

Christakis invited to present paper at international conference

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Michael Christakis, a 1999 graduate of Alfred University who is now a Ph.D. candidate and assistant director of Residence Life at the University at Albany, SUNY, was an invited presenter at the 4th International Congress on the Challenges and Expectations of Higher Education held in Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico June 8 - 10, 2005. Christakis joined higher education scholars from Australia, China, Canada, Spain and Mexico during the four-day meeting. He presented on his on-going research focusing on US State Governors' authority and influence on public higher education systems in 33 states. "I was thrilled to participate and share my research with so many distinguished colleagues in the international field of higher education," said Christakis. "My research findings to date prove to be valuable in an international comparative vein for conference participants. Higher education today, throughout the world, is acutely influenced by a variety of political forces within and around universities." Christakis' research examines governors' formal authority, as prescribed in state statute, such as a governor's budget authority, and informal influence, as reflected in a survey of over 1,000 University executives in 33 states nationwide. Ratings of formal authority and informal influence are combined to reflect each governor's type of power relationship with their state university systems. While studies have dealt with states' role in higher education, none specifically focus on governors' role in public higher education as Christakis' research aims to do. "At a time when state governors are expressing an increased interest in the affairs of their states' public colleges and universities, an examination of the nature and extent of gubernatorial authority and influence on state universities is timely," Christakis said. Christakis hopes to conclude his research in the early fall.