

## **Alfred University alumnus Robert S. Cohen establishes scholarship to attract New York City students**

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Alfred University left a lasting impression on Robert Stephan Cohen, who came to the small but multi-disciplinary and distinguished school in Allegany County from his native Brooklyn in 1955. Cohen, a 1959 graduate of Alfred University, is a senior partner in a prominent Manhattan law firm who credits his time spent at Alfred for much of his success.

“Alfred was a very important part of my life; it changed my life,” Cohen said. “I was a lower class kid from Brooklyn. Alfred opened my eyes to so many things.”

Cohen earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Alfred University in 1959 at age 20 and went on to receive his law degree from Fordham University. A former member of the Alfred University Board of Trustees, he is senior partner at Cohen Clair Lans Greifer Thorpe & Rottenstreich LLP, one of the most well-known and successful matrimonial law firms in the United States.

Now, more than five decades after graduating from Alfred, Cohen wants to help attract more students from New York City to Alfred. He has established a scholarship fund targeting students from a select list of schools in the City. Beginning with the 2019-20 academic year, The Cohen Fund for Admissions Innovations will fund three scholarships to run through the 2022-23 year. Cohen’s expectation is that the scholarships will entice more students from city schools who want to attend a distinctive rural-based university.

Several Alfred University alumni, including Joseph Smith ’66 and Phillip Stillman ’64, are raising funds from their fraternity brothers to support the Cohen scholarship by funding the cost of a private jet flight to bring guidance counselors and administrators from New York City schools to the Alfred University campus. They will spend time on campus, learning what Alfred University has to offer and how their students would benefit from an Alfred University education.

Mark Zupan, president of Alfred University, thanked Bob Cohen for his ongoing generosity: “Bob’s philanthropic investment will allow promising students from the New York City area to follow in his footsteps and thereby provide the means for our University to transform their lives, thereby bettering our broader world.”

“Alfred is like a handful of schools – small, typically liberal arts schools that are rural – like Bates and Colby in Maine, or Hamilton and Colgate in New York,” Cohen said. “I think Alfred offers an appealing alternative to those schools because of the breadth of its curricular and co-curricular options thereby helping students identify their passions and nurture the confidence to pursue them. Alfred provides an immersive and highly personalized learning experience, in contrast to the distractions that come with schools located in big cities and the anonymity often associated with big state schools.”

Among the academic components that make Alfred University appealing are: a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter; a College of Business that is AACSB-accredited (one of the three smallest business schools in the country earning such a gold standard of accreditation); a School of Art and Design that is routinely rated among the 10 best in the country and is known worldwide for its ceramic and glass art expertise; and the Inamori School of Engineering, with leading programs in ceramic engineering, materials science, and glass engineering/science.

Cohen said when he was in high school, he was well aware of Alfred University. “Alfred was a school presented to New York City kids an option, particularly for students wanting to be professionals,” said Cohen, who originally enrolled at Alfred University with plans on becoming a dentist but changed course after taking a class on Constitutional Law his junior year.

“Taking that class pushed me to make the decision to go to law school,” said Cohen, who admitted he would have been hopeless at dentistry. “My success in life emerged from that decision.”

One of the leading matrimonial lawyers in the United States, Cohen is a sought after lecturer and author on issues relating to divorce. He wrote the “anti-divorce book,” *Reconcilable Differences*, published by Simon & Schuster, and since 2003 has been an adjunct professor of law in the University of Pennsylvania School of Law for 15 years, teaching a course titled “Anatomy of a Divorce.”

Governor Cuomo has appointed him Chair of the Screening Committee that recommends judges for the Appellate Division in New York and the Screening Committee that recommends judges to the Court of Claims to the Governor. He is also the Chair of the Matrimonial Committee in the Supreme Court, New York County, appointed by Judge Deborah Kaplan, Administrative Judge in New York.

Cohen said if Alfred University is going to be among the choices of students in the New York City area, more people – particularly guidance counselors and administrators – need to know what the University has to offer. “People who help these high school students make a college decision should learn about Alfred as an option.”