

## **AU Western equestrian team moving on to national championships**

3/27/12

Ocala, FL - The Alfred University Western equestrian team has qualified to compete in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) National Championships. AU tied for second at the IHSA National Semi-Finals Saturday and Sunday, March 24 and 25, at the Ocala Equestrian Complex in Ocala, FL. The top two teams at Semi-Final shows earn berths to the IHSA nationals. AU tied for second with Michigan State and advanced with a tiebreaker. Seven AU riders competed in individual events at the Semi-Finals. No AU riders finished in the top four in their respective events, which would qualify them to compete as individual riders at nationals. Senior Kalcy O'Keefe (Rochester, NY/Penfield), as the High Point AQHA (American Quarter Horse Association) rider in the Open division of IHSA Zone II, Region I this season, had automatically qualified to compete individually at the national championships. O'Keefe earned a first place in open reining in the team competition, which ultimately sealed Alfred's tiebreaker over Michigan State. The first tiebreaker was the number of first-place ribbons; both teams had one. The second was the number of second-place ribbons; both had one. The third was the highest score in reining, the event O'Keefe had won. Also competing at Semi-Finals in the team competition were: freshman Erika Miller (Wyoming, NY/Perry), third in intermediate horsemanship; freshman Alexandria Buckheit (Mansfield, PA/Mansfield), eighth in open horsemanship; freshman Audrie Kelley (Friendship, NY/Cuba-Rushford), seventh in advanced horsemanship; sophomore Nicole Mekker (Cicero, NY/Cicero-North Syracuse), fifth in beginner horsemanship; and sophomore Derek Partridge (Groveland, NY/Geneseo), second in novice horsemanship. O'Keefe, Buckheit, Partridge, Miller, Mekker and freshman Casey Duncan (Stuarts Draft, VA/Stuarts Draft) were selected to represent AU in the team competition at the IHSA National Championships May 3-6 in Raleigh, NC. In the individual competition at Semi-Finals, O'Keefe was fifth in open reining; Buckheit and Kelly were fifth and eighth, respectively in advanced horsemanship; junior Brianna Cappiello (Webster, NY/East Rochester) was sixth in novice horsemanship; and sophomore Caralee Cecala (Springville, NY/Springville) was fifth in beginner horsemanship. Senior Kaitlyn Bentley (Jamestown, NY), in novice horsemanship, and sophomore Kaylyn Slater (Phelps, NY/Midlakes), in intermediate horsemanship, competed at the Semi-Final show but did not make the finals of their respective events and thus did not place.