

◆Bicycle library◆ open for business this fall at Alfred University

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ALFRED, NY Beginning this fall, members of the Alfred University community will be able to "check out" a bicycle, just as they would a book at Herrick Library. The Alfred University Bicycle Lending program, the brainchild of AU student Ian Cramer, will begin with the fall 2009 semester and will initially make 20 hybrid (on-road/off-road) bicycles available to AU students, faculty and staff for a nominal fee. Similar programs are sometimes referred to as a "bicycle library," where community members check out bicycles temporarily and return them for others to use. The program provides several benefits, says Cramer, who feels his love for bicycle riding is shared by many in the AU community. "The primary benefit of the program is it makes bicycles available to more people," said Cramer, an athletic training major from Red Creek, NY, who will be a senior in the fall. "Riding a bicycle when you were a kid was so much fun and I believe that people, as they grow up, forget how much fun it was." The 20 Fuji hybrid bicycles were purchased with \$10,000 in funding Cramer received from the AU Student Senate. Space at Davis Gym has been renovated and will serve as the rental and maintenance shop, where the fleet of bicycles will be stored. Bikes will be available, beginning when classes resume in August, for \$3 for two days and \$5 for a week. Cramer credited Peter Stull, president of Bicycle Man, an Alfred Station bicycle sales shop, and Keith Gregory, a local bicycling enthusiast, with assisting him in choosing the Fuji bikes and repair tools and acquiring them at a discounted price. Customers will fill out a usage and liability form and be fitted for a bicycle. They'll receive a bike lock and, if they wish, a helmet. Money raised will be used to sustain the program by covering repair and maintenance costs. Kathy Woughter, AU vice president of Student Affairs, praised the program and credited the Student Senate for approving the monies to get it up and running. "This is the perfect use for their (Student Senate's) funds," Woughter said. "It's something innovative; it benefits the entire student body; and it helps move toward creating a greener campus." Cramer agreed the program will have a positive impact on the environment, as more people trade their cars for bicycles when making short trips around the campus and throughout the village. "I definitely see this program as a way to create a greener campus and community in Alfred," Cramer said. "I wanted to see less cars driving around campus and more bikes. I saw students who live way off campus, but still in the town of Alfred, driving to their classes. Yes, it's quicker than walking but a bike would be a way better solution." Woughter noted other benefits promoting fitness and wellness; providing an inexpensive and convenient mode of transportation; and simply promoting recreation and activity. "Part of the University's strategic plan is to make use of the beautiful location we have here at Alfred. This helps us do that," she said. Cramer said he came up with the idea of starting a bike lending program as a freshman but didn't really pursue it until his junior year. He credited Garrett McGowan, chemistry professor, bicycling enthusiast and advisor to the AU Biking Club, with providing input and giving him encouragement. He noted that fellow student Jay Price was a "huge help" in getting the project off the ground, putting in long hours cleaning up and renovating the space at Davis Gym. "When this project started in January, my timetable was to have everything set and in place when we left for the summer so that we could start right away in the fall," Cramer said. "I would say that we met that timetable, but I couldn't have done it without Jay's help." The bike shop will be staffed by students. A work study position has been created and will be responsible for running the shop taking completed rental paperwork from students and keeping bicycles in working order. Cramer said he and fellow students Price and David Hensel will also volunteer their time at the shop. "The hope is that as this program gains popularity, students who know how to fix bikes and who are work study-eligible will come forward to provide their services," Cramer commented. Marketing of the program will be primarily word of mouth, Cramer said, and he's already gotten feedback from students who are looking forward to taking advantage of the program. He said he has been working with the Office of Student Affairs to create a website and is considering printing flyers, stickers and t-shirts to help with promotion. An AU email account bikelending@alfred.edu has also been established. Depending on the popularity of the program, Woughter said it could be expanded in the future, with more bikes added to the fleet. Cramer is confident that will be the case. "I truly believe that the 20 bikes we ordered initially for this program will go in a snap. I believe that this program will be wildly successful and that it will have to grow to meet the demand of the student body," Cramer said. "We want there to be enough bikes for everyone. I can easily see this program expanding to over 100 bikes in five years or less." Woughter said a University trustee made an anonymous donation of \$2,000 per year to help cover ongoing costs of the program. She said the University is exploring grant funding that, if approved, could be used to expand the program by adding bicycles in the future.