

## Acclaimed poet returns to AU to deliver commencement address

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ALFRED Alfred University students graduating Saturday were asked to view commencement not as an ending, but rather as a beginning in which they will face new challenges and pursue new passions. "I am here to say hello and goodbye," said Marvin Bell, a 1958 graduate of Alfred University and a renowned poet and educator, as he addressed the Class of 2002 during the University's 166th Commencement. "The goodbye comes first. For this is the day when you seniors say farewell. You say so long to the place where you learned, more than ever before, to live on your own and think for yourself." In bidding farewell to graduates, Bell reminded graduates of the value of their time spent at Alfred, which transformed them from "raw" teenagers into young adults ready to make a difference in the world that is increasingly challenging and rife with pitfalls. "I don't have to tell you that the world on your graduation day is faster and more layered than mine was or that of your teachers," he said. "For you there will be new dangers and new challenges. The challenges are much more 'in your face' than they were for us." Bell referred not only to the obvious challenges of dealing with the events of Sept. 11 and the continuing battles in the Middle East, but to conditions at home, in our hometowns and neighborhoods. He said the success of graduates will be measured as much by how they cope with problems in society as by their personal achievements. "I have an idea I'd like to try out on you, a very simple idea," Bell said. "I want to suggest to you that, in the final analysis, you will be judged, by others and, just as crucially, by yourself, by what you do for free. By what you do for others for free. And by the reach of your compassion." Bell reiterated that while graduation is a noteworthy accomplishment, it is as much a beginning of a new era as it is the end of an old one. "You made it to the finish line. You also made it to the start line. After the long goodbye, the big hello," he said. "Look after your insides. Remember to do something for others. Try to be awake. Don't be timid. I believe in dumb luck, but you have to make yourself available. And above all, enjoy yourself." Bell is the Flannery O'Connor Professor of Letters at the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he has taught since 1965. He is acclaimed author of 17 books of essays and poetry, one of which, *A Probable Volume of Dreams*, received the Lamont Award from the Academy of American Poets. In 2000, he was named Iowa's first-ever Poet Laureate. Two graduating seniors, Judy Tsang and Jalal Clemens, addressed their classmates as the Outstanding Female and Outstanding Male students, respectively. Tsang, who earned a bachelor's degree in communications, asked her classmates to use what they have learned at Alfred to make a difference in the world. "We are all leaving Alfred in different directions and in different ways," she said. "Regardless, we all have the skills and perseverance to bring change to the world." Tsang cited a Chinese proverb which, translated to English, means "heart, thoughts, matter and succeed." She urged graduates to always dream and aspire to greatness. "Whatever your heart and mind can think and dream, it can happen," she said. Tsang said there are countless people she and her classmates owe a debt of gratitude. "This is a day to celebrate the achievement of you graduates, but remember to thank your family, friends, faculty and staff and everyone who has helped get you here." Clemens, who earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in business administration and a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics, recalled how the Alfred community rallied in the face of tragedy over the last year, from the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 to the death of AU student Benjamin Klein in February. Clemens said he discovered that being part of a close-knit University community helped students deal with the tragedies, and to also grow as a people. "After each of these events and tragedies I, as I'm sure you all did, looked back on what had made the most impact on my life at Alfred and reevaluated my goals and dreams based on a changed world," he said. "What I found was that it was not academics, although I did learn a great deal of useful information. It was in the clubs, activities, friends of all ages, and organizations that I had learned about who I was and where I wanted to go with my life." Clemens told his classmates to treat graduation day as "the beginning of the rest of your life" and to make the most of what they have learned during their time at AU. "Let's go out with the light that Alfred has given us and make a difference, conquering the world with our hearts, our minds, our service and our lives, leaving it a little better than when we came into it." Top graduates honored at commencement for having the highest grade-point average in their college or school of study were: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Lizette Jacobs, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree in computer science, and Nicholas Eugene Keeney, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics, each earned straight A's. School of Art and Design: Robin Kathleen Eddy of Cowlesville, NY, 3.82 GPA. Eddy received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. School of Ceramic Engineering and Materials Science: David Fogelman of Glenmont, 3.85 GPA. Fogelman received dual degrees, with a Bachelor of Science degree in ceramic engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in computer science from the College of Liberal Arts and

Sciences.College of Engineering and Professional Studies: Benjamin Arthur Miller of Lockport, NY, 3.95 GPA. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering. College of Business: Andrew S. Reeve of Penn Yan, NY, 3.84 GPA. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration.The University conferred eight Doctor of Psychology degrees in School Psychology; 85 master's degrees and 370 baccalaureate degrees.