

Alumni to receive honorary degrees

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Alfred University will confer honorary degrees on two alumni during its 170th commencement exercises at 10 a.m. May 12 in McLane Center. "Each has brought distinction and honor to Alfred University, and the Board of Trustees found them worthy of recognition by the University," said Dr. Charles M. Edmondson, president. Robert R. McComsey, a 1966 alumnus who has served on the Alfred University Board of Trustees since 1980 and who is completing his second three-year term as chairman of the board, will receive the Doctor of Laws degree, *honoris causa*. Dr. Madeline Dalton, who earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Alfred University in 1983, will receive the Doctor of Science degree, *honoris causa*. Dr. Dalton will also deliver the commencement address. A graduate of the School of Engineering with a degree in ceramic engineering, McComsey began work with RCA Corporation after graduation. Although he was only beginning his career, he earned accolades as RCA's Engineer of the Year in 1969, while also attending the University of Chicago where he received his M.B.A. degree in 1973. Changing his career course in 1972, McComsey joined A.G. Becker, a Chicago-based investment bank, where he remained until 1977 when he became a general partner of Neuberger & Berman, an investment management firm in New York City. Mr. McComsey retired in 2002, just before Neuberger Berman became a wholly owned subsidiary of Lehman Brothers. He is a current member of the New York City University Club; a past trustee of the Graduates of the United States Military Academy, and a patron of the Metropolitan Museum of the Art and the Viennese Opera Ball in New York City. But it is his passions that distinguish McComsey. First there is his avocation: ballroom dancing, something he began 11 years ago. His interest in dance, he said, goes back to when he played hooky from high school to dance on American Bandstand, but it wasn't until he was over 50 that he took it seriously. McComsey now spends three hours a day, five or six days a week, taking lessons and practicing for competitions all over the world. McComsey and his dance partner Olga Bylim are the reigning US Pro/Am Senior American Rhythm and American Smooth Dance Champions, titles they won in September 2006. And second is Alfred University. McComsey's success in investment management and corporate leadership were carried over to his work for Alfred University. During the 21 years he has been a Trustee, he has been a member of or chaired every board committee. As the current chairman, he serves as a member of its Executive, Investment, Human Resources, Strategic Planning and Statutory and Governmental Relations committees, as well as an ex officio member of its Committee on Trusteeship. During the six years McComsey has been chair of the Board of Trustees, Alfred University has enjoyed record levels of fund-raising, and this year will conclude its Building on Excellence Campaign a year early, and over its \$150 million goal. McComsey is a charter member of the Society of Benefactors, a giving society for those whose lifetime contributions to Alfred University exceed \$1 million. He is perhaps most proud of helping the University to grow its endowment to more than \$100 million, a goal he set when he became chairman in 2001. When he joined the board and became chair of its investment committee in 1980, the University had an endowment of \$6 million. Through gifts - including McComsey's - and through a 27-year annualized yearly performance of 13 percent, which places Alfred University among the top 1 percent of colleges and universities nationwide in endowment performance, AU's endowment has grown to more than \$105 million. For his efforts on behalf of the University, McComsey was inducted into the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' Alumni Hall of Fame earlier this month. While the Steinheim Museum renovation into the Robert R. McComsey Career Development Center may be the most visible evidence of McComsey's generosity toward his alma mater, the creation of the Fern McComsey Scholarship to assist single mothers to attend Alfred University is perhaps the gift of his heart. In a column in The Alfred Magazine shortly after he became chairman, McComsey wrote, "Each of us gives to and serves Alfred University in ways that are appropriate for us and are consistent with what our 'Alfred Experience' has been." "I grew up in Pennsylvania, the only child of a World War II widow. My father, a twice-decorated flying ace, died when I was 6. My mother never remarried, so finances were tight. When Alfred University offered me a scholarship, my life changed. The four years I spent at Alfred were, without exception, the best of my life." Dalton is a nutritional epidemiologist and associate professor in Pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. She used her expertise in nutritional epidemiology to develop methodology for determining how viewing smoking in movies influences teen-agers' decisions to smoke. Her seminal research in this area demonstrated that "viewing smoking in movies strongly predicts whether or not adolescents will try smoking." Dalton shared her results with the Alfred University campus in September 2004 when she delivered the JoAnn S. Miller Memorial Lecture on Ethical Issues. Her research, conducted under the auspices of Dartmouth Medical

School, Dartmouth College and the Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, was funded by the National Cancer Institute, which is also funding a follow-up study that will "evaluate the influence of movies on adolescent smoking behavior and identify parental factors that might modify the association between exposure to movie smoking and adolescent smoking." Dalton is also evaluating the environmental and family influences on another significant health issue: the obesity "epidemic" among the nation's children and adolescents. She will attempt to "identify the characteristics of the environment, such as community design and resource availability, that influence adolescents' physical activity and dietary patterns." Her work in that area is being funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Alfred University Alumni Association presented Dalton with a Distinguished Achievement Award in June 2006 for her professional accomplishments that reflect so well on her alma mater. After graduation cum laude from Alfred University with a degree in biology, Dalton earned a Master of Science degree in 1988 and then a Ph.D. degree from the School of Nutrition Science and Policy from Tufts University. Dalton is married to Alfredo Jurado; they are the parents of twin sons.