

## **Susan Strong receives Abigail Allen Award**

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Dr. Susan R. Strong, who is writing a book on Alfred University's history as one of the first co-educational institutions of higher education in the country, is this year's recipient of the Abigail Allen Award for Faculty and Staff. Strong was recognized for achievements at the University's annual Honors Convocation. She is on sabbatical this year, completing her book. "Honoring Susan Rumsey Strong with the Abigail Allen Award brings the history of this award to the heart of its beginnings," said Susan Morehouse, associate professor of English. As last year's recipient of the award, Morehouse was afforded the privilege of making this year's presentation. "Without Susan's PhD. Thesis, 'The Most Natural Way in the World,' which focuses on women's education at Alfred University in the 19th Century and highlights the profound contributions of Abigail Allen, there probably would not be an award in Abigail's name because she was largely unknown in our time before Susan's research reintroduced her to 20th and 21st century Alfred," Morehouse said. The Abigail Allen Award is presented each year to a faculty or staff member who has contributed to the Alfred University campus and the community by "improving the lives of women's lives today and whose exceptional efforts deserve recognition." In her research, Strong explored what she called Alfred's "uniquely egalitarian attitude toward women's education in the 19th century," and focused on the role Jonathan Allen, the second president of Alfred University, and his wife, Abigail, had in shaping AU's "progressive stance" in that area. Founded in 1836, Alfred University accepted and taught women on an equal basis with men from the beginning. The University is oldest co-educational institution in New York State, and, arguably, was the first in the nation to truly offer equal opportunities to women. Strong uncovered the Allens' connection with reformers as Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Caroline Dall, Sojourner Truth, Julia Ward Howe, Frederick Douglass, and Susan B. Anthony, and that, according to Morehouse, has "changed the way many on campus understand our University's very unusual history." Strong is a role model for AU students, especially women students, Morehouse said, noting Strong was the first woman in AU's history "to serve as associate provost, acting provost or vice president." Strong came to Alfred University in 1971 with a BA in English from The University of Wisconsin, a Phi Beta Kappa key, and a very young family, Morehouse noted. "She realized the best way to find work here was to be a librarian, and so the first year she was here she got a Master's of Library Science at SUNY Geneseo. She was hired at Scholes Library as art reference librarian and college archivist, where she served from 1977 - 1990. During those years she published her first book, History of American Ceramics: An Annotated Bibliography and won the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Librarianship. In 1990 Strong was named associate provost, a post she held for 15 years; in 1995 she began her tenure as vice president of enrollment management; in 2001 she served as acting provost.