

APEX offers Alfred University students unique learning opportunities

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APEX

ALFRED, NY – A new program at Alfred University scheduled to roll out this fall aims to assist students in choosing a career path and increasing their opportunities for success after graduation. It also expands access to applied learning experiences for students who might otherwise be hindered due to financial barriers.

Alfred University's Applied and Experiential Learning Program (APEX), which begins with the fall 2018 semester, will allow juniors and seniors to apply for funding to defray the cost of work experiences such as internships; co-ops; clinical and practicum placements; civic engagement initiatives; and art apprenticeships, or study/research programs like study abroad/off-campus study; undergraduate research; service learning classes; and capstone projects.

"Hands-on learning has long been a hallmark of Alfred University," said Mark Zupan, Alfred University president. "Through the APEX program, we intend to make applied, experiential learning experiences even more available to our students and a visible component of the Alfred University brand. Our ultimate objective is to have Alfred University be the first higher educational institution in the country to provide meaningful applied, experiential learning opportunities for each student while offering financial support to help students pursue those opportunities."

"The purpose of APEX is to highlight the powerful connection of scholarship with practical application," said Angie To, chair of the Division of Foundations, School of Art and Design. She and Kathy Woughter, vice president of Student Affairs, are co-chairs of the APEX Design Team, a group of Alfred University faculty and staff charged with building the APEX program from the ground up.

"This is an affirmation of Alfred University's promise to create substantive pathways for students to translate their education into diversified career choices as well as expanding their perspective as civic leaders and global citizens," To said.

W. Richard Stephens, Alfred University provost and vice president of Academic Affairs, said the program will help prepare students for their careers by helping them find real-life experiences while still in college.

“With the APEX experience, students will make choices about where they want to go and how they want to get there (through internships, or study abroad experiences, for example). Once they’ve done it, they will have learned self-reliance, responsibility, and navigational skills that help them move through a network,” Stephens said. “We’re creating safe environments where students can step out of their comfort zone, sample work life, other cultures and nationalities, and other socio-economic environments. It will be a part of who those students become.”

Woughter said, “while we have always had great programs for co-ops, undergraduate research, off-campus study, service learning and internships, they were not necessarily gathered under one applied/experiential learning roof.”

Now, financial awards for these types of learning initiatives will be coordinated under one program, APEX; by providing grant money, the University makes them accessible to more students.

When APEX rolls out in the fall, it will initially be considered a pilot project, with enough funding to provide one-time grants of up to \$1,000 to 200 students. Applications for APEX funding will open July 1, with the first awards designated at the start of fall 2018 semester. Grants will be supplemented by funding already provided for existing APEX-type experiences as well.

The program will continue as a pilot, open to juniors and seniors, for two years. Once permanent funding is in place, the maximum one-time award will increase to \$2,000 and will be available to second-semester sophomores as well.

Stephens envisions the program becoming more popular as students participate in APEX-funded initiatives. “People will come back and share their APEX experiences with others. I think it will grow organically,” he said.

APEX is made possible in part by start-up funding from Michele and Marty Cohen. The Cohens are members of Alfred University’s Society of Benefactors, and Michele Cohen has been a member of the Board of Trustees at Alfred University since 2001.