

## **School of Art & Design dedicates foundry facilities**

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Alfred University's School of Art & Design has a facility that few, if any, other art schools in the country can claim - a foundry capable of melting large quantities of metal at high temperatures. Dedicated during Reunion '06 Weekend, the metal foundry is phase one in creating what Professors Glenn Zwegardt and Stephen D. Edwards have named the National Casting Center - facilities where their students can cast ultra-large-scale metal and glass sculptures. Zwegardt, a member of the faculty of the School of Art & Design since 1969, teaches metal sculpture, and Edwards, who joined the faculty in 1988, teaches glass art. Both are internationally recognized artists as well. The School of Art & Design, part of the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, has had a metal foundry for more than 30 years. Located in the basement of Binns-Merrill Hall, the foundry had furnaces capable of melting smaller amounts of metals and at lower temperatures. Adjacent to the metal foundry was the hot glass shop, where Edwards and his students had facilities to melt small batches of glass. For several years Zwegardt and Edwards have been experimenting and collaborating on casting large sculptures, and teaching their students to do the same. More room and better facilities were needed, they decided, and they set out to make it happen. A gift of an induction furnace from Jon and Mary Tabor was the first step in the creation of the National Casting Center. Jon Tabor is a 1955 graduate of Alfred University and a former member of its Board of Trustees, who became president and chief executive officer of Allied Mineral Products, Inc., in Columbus, Ohio. Mary Tabor is a member of Alfred University's Class of 1958. But finding a suitable location for the foundry proved to be a problem, one that took Zwegardt several years to solve. He'd obtained a prestigious \$110,000 State University of New York Initiative Grant, and support from the F.T. & Anna C. Manley Memorial Trust, but couldn't find sufficient space for the facility he envisioned. The basement of Binns-Merrill Hall was not properly ventilated to handle the furnaces. Zwegardt and Edwards had their eyes on a facility on State Route 244, just north of the Village of Alfred, that is owned by Alfred State College and had been used on a temporary basis by the School of Art & Design while Binns-Merrill Hall underwent renovation. Zwegardt took his proposal to create a casting center to Dr. Uma Gupta, president of Alfred State College, who he says was "very receptive" to his plan, as long as the facility would benefit Alfred State College students, a request that Zwegardt says will be easy to fulfill. "Dr. Gupta asked us to think of ways in which our students could interact with those at Alfred State College," said Zwegardt. Students of the Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering at Alfred University will also benefit. Glass and materials engineers will be able to observe and study the problems faced in industry by large-scale melting and casting of these materials. SUNY Construction Fund agreed to pay for necessary renovations to convert the former agriculture building into a foundry with an adjoining classroom. While the newly remodeled metal foundry now has several furnaces, it is the induction furnace that is the centerpiece, and that gives the Alfred facility its uniqueness. It is capable of melting up to 200 pounds of stainless steel, corten steel, cast iron and other metals at temperatures exceeding 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Phase two of the National Casting Center is now under way, in the basement space vacated by the foundry. Located adjacent to the hot glass shop, it was a natural choice for the expansion of those facilities. Edwards is currently constructing a two-ton capacity clear glass and three-quarters of a ton colored glass furnace dedicated to "hot casting." These furnaces are expected to be ready for use in the fall of 2007. The combined glass and metal facilities will be unmatched, anywhere in the country, Zwegardt noted. The facilities will be used for regular and summer school classes as well as short courses, and special demonstrations by visiting artists. While details have not been finalized, the National Casting Center will also be made available on a time-available basis to faculty from other schools and to independent artists, according to Zwegardt.