

## 2015 Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors passionate about fellow students, community

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It's no surprise to see in their college profiles that the two 2015 Alfred University (AU) Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors each embody their own unique "outstanding" qualities.

Brennan O. Ferguson, a chemistry and environmental science double-major with a minor in mathematics from Destrehan, LA, and Daniel Totten, an art and design major with a concentration in sculpture from Red Hook, NY, were chosen as the young woman and young man in the AU senior class who have "contributed most to the life of the University overall" and who have "built uncompromised reputations" for this highest all-around recognition of accomplishment the University bestows upon a student. Faculty, staff, and students may nominate graduating seniors for the award.

"Brennan and Dan are great choices as Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors," said Kathy Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs. "Both exemplify the criteria of the award: scholarship, excellence in leadership, and character. As Empire 8 Sportswoman of the Year in two separate sports - basketball and tennis - Brennan competes with integrity and class while maintaining an almost perfect GPA (grade point average) in her double major. Dan's style of leadership isn't 'in your face' instead, he personifies what it means to be a social justice agent and a quiet leader capable of bringing about real change," she explained.

"Along with all our great finalists this year, these two Outstanding Seniors make Alfred University very proud," Woughter added.

Ferguson and Totten were introduced at the University's annual spring Honors Convocation and presented with the Marlin Miller Award Tile in its presentation box. The tile, conceived of and designed by Wayne Higby, AU professor of ceramic art, is made from local Alfred terra cotta roof tile clay and depicts the village of Alfred in its surrounding landscape featuring words from the University alma mater as foreground. The award tile is presented in its own unique box handmade by Don Kaake of Angelica from local cherry wood. Each boxed tile is housed for protection in a quilted cloth bag made by Pat Kaake. The bag is purple with a gold ribbon closure, representing the AU colors.

Ferguson and Totten will also each give an address at the University's Commencement exercises May 16.

In nominating her for the Marlin Miller Award, Geoffrey M. Bowers, assistant professor of chemistry and one of Ferguson's professors said: "I have been impressed beyond measure with her academic abilities, natural research aptitude, personal character, work ethic, and potential as an interdisciplinary scholar.... Brennan is tops in the classroom and the research environment, having already presented the fruits of her research at national/international meetings, co-authoring two peer-reviewed scientific publications with me in the Journal of Physical Chemistry C, and contributing significantly to several additional presentations, publications, ....

“In addition, she is a leader whether she is on the tennis court captaining the most successful tennis team in the past decade, or in the classroom rallying her colleagues to participate in class discussion. She does all of these things while retaining the admiration and friendship of her peers.

“Brennan is simply the most accomplished and outstanding student we have had in chemistry since my arrival at Alfred, a once-in-a-lifetime outstanding student for a professor ....”

“She has also been a tutor for our organic chemistry course and several of our math courses ....showing that she can engage and help others learn academic material and that she is dedicated to serving our division and its students....”

Fellow graduating senior and Miller Award finalist Audrey Arnold says of Ferguson: “I consider Brennan a personal friend and have come to know her as one of the sweetest and most genuine people I&ve ever met. I&ve never heard her speak badly about anyone; I&ve actually heard her chime in with compliments about people that other people spoke unfavorably about. She&s very humble about her accomplishments and does not boast or brag about her research experience, travels within Europe, or athletic and academic success.”

Honors Program Director Gordon Atlas, professor of psychology, added: “I don&t believe I have seen a better academic student who is simultaneously as active on campus. She is truly one of the most outstanding seniors I have encountered.”

Ferguson is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the national liberal arts honor society, and Sigma Xi, the scientific research society.

“Dan Tottten is bright, motivated, and has a diverse range of intellectual interests ranging from art and art history to dance to civic engagement and social justice,” said Corey Fecteau, art adviser and Service Learning coordinator at AU, in her nomination of this year&s Outstanding Male Senior.

“Dan is currently serving as a teaching assistant at Alfred because of his grasp of the course material and his ability to help other students learn. Dan has also furthered his scholarly development outside of the University setting by serving as a research assistant and workshop facilitator,” she continued.

Fecteau goes on to explain: “Dan Totten is highly involved in multiple areas of art, performing arts, and community service.” He has participated in such volunteer events as Celebrate Service, Celebrate Allegany/Make A Difference Day as well as “numerous activities outside of campus, including multiple social justice and socially engaged art workshops in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. He has brought those experiences back to Alfred and led several workshops on campus and in the village of Alfred.”

In addition, “He is invested in helping the campus and community become a more civil and just environment, particularly with respect to gender inequities. He is also concerned with the effects of modern life on the environment, and strives to increase awareness of how individuals and communities can achieve a more balanced relationship with the natural world. His strategies are to build coalition among various stakeholders to create opportunities for conversation .... He is a leader by example.”

Fecteau continued, “Dan&s particular talent is for synthesizing departments and structures within the University that do not normally collaborate ....” and he “is continually working to increase collaboration among various departments, programs, and offices on campus with resources in the community. Where others see barriers, Dan sees possibility and then makes connections.”

Totten is a member of Omicron Delta Kappa, the national leadership honor society and is president of Green Alfred. He is currently developing a collaborative project among AVI Fresh Dining Hall Services, The Alfred Community Garden, and dining hall patrons entitled “Alfred Garden AU Community Outreach Project.”