

Alfred University appoints equestrian program director

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ALFRED, NY Jill Paxton has spent a lifetime training and showing horses and teaching horsemanship. Now she's leading efforts to develop a world-class equestrian program at Alfred University. Paxton recently began her duties as director of the AU Equestrian Program. She will oversee operations at the University's new equestrian center, now being constructed on 47 acres in the town of Alfred, just minutes from campus, and work to expand the Equestrian Studies academic program. She is excited about the opportunity to build and expand the equestrian program. "I'm deeply appreciative of the chance to help build the program here," said Paxton, who began her duties recently. "How could you not be excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for us?" The most significant improvement will be the new equestrian facility, made possible by a gift from Catherine Bromeley Daggett '58 and her son, Robert Daggett '81, a current member of the AU board of trustees. Located just five minutes from campus, the new center will include a 225-by-150 foot barn housing 50 stalls, classrooms and offices, viewing rooms and a 200-by-80 foot indoor arena. Two outdoor arenas (100-by-200 feet and 100-by-80 feet), pastures, a cross-country riding course and leisure trails are also planned. The barn, outdoor arenas and pastures will be completed before the 2005-06 academic year. "We are so grateful to Rob and Cathy Daggett for the generosity of their gift," Paxton remarked. The University plans to build on its Equestrian Studies program. Combined training and hunt seat equitation are now offered. The University will add training in dressage, western pleasure and western horsemanship. Training classes, in which students learn to train and work with young horses, will be implemented, and internships will be made available. The University's long-term goal, Paxton said, is to offer an equestrian major. "AU is looking to grow and diversify the program, building on the strong base that has been established," Paxton said. "By next fall we should have in place opportunities for students to combine majors. For example, they could major in business and minor in equestrian studies." The new facility will be home to the University's varsity equestrian team and will benefit any student interested in riding. Many of the 50 stalls at the new barn will be reserved for students wishing to board their own horses. An equestrian club, open to all students, is also planned. The close proximity of the new center to campus and the increased opportunities for student involvement will be invaluable from a recruiting standpoint, Paxton said. "By growing and expanding our program, we'll be able to involve a larger number of students," she said. "AU will be able to meet the needs of people who range from never riding before to competing at the national level." Paxton notes that the new equestrian center will be an asset to the entire Alfred community. Weekend clinics will be offered to AU students, faculty and staff as well as local residents. "Alfred University looks forward to making this venture something the Alfred community can be proud of," Paxton said. Paxton has an extensive background in training and showing horses. She comes to AU from Solon, IA, where for the last four years she ran Paxton Performance Horses, training horses for show and teaching amateur riders. Growing up, she showed hunters and jumpers on the east coast. She would go on to judge at shows and teach in the equestrian and physical education programs at the University of Delaware, Salisbury State College and North Texas University. She has a bachelor's degree in physical education and a master's in kinesiology, both from the University of Delaware, and has done doctoral work in higher education administration at George Fox University. She is the former head coach of women's swimming and diving at Delaware. Paxton has two children. Son Kyle will graduate in December from the University of Northern Iowa with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Daughter Shannon is a senior at the Illinois Institute of Art in Chicago. Shannon is an eight-time world champion in the American Paint Horses Association (APHA) and is one of only two riders to have ever won the APHA 14-18 hunt seat equitation world championship on all five judges' cards.