

AU celebrates its septaquinquacentennial with (record) class

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2011 Orientation Guides will welcome new students

A record number of Alfred University freshmen will roll into Alfred Thursday for the start of the 2011-12 academic year, and the celebration of the University's 175th anniversary of its founding on Dec. 5, 1836. "We broke all records this year, with the largest number of deposited freshman students in the University's history," President Charles M. Edmondson told the University employees gathered for the annual opening of school breakfast in Ade Hall this morning. He said that the University has 573 deposited first-year students as of today. By census date, which is mid-September, the number will most likely be 560-565, as students make a last-minute decision not to come or decide to leave immediately for various reasons. Even at 560-565, "that's very good news," said Edmondson. He commended the Division of Enrollment Management for its efforts in bringing in the record class. "I salute the Admissions and Financial Aid offices," said Edmondson. "They worked smart; they worked hard, and they did it with unflagging loyalty." The University is also anticipating 83 transfer students will matriculate when classes start next week. Earl Pierce, vice president of Enrollment Management, said the number is comparable to what the University has experienced in the previous two years. Edmondson said the Enrollment Management Division's efforts had "intense levels of support from faculty and staff. Now in his 12th year as Alfred University president, Edmondson said he has "never seen the University work together with more purpose and focus" than it did this year. "Now we need all of you to do it again this year," Edmondson said. He noted that this year's entering class is 26 percent minority students, up from a previous high of 16 percent. It reflects the changing demographics of the state and the nation, but is also indicative of the "openness" found at Alfred University, which from its beginning has welcomed students without regard to gender, ethnicity, race or religion. While the incoming class tracks national and state trends for scores on standardized tests and grade-point averages, it is significantly different in one regard: Men are 56 percent of the class, at a time when other schools are struggling to enroll classes that are 40 percent men. The strong enrollment of men at AU most likely speaks to the "quality of our engineering and business programs, and football," said Edmondson. There is one troubling aspect to the class, and that is that 78 percent come from New York State, up from 63 percent about 10 years ago, said Edmondson. It is, of course, a positive demonstration that AU competes well with the more 121 private colleges and universities in New York, and with the many campuses of the State University of New York. Unfortunately, the high school population of New York State is already declining and census data indicate this decline will continue for the foreseeable future. That means the University and all of its competitors will be recruiting in the same, shrinking pool of candidates. The students are also not from wealthy families. "This is a blue-collar class," said Edmondson. "These kids have done everything right but be born to affluent parents," but, he added, "They are the type of students Alfred University has historically served very well." Along with a continued focus on recruiting new students, the University also must work at retention of current students. "It is highly improbable that every student we

lose is one we needed to lose" because of academic, financial, or emotional issues," he said, just as it is 'highly likely that we do lose students whose lives would be materially improved if they were able to stay here."