvement, coordinates the Drawn to Diversity program. "The Drawn to Diversity program continues to grow and evolve into a powerful force for student activism," said Napolitano. "The power of our students' creativity in promoting equality and fighting ignorance inspires me to continue to support and strengthen this effort. I am honored that NASPA has recognized this strength within our Alfred community." The Alfred University Drawn to Diversity program was created in 2005 as a service-learning project to teach history, inspire artists, cultivate dialogue, and fight ignorance through creative exhibits and programs. Drawn to Diversity's mission aspires "to build an appreciation for diversity and to champion equality by exploring various media and art forms." The program has grown into a credit-bearing course. Napolitano currently teaches a two-credit Drawn to Diversity service-learning course in which students have formed partnerships with numerous community agencies and businesses including Marvel Comics, MTVu, Wegmans Food Markets, Equality Charter School (Bronx, NY), NYC Comic Con, The National Museum of Play (Rochester, NY), and Catholic Charities of Steuben County. More information can be found at www.drawntodiversity.com. Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs at Alfred University, nominated Drawn to Diversity for the award "because I believe Drawn to Diversity is the most creative and totally unique program I've ever seen. Dan has found a way to tap into every student's creative nature, regardless of academic major, and to put that creativity to use for socially just purposes. "One of the elements in the Student Affairs Division's vision statement is Dedication to Diversity, defined as 'Alfred's unique history of equality will inspire us to be proactive in celebrating the diversity on our campus and preparing students with leadership skills to create safe, socially just communities start here in our own rural area.' Drawn to Diversity has perfectly captured that vision in a way that is 100 percent Alfred, combining diversity and art with service learning and history," Woughter noted. She added, "I thought that the NASPA should recognize this outstanding program, as that organization exists to support and recognize all the great staff and leaders who integrate academic learning with student development. I know my NASPA colleagues love to hear about programs they can adapt for their campuses, just as I do." Napolitano is an Alfred University alumnus; he holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts degree and a master's degree in education. In addition to the Drawn to Diversity successes, highlights include the national award-winning Cultural Caf restaurant series, presenting hip hop workshops to coincide with Russell Simmons Hip Hop Summit, the creation of a Buffalo Bills student-fan group called The Daydream Bill-ievers, and producing numerous concerts with artists including Alanis Morissette, Barenaked Ladies, Maroon 5, and the Black Eyed Peas. Napolitano and Alfred University Assistant Dean of New Students Tricia Debertolis, an AU alumna, are married and have three children, Sophie, Noah, and Ella. While residing within the Alfred village, they have become involved in community groups such as the Alfred Lions Club, Cub Scout Pack 1026, the Alfred Community Chest, and the Montessori School Board.