

Alfred University appoints new dean for School of Art & Design

5/17/10



Leslie Bellavance, now director of the School of Art and Art History at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, will become the dean of the School of Art & Design at Alfred University, effective Aug. 1. She succeeds Joseph S. Lewis, III, who left in March to become dean of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at the University of California-Irvine after six years at Alfred. Dr. Mary Drach McInnes, professor of art history, is filling the position on an interim basis. "We had an exceptionally strong pool of candidates, so it is a testament to Ms. Bellavance's strengths as an arts educator, administrator and artist that she was recommended by the search committee for this position," said Dr. William Hall, acting provost of Alfred University. Bellavance says she was drawn to Alfred "not just by history and reputation of Alfred University and the School of Art & Design, but by the impressive accomplishments of the faculty and the ambitions of the students." During her visit to Alfred earlier this spring, she was able to see some of the Master of Fine Arts degree candidates' exhibitions, and found them "extraordinarily innovative." Alfred's MFA in ceramic arts is ranked number one in the nation by US News and World Report, and its glass art program is second. Overall, the MFA program at Alfred is 10th in the nation. She is excited, too, about the leadership at Alfred University and the NYS College of Ceramics, which includes the School of Art & Design. "Everyone I spoke to has high aspirations for the future of Alfred, and I am very enthusiastic about joining the Alfred community." With Bellavance's appointment and the naming of Dr. Linda Jones as assistant vice president for statutory affairs for the NYS College of Ceramics earlier this month, it marks the first time in the history of the 110-year-old college that all three top administrative positions have been filled by women. Dr. Doreen Edwards became dean of the Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering last summer; the materials-based programs in the School of Engineering - ceramic engineering, biomedical materials engineering science, glass science and materials science - are statutory programs. Alfred University administers the College of Ceramics for New York State, and receives part of the funding for the programs through the state budget. When she visited Alfred, she was impressed with the art faculty's "very clear sense of mission the commitment to 'high-tech, high-touch'," something she will continue to support in her new role. She is eager to "move forward with strategic planning for the School of Art & Design." Nationally, there are conversations occurring about the "art school of the 21st century." Alfred, she said, has much to contribute to those conversations, and she wants Alfred's perspectives to be heard. As she begins her tenure with the School of Art & Design, she wants to explore further the possibility of interdisciplinary programs between art and liberal arts, particularly performing arts, and engineering. "I know there are interdisciplinary approaches being explored now, and I'd like to learn more about them and find out how we can encourage them," she said. "I want to identify strategies" for creating such programs, something she has

been interested in throughout her academic career. One of the hallmarks of Alfred's art program is its strong studio practice component. Bellavance would like to explore sustainability issues as they apply not just to the content of art, but also the making of art, from the materials to the processes. Alfred's programs in ceramics, glass and sculpture present particular challenges in that area. "I am really interested in taking on that challenge," she said. Bellavance has been director and professor in the School of Art and Art History at James Madison since 2005. Prior to that, she was interim associate dean at the Peck School of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2004-05, and a professor in the Peck School's Department of Visual Arts from 1981-2005. During her tenure at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she served as director of graduate studies for the Department of Visual Arts and head of the photography area for the department for a total of 10 years. She has exhibited her work in the United States and Europe in numerous solo and group exhibitions. Her work is found in the permanent collections of several museums and private individuals. Bellavance is a recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, and a residency to support creation of her book, *analemmic*, which was published by Nexus Press, Atlanta, GA. She has written and lectured extensively on contemporary art. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree, *summa cum laude*, from Tyler School of Art of Temple University, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Chicago.