

## Alfred University's downstate program to award 118 degrees

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One hundred and eighteen students who have completed their requirements for master's degree from Alfred University through a downstate program offered through the Center for Integrated Teacher Education in New York City will graduate Saturday, June 20, in a ceremony in the rotunda at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn. The speaker will again be Brigadier General Robert L. "Steve" Stephens (U.S. Army retired), an Alfred University alumnus who joined the University's Board of Trustees in 2007. Stephens is now vice president of External Relations and executive assistant to the president of Clayton State University in Georgia. "General Stephens spoke to our first class of downstate graduates last September, and was so well-received we asked him to speak again," said Alfred University President Charles M. Edmondson. "General Stephens has had a distinguished career, and that alone would merit an invitation to be our commencement speaker. But the fact that he has so much in common with our downstate graduates makes him a natural choice. Just as they have done, General Stephens earned his master's degree in counseling from Alfred University while working full-time and raising a family." This year's class is 49 percent larger than the 79 students who graduated last September in the first-ever Alfred University downstate commencement ceremony. Sixty of this year's graduates will receive Master of Science degrees in counseling, and 58 will receive master's in literacy education. Alfred University began offering master's degrees in school counseling through C.I.T.E in fall 2006, and in literacy in the summer 2007. Counseling students attend classes year-round for two years, including seven courses on the Alfred campus during their two summer sessions in the program. The literacy program is a one-year program during which the students attend three courses on campus and the rest of their coursework downstate. The downstate programs are offered as satellites of the programs on campus, with courses located at sites in Brooklyn Heights and various locations on Long Island. Alfred University has a long history of offering Master of Science in Education degrees in counseling and literacy (formerly reading); the counseling program has been in existence for more than 50 years. A graduate of West Virginia State University, where he was a member of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and commander of the Corps of Cadets, Stephens was commissioned a second lieutenant of infantry and assigned to the 101st Airborne Division upon his graduation in 1962. It was the beginning of a 30-year career in the military that included a stint as a ROTC instructor at Alfred University, where he earned his master's degree in 1971. Stephens served in every leadership position in the Army, from an infantry rifle platoon leader to assistant division commander of an infantry division. Among the highlights of his military career: He served as a Special Forces "A Team" commander in Latin America; commanded two companies during combat in Vietnam; commanded an infantry battalion at Fort Lewis, WA, and commanded a one-of-a-kind forward deployed separate infantry brigade in the Republic of Panama. He also commanded the Joint United States Military Advisory Group in Bangkok, Thailand. His final military assignment was director of the Joint Armed Forces Inaugural Committee that directed all of the ceremonial activities in the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton. His service also included assignments with the Army General Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. Upon his retirement from the Army in June 1993, Stephens was appointed director of personnel for the State of West Virginia. In 1997, he accepted an appointment to the position of deputy commissioner of the Georgia Merit System of Personnel Management. From July 2000 to July 2002, he was project manager for the Eagle Group International, Inc., directing a worldwide command post exercise program for the U.S. Army Reserves before accepting his present position at Clayton State. His military awards include the Army's highest award for meritorious service, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Department of Defense Superior Service Medal (2d Award), the Legion of Merit (2d Award), the Bronze Star with "V" device and 2 oak leaf clusters, the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with "V" device and 4 oak leaf clusters and numerous other American and foreign awards including the coveted Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Master Parachutist Badge and the Air Assault Badge. He is also authorized to wear the parachute badges of Bolivia, Panama, and Thailand. Stephens is included in "Who's Who in America;" "Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges;" and he is a Fellow in the Council of State Governments' Toll Fellowship Program. He was president of the National Association of State Personnel Executives in 1998. He has been designated a Kentucky Colonel, an Arkansas Traveler, and was twice recognized as a Distinguished West Virginian. In 1996, he was selected by Senator Jay Rockefeller to serve on a Congressional Commission for Veterans' Transition Programs. He is a member and past chairman of the Board of Directors of the West Virginia State University Foundation and an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees for the Clayton State University Foundation. Stephens is a lay Eucharistic minister in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta (GA). He is a

graduate of the National War College, the Army Command and General Staff College and the Defense Language Institute. He has also completed Harvard University's Senior Managers in Government Program, Duke University's Strategic Leadership Program, and the prestigious program of study at the Center for Creative Leadership. He is also a recent graduate of the Leadership Regional Institute (LRI) of Georgia. He is married to the former Delores Olivia Bennett. They have a son and two daughters. For more information about Alfred University: <http://www.alfred.edu> For more information about Alfred University's downstate programs: <http://www.alfred.edu/gra...> and choose "CITE."