

Cohens' gift endows School of Art and Design deanship; creates opportunities for applied learning

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Marty, Michele and Adam
Cohen

A \$2 million gift from Michele and Marty Cohen will create an endowed dean&s position for the School of Art and Design, and provide immediate funding for an applied learning program for Alfred University students, regardless of major.

An endowment to support a dean&s position is a first for Alfred University and helps to advance the University&s strategic objective of doubling the number of endowed faculty/staff positions over the next decade.

Alfred University president Mark Zupan relayed that “We are profoundly grateful to Michele and Marty Cohen for their inspirational gift. Their investment in Alfred University will promote ongoing excellence and leadership at our top-10-rated School of Art and Design through the Michele and Marty Cohen endowed deanship. Furthermore, their generous support will allow us to expand our applied learning program at Alfred University and to ensure that, effective with this fall&s entering class, every student at Alfred will be able to benefit from an applied learning opportunity.”

The choice to endow the dean&s position in the School of Art and Design was a natural one for the Cohens. Not only is their son, Adam, an alumnus of the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, but an earlier gift created the Cohen Center for the Arts and the Cohen Gallery. Michele and Marty are both emphatic about the value and importance of art in people&s lives.

The timing was right, too, as Alfred University is searching for a new dean for its School of Art and Design. “Endowing the position at this time helps the University to attract a wonderful new dean, and that is an enormous plus,” Michele Cohen said.

Provost W. Richard Stephens agreed. “This gift has come at an especially significant time for Alfred University as we are in a national search for a new dean. This commitment by the Cohens demonstrates our collective and long-term commitment to art and design at our University. This is a profound gift for which we are all grateful.”

The second part of the Cohens& gift creates a current-use fund that will open up opportunities for Alfred University students to undertake a variety of applied learning activities such as internships and co-ops, having an international experience, completing an undergraduate research project, and engaging in service learning activities.

“This gift will promote applied learning opportunities and assure that, effective with our entering first-year class this fall, every student will be able to benefit from such an opportunity by the time he or she graduates,” said Kathy Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs.

“I cannot emphasize enough what a positive turning point this applied learning gift will be for Alfred University's future, starting immediately,” Woughter added. “We have always known how well an Alfred University degree prepares students for success after graduation, and this program will guarantee that it's no longer a secret for incoming students, parents, and employers. The Cohens& gift ensures that our students have a broader choice of applied learning experiences that may have been out of reach before.”

“The Cohens& gift for applied and experiential learning at Alfred University fits exactly with our strategic initiatives in student learning outcomes,” said Provost Stephens. “It is imperative that we more clearly link the undergraduate experience to the postgraduate lives our students will have for decades to come. This is a most appropriate, relevant, and generous gift, not just to Alfred University, but for the lives of our students well beyond their time on campus.”

“We wanted to do something that has an immediate impact for students,” said Michele Cohen, a member of the Alfred University Board of Trustees and chair of its Student Affairs committee. “We totally believe in the opportunities this will make available to Alfred University students. Those experiences can have such an impact.”

Travel, internships, volunteer work, undergraduate research projects, and the creation of a body of art work all can qualify under the program being developed by Alfred University.

Amanda Baker, director of Alfred University's Career Development Center, underscores the value an internship can have for a student. “Our Experiential Education Report for 2015-16 shows that 98 percent of students who completed an internship said that they were better prepared to enter the world of work because of their experience. Internships offer skill and knowledge development beyond what is taught in the classroom, including professionalism, proper communication, understanding of teamwork, organization, confidence, and time management,” said Baker.

“Refining soft skills and abilities better prepares students for full-time work while making them more attractive to employers. In that same 2015-16 report, 80 percent of students said a permanent job could result from their experience, and 99 percent said they could acquire a useful reference because of it,” Baker added.