

Commencement speaker urges new graduates to continue asking questions

5/17/14



Your degree is “a first-class ticket to adventures of a lifetime and an opportunity to places to explore,” David E. Sanger, national security correspondent for the *New York Times*, told Alfred University (AU) graduates gathered Saturday morning (May 17) in the McLane Center on campus.

That degree is an “engraved invitation to keep asking questions as if you are still in the classroom. Ask why. Questions lead to discussion. Questions connect the dots. Questions make the intellectual leaps of understanding our world,” he explained. Further, “asking why creates a sense of community” because “answering the questions turns out to be a team sport, involving like-minded people who share the same passions.”

In leaving the confines of the Alfred community, Sanger recommended, “Whatever you do, think about what the larger purpose of your world is and then engage as you can. Do yourself a favor and ask why. I think you’ll find those questions will change the trajectory of where you’re headed.” And then, “don’t linger on the fringe of society. There are many problems to tackle in our country. Go out and ask why, and use (the answers) to change this world just a little bit.”

Prior to presenting the keynote address, Sanger was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree. He was presented by Leslie J. Gelber, AU Class of 1977 and chairman of the University Board of Trustees. Gelber and Dr. W. Richard Stephens Jr., provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, assisted in bestowing the doctoral hood on Sanger.

More than 512 undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degree candidates (including those who earned degrees in August and December 2013) were awarded AU diplomas and 28 students received advanced studies certificates (credentials allowing practice professionally as a counselor) during the mid-morning. Presiding over the traditional program was Dr. Charles M. Edmondson, AU president, with Provost Stephens as master of ceremonies.

Four graduating undergraduates were recognized during the exercises for achieving top honors in their respective areas of study. They were part of the official stage party and seated on the Commencement platform throughout the ceremonies.

Top student in the College of Professional Studies is Maci Elizabeth Lloyd of Wellsville, an early childhood/childhood education major who earned a 3.97 out of a possible 4.0 GPA (grade point average) on her way to a bachelor of arts degree. A graduate of Wellsville High School, she is the daughter of Jodi Lloyd of Wellsville.

Bellisant Bowe Corcoran-Mathe, a bachelor of arts degree theater major from Kendall leads classmates academically in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences by earning a 3.98 GPA. Corcoran-Mathe is the daughter of Kim Corcoran

of Kendall. She earned her high school diploma through the Royal Academy Education, Maine.

Julia Ann Berbling of Mandeville, LA, a bachelor of fine arts degree major in the School of Art and Design, earned a 3.90 during her years at AU. She is a graduate of Mandeville High School and the daughter of Donna Berbling of Mandeville and Gerald Berbling of Houston, Texas.

Stephen Charles Kaplan Rooney is the top student in the Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering where he earned a bachelor of science degree in materials science and engineering. The Montclair, NJ resident also graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree. He earned a 3.80 cumulative average. Rooney is a graduate of Montclair High School and the son of Stephen and Cindy Rooney of Montclair.

Leading the Commencement procession was Grand Marshal Dr. Robert J. Maiden, professor of psychology, from Wellsville. College/school banner bearers were Dr. Edward Gaughan, professor of school psychology, The Graduate School; Dr. Arthur L. Greil, professor of sociology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; John Gill, professor of ceramics, College of Ceramics; D. Wayne Higby, professor of ceramics, School of Art and Design; Dr. Alastair Cormack, professor of ceramic engineering, Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering; and Dr. Mark Fugate, professor of school psychology, College of Professional Studies.

Accompanied by the AU Symphonic Band, under the direction of Dr. Christopher Foster, the “National Anthem” was sung by seniors Jessica Antrobus, an English/communication studies major from Orange Village, Ohio; Holly Durand, a theater major from Albany; and Rebecca Hayes, an English/theater major from Manorville. The Symphonic Band also provided pre-ceremony music and processional and recessional melodies.

The invocation and benediction for the ceremony was provided by The Rev. Laurie J. DeMott, interfaith adviser and minister of the Union University Church, Alfred.

Following the address by Sanger and the conferment of master&s degrees by Dr. Nancy Evangelista, associate provost for graduate and professional studies, the 2014 Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors, also part of the stage party, spoke to their classmates, families, and friends. This year&s honorees are Kelly McNamara, a communication studies and sociology major with a minor in women&s and gender studies from Hurleyville, NY, and Kevin O&Connor, a biology major and environmental studies minor from South Portland, Maine. They were introduced by Kathy Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs. The senior awards are named for Marline Miller, AU class of 1954, a current member and former chairman of the University Board of Trustees.

Stephens recognized outstanding AU scholars prior to the awarding of the baccalaureate degrees conferred by Dr. Louis Lichtman, acting dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Leslie Bellavance, dean, School of Art and Design; Dr. Doreen Edwards, dean, Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering; and Dr. Nancy Evangelista, College of Professional Studies.

Prior to concluding remarks by Edmondson, Bradley Berwald, AU class of 2000 and president of the AU Alumni Association, inducted the newest members into the organization.

Senior students who are members of the AU Choirs, including Antrobus, Durand, Hayes, Arianna Ackerman, an English major from Wellsville; Nicole Mekker, an art and design major from Liverpool; Cheryl-Ann Alfred, electrical engineering, Roosevelt; Molly Westfall, art and design, Holley; Kasey Hinkle, English, Camden; Amanda Tuttle; Edidong Udoyen; Darren Palmer, a theater major from Wingdale; and Artemas Steer, ceramic engineering, Hornell, came forward to lead the assembly in the AU alma mater. Led by David Toot, professor of physics, they were joined by Stephen S. Crandall, dean of libraries and director of Herrick Library, and Nancy Furlong, professor of psychology.

A 30-year veteran of *The New York Times*, Sanger&s articulate style has made him a regular on a variety of radio and television programs, including CBS&s “Face the Nation” and PBS&s “Washington Week” and “Charlie Rose.”

Sanger&s national bestseller, “[Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American](#)

[Power](#),” is an analysis of the Obama administration’s foreign policy, including its covert reliance on cyber-warfare, drones, and special operations forces. The book sent shockwaves around the globe. His previous bestseller, “The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power,” is an in-depth examination of American foreign policy successes and failures. Sanger has been a part of two Pulitzer Prize-winning teams at the *Times*. His coverage of the Iraq and Korea crises took home the Weintal Prize, one of the highest honors for diplomatic reporting. He also won the White House Correspondents’ Association Aldo Beckman prize for his presidential coverage.

A native of White Plains, Sanger graduated magna cum laude in government from Harvard College and now teaches national security policy as a visiting scholar and adjunct professor at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

A number of faculty members served as Commencement marshals including Dr. Wesley Bentz, professor emeritus of chemistry; Dr. Frederic Beaudry, assistant professor of environmental science; Dr. Elizabeth Ann Dobie, professor of art history; Dr. Juliana Gray, associate professor of English; Dr. Theresa Gunn, assistant professor of accountancy; Mark Lewis, visiting clinical instructor of business; Dr. Nathan Mellott, assistant professor of material science and engineering; Susan P. Morehouse, professor of English; Dr. Steve Pilgrim, professor of materials science and engineering; Angus M. Powers, associate professor of glass; Dr. Joseph W. Rosiczkowski, professor of mechanical engineering; Dr. Jeffrey Sluyter-Beltrao, associate professor of political science; Dr. G. David Toot, professor of physics; Kelly Williams, clinical instructor of education; and Chris Yartym, clinical instructor of athletic training.