

Alfred University alumnus tells New York City graduates the full impact of their work cannot be measured
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Alfred University President
Mark Zupan, left, and
Matthew S. Washington '04

By choosing professions that help others, the graduates of the Alfred University New York City-based programs “are investing so much of your lives to make a positive difference in others’ lives,” said Matthew S. Washington, a 2004 alumnus of Alfred University who is now the deputy borough president for economic development and budget for the Manhattan Borough President’s Office.

Speaking to the 170 graduates – the largest number in the 11-year history of the “downstate” programs offered by Alfred University in cooperation with the Center for Integrated Teacher Education—Washington lauded them for choosing to make a difference.

The graduates earned masters’ degrees in public administration and counseling, as well as certificates of advanced study in patient care management and in advanced mental health counseling. Since the program began 11 years ago, nearly 1,200 degrees have been conferred.

“You invest so much of your lives to make a positive difference in others’ lives,” Washington said. Their work has “lasting impacts on the individuals you serve, on their families and on generations to come... You will make a difference in the lives you touch.”

In order to earn their degrees, the new alumni had to make sacrifices of their own time, and the time they spent with their families, but those sacrifices are worth it, he assured them.

Washington cited the sacrifices his own mother, widowed at the age of 33 with five young children to raise, made to

assure that her children would not “slip into gangs, drugs and alcohol,” all too prevalent in the community where the family lived.

President Mark Zupan presented Washington with a Fiat Lux! Award for his leadership, his community service, and his service to the University. Prior to becoming deputy borough president in 2015, Washington previously served as deputy director of external affairs at The Durst Organization. While there he led public affairs for new development in Queens and worked on the project team that developed One World Trade Center, the Western Hemisphere’s tallest building. In addition to government and real estate development, he has a diverse background in non-profit management having served as the executive director of Friends of the High School for Environmental Studies and formerly as deputy director of Friends of Hudson River Park.

Washington also invests much of his personal time to public service beyond his work responsibilities. Born and raised in East Harlem, he remains committed to the area and was a member of its community board for over 10 years where he was elected as its chairperson at the age of 26 – a position which he held for six years. His commitment to service extends to other organizations as well, having served a member of the Board of Directors for the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, Voices UnBroken, Harvest Home Farmers Market, El Barrio’s Operation Fightback, the New York City Chapter of the New York League of Conservation Voters, Civitas, Make Music New York and Learning through an Expanded Arts Program. Washington is currently on the Board of Directors of the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

“We like to think Matthew honed some of his leadership skills at Alfred University,” Zupan said, noting Washington was Student Senate president, a resident assistant, head of the summer programs crew, and a member of what is now known as the Lighthouse Christian Fellowship and a number of multi-cultural organizations.

A past member of the Alumni Council, Washington was just elected to the Alfred University Board of Trustees, one of its youngest-ever members. He is also a charter member of the Saxon Circle, a leadership giving society whose members pledge a minimum of \$1,000 a year for five years to the University.

President Zupan encouraged the new Alfred University alumni to follow the four “I’s” of good stewardship for the University.

The first I is for input, he said, inviting graduates to email him and to offer comments on the University’s new strategic plan.

The second is involvement, according to Zupan, who invited graduates to refer students to Alfred University. Through a new scholarship program, if alumni refer students who enroll at the University, the new students will receive scholarships in the names of the referring alumni.

Third is investment, said Zupan, encouraging the new alumni to “pay it forward for the next generation” through their gifts to the University.

The final “I” is for inspiration, he said, and that’s the role alumni play through the accomplishments that make the University proud.