

NYS Gov. Paterson to address AU class of 2009

5/16/09

New York State's 55th governor, David A. Paterson, will address Alfred University's 173rd graduating class today, Saturday, May 16, 2009, during exercises beginning at 10 a.m. in the McLane Center, on campus. Members of the class of 2009 include 173 master's degree candidates (M.S.Ed., 117; M.F.A, 18; M.S., 8 engineering, 2 numeracy; M.A., 18; M.B.A., 10) and 313 undergraduates (B.A., 145; B.S. athletic training, 6, business, 51, engineering, 39; B.F.A., 72). The Governor will be awarded an honorary degree Doctor of Humane Laws, honoris causa. The presentation will be by Dr. Gene M. Bernstein, chairman emeritus of the Alfred University Board of Trustees. Presiding over the mid-morning ceremony will be Alfred University President Dr. Charles M. Edmondson. The Southern Tier Brass Quintet, under the direction of Dr. Christopher Foster, assistant professor of music and director of bands at Alfred University, will provide processional and recessional music. Grand marshal for the ceremony is Dr. Martha Anderson, professor of art history. One undergraduate distinguished herself by earning a perfect 4.0 grade point average (GPA). She is Chelsea Rebecca Heinz of Cuba, who is receiving a bachelor of arts degree in psychology, School of Liberal Arts & Sciences. She is a daughter of Craig and Theresa Heinz of Cuba and a graduate of Olean High School. Joining Heinz in earning top honors in their respective schools/colleges of study are: Samuel Levi Newman of Lewis Center, Ohio, bachelor of fine arts degree in art and design, School of Art & Design, 3.91. He is a son of Robert Newman and Linda Leviton and a graduate of Worthington Kilbourne High School. Alex Daniel Weller of Flemington, NJ, a bachelor of science degree in biomedical materials engineering science, Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering, 3.93. He is a son of Steven and Shelly Weller and a graduate of Hunterdon Central Regional High School. Amanda Marie Smith of Hornell, bachelor of science in accounting, College of Business, 3.97. She is a daughter of Steve and Denise Smith. All four students will be seated on the Commencement platform and recognized during the ceremony. Top students are selected by the University Registrar, Larry Casey, based upon a minimum of 60 "GPA hours." Any courses transferred into AU are included in the calculation. Double-degree candidates may be honored for their work in either college or school. Senior class speakers, the 2009 Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors, both graduating from the School of Art and Design, are Callie E. Rimmel and Nicholas Garofoli. Rimmel, a graduate of Hampton High School, is a daughter of Frederick and Janet Rimmel of Allison Park, PA. A graduate of West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North, Garofoli is a son of Mary Jo Garofoli and Eric Harris, both of Plainsboro, NJ. The Rev. Laurie J. DeMott, interfaith adviser at the University, will give the invocation and benediction. The Alfred University Chamber Singers, under the direction of Dr. Luanne Crosby, will provide special music, "Omnia Sol" by Z. Randall Stroope. Towards the end of the ceremony, The Chamber Singers and the AU Chorus will sing the Alma Mater. Michelle DeRitter of Olean, AU class of 1974, will induct the new graduates into the AU alumni ranks. Paterson became governor on March 17, 2008, after serving as lieutenant governor for 14 months. In 1985, Paterson was elected to represent Harlem in the NYS Senate, becoming the youngest senator in Albany. In 2003, he became the minority leader of the NYS Senate, the first non-white legislative leader in New York's history. He made history again in 2004 when he became the first visually impaired person to address the Democratic National Convention. He became New York's first African-American lieutenant governor in 2007 and is now New York's first African-American governor. Paterson, who is legally blind, is nationally recognized as a leading, active advocate for the visually and physically impaired. He is a member of the American Foundation for the Blind. In addition, he is a member of the board of the Achilles Track Club, having completed the New York City Marathon in 1999. He serves as a member of the Democratic National Committee and as a board member of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. Paterson earned a bachelor's degree in history from Columbia University and completed a juris doctorate degree at Hofstra Law School. He has served as an adjunct professor at Columbia's School for International and Public Affairs.