

The Alfred Ceramics Corridor is one of NYS' Hot Spots

11/18/14



The Alfred Corridor director is committed to creating an environment where small startups can thrive.

"Most people think that it is not possible to start a business in New York State," said Dr. Alan Rae of the Alfred and Painted Post Ceramics Corridor Innovation Center (CCIC). "That's just not true."

To help him achieve that, Dr. Rae and the CCIC team worked to become a recipient of one of the five 2013 Hot Spot awards. The Alfred Corridor is part of the Western NY region awardees led by University of Buffalo, while Painted Post is included in the Southern Tier Region group with Cornell and Binghamton Universities.

Each group received an award of \$250,000 to provide services to help small business grow and thrive. In addition, each of these incubators must have a strong university affiliation. In Alfred, that would include both Alfred University and Alfred State College.

"Often new companies start with a professor, a patent and a prayer," said Dr. Rae. But mostly, the real entrepreneurial spirit is found in students: both graduate and undergraduates. They are the ones that need a job. The professors are too busy publishing.

Often, professors start businesses with the idea of being bought out by either large corporations or venture capital. "We want them to stay and grow businesses here!" says Rae.

Dr. Rae said that he has met Alfred graduates through out this country who have established successful business. Many of them would have stayed in Western New York if the resources had been available. These resources, professional and technical, are what Rae hopes to enhance here.

The Hot Spot program is intended to boost small businesses and keep them here in New York. These small businesses are good for the local economy. Both in terms of employment and by creating wealth.

Both the Alfred and Painted Post facilities have been open for 26 years. However, the turnover in has not been as strong as CCIC would like.

"These facilities should not be 100 percent full," he said. "There needs to be room for new start ups and the established businesses need somewhere to go." For those here in Alfred, there is Sugar Hill, an area zoned as light industrial on the other side of Main Street from the CCIC.

Dr. Rae is also looking at converting the former Schweitzer plant at the Elmira Airport into a manufacturing location. This a potential production location for any business ready to graduate from any of the regional incubators.

See [UB video](#) for Hot Spots.