

## 'Changing Lives of Women Chemists' Topic for Scholes Jr. Lecture

4/07/06

Dr. Mary Ellen Bowden, senior research historian at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, will deliver this year's Samuel R. Scholes Jr. Lecture at 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 11, in Nevins Theatre, Powell Campus Center. Her topic is "The Changing Lives of Women Chemists." Dr. Joshua Fierer '59, created the Samuel R. Scholes Jr. Lecture in honor of his long-time mentor and friend. Scholes came to Alfred in 1932 when his father joined the faculty of the College of Ceramics at Alfred University. A 1937 graduate of Alfred University, the younger Scholes earned a Ph.D. degree from Yale University. He returned to Alfred in 1946 as a member of the faculty in the chemistry department, where he taught until his retirement in 1980. "It is in the interest of all of us, male and female, that highly talented young people of whatever gender or ethnicity study the chemical sciences and technologies, since these fields are so critical to our individual lives, the global economy, and the environment," said Bowden in describing the talk she will deliver. "It is equally important that such young people graduate to situations in academia, government, and industry that permit them to succeed in their careers according to their knowledge and dedication. "Those men and women who are mindful of the heritage of women in chemistry will be in the best position to protect past gains and to make further progress in leveling the playing field. In this presentation anecdotes and images from early times to the present will illustrate women's struggles to attain equal status with men as contributors to the chemical sciences," she said, noting her talk will "span the historical distance between the assertion by Marie Meurdrac, accomplished 17th-century Parisian chemist, 'that minds have no sex' to the iconic life of Marie Curie to the experiences of present-day chemists." Bowden has been associated with the Chemical Heritage Foundation since 1988. She has curated several of its exhibits; among these are traveling exhibits on the life of R. B. Woodward, a 20th-century organic chemist, and "Chemistry Is Electric!" which deals with the history of electrochemistry. More recently she participated on the teams creating an exhibit and web site on women chemists, "Her Lab in Your Life," and on another team creating an in-house temporary exhibit, "Joseph Priestley, Radical Thinker." She has authored two books designed to help high school and college teachers enrich their courses with the human element--Chemical Achievers: The Human Face of the Chemical Sciences and Pharmaceutical Achievers: The Human Face of Pharmaceutical Research. For scholarly audiences, she has edited the proceedings of the 1998 and 2002 conferences on the history and heritage of scientific and technological information systems--including of course chemical systems-- and is helping plan an international conference on alchemy and early chemistry scheduled for summer 2006. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Smith College and both a master of arts in teaching history and a doctorate in the history of science and medicine from Yale University.