

Alfred University's Class of 2012 urged to take risks in pursuing passions

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David Miller receives honorary degree hood

It was true 50 years ago, and it's true today. Alfred University prepares its graduates to take risks in pursuing their passions, David J. Miller, AU class of '66, told those assembled in McLane Center for the University's 2012 Commencement exercises Saturday (May 12). Miller, a member of the AU Board of Trustees, said he owes his success as a noted lawyer and jazz musician, "in no small part to the experiences I had at Alfred University. It's the same for you," he said, noting it was on campus he learned "the importance of listening, reflecting, and respecting other's points of view." "The good fortune that has come my way can be traced directly to AU," emphasized Miller. Faculty ingrained purpose and self-confidence, the ability to take risks, to improvise. And there was an "opportunity to find stimulation in the visual and performing arts." Miller said he had opportunities "to take to the stage" in a "lifelong fulfillment" of pursuing his musical passion. "I was innocent and nave, not yet grasping how my life would change" in September of his freshman year. But "I was made to feel welcome" in the place that allowed him, an English major - with a music minor - to also pursue his passion for music. "You might say I hit a high note melding passion with risk" by performing in public on campus. "You need to take risks to perform on the stage of life," Miller told the Class of 2012. Then "you too can reap a life of fulfillment." Prior to Miller's remarks, the University bestowed on him a Doctor of Music degree, honoris causa. Fellow Trustee Jeffrey S. Maurer '69 presented him for the degree. University President Dr. Charles M. Edmondson presided over the ceremonies marking the conclusion of AU's 176th year. "The Board of Trustees was unanimous in its decision to honor David Miller," said Edmondson. "Not only is David Miller a recognized authority in transportation law, but he's an acclaimed jazz pianist, and a devoted Alfred University alumnus. He's guided us with his counsel, entertained us with his music, and inspired us with his leadership." Leading the processional of 13 doctoral, 104 masters, and 423 bachelor's degree candidates and faculty members into the McLane gymnasium was Theodore L. Morgan, professor of art, serving as grand marshal. The group processed and recessed to music provided by the Alfred University Symphonic Band under the direction of Christopher Foster, assistant professor of music and director of bands. Four graduating undergraduates were recognized during the Commencement exercises for achieving top honors in their respective schools; they were part of the official stage party and seated on the Commencement platform. Two of the students rank at the top of the class of 2012 with perfect, four-year grade point averages (GPA) of 4.0. The highest honors go to Samantha Lee Dannick of Coral Springs, FL, representing the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and Courtney Lawson Brown of Williamsville from the College of Business. Dannick, earning a bachelor of arts degree, is a double major in philosophy and an individually structured major in "Violence and Conflict Studies." She is the daughter of Jeffrey Dannick and Marcia Mofson and a graduate of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Brown has earned a bachelor of science degree in accounting. She is the daughter of Scott and Debra Brown and a graduate of Williamsville High School-South. Representing the School of Art & Design with a 3.94 GPA is Matthew David Phillips-Shaw of Harleysville, PA, receiving a bachelor of fine arts degree in art & design. He is the son of Keith Shaw and a graduate of Christopher Dock Mennonite High School. Julie

Anna Georgiev of Washington, D.C., has earned a 3.93 GPA on her way to earning a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering in the Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering. She is the daughter of George and Carol Georgiev and a graduate of Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School. The highest ranked graduating student in each undergraduate college or school is selected by the Registrar based on a minimum of 60 GPA hours. The Rev. Laurie J. DeMott, campus interfaith adviser and minister of the Union University Church, Alfred, presented the invocation and benediction for the ceremony. Following Miller's address and the conferment of the master's degrees by Nancy Evangelista, associate provost for graduate and professional studies and dean of the College of Business, the 2012 Marlin Miller Outstanding Seniors - Margaret "Molly" Anna Finnerty of Watertown, a Dean's List student in the School of Art & Design, with a minor in marketing, and Kevin Daniel Carr of Canandaigua, a Dean's List student in the School of Art & Design, who has concentrated on painting and printmaking- offered their thoughts upon leaving Alfred to fellow graduates, faculty, family, friends. Kathy Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs, introduced them. The senior awards are named for Marlin Miller, AU class of 1954, a current member and former chair of the University Board of Trustees. Baccalaureate degrees were conferred by Mary McGee, dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences; Leslie Bellavance, dean, School of Art & Design; Doreen Edwards, dean, Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering; and Evangelista. Prior to concluding remarks by Edmondson, Michael Christakis, AU class of 1999, president of the Alumni Association, inducted the newest members into the organization. The ceremonies concluded with a rendition of the Alma Mater by members of the University Chamber Singers, and the benediction by DeMott. A number of faculty members served as Commencement marshals, including Wesley Bentz, professor emeritus of chemistry; Elizabeth Ann Dobie, professor of art theory; Frank Duserick, Kruson Distinguished Professor of Business; Gerard Edizel, professor of art history; Addison E. Frey, associate professor of mathematics; Juliana Gray, associate professor of English; Theresa Gunn, assistant professor of accountancy; Michelle Illuminato, assistant professor (art) Foundations; Nicholas Kuder, assistant professor of graphic design; Coral Lambert, associate professor of sculpture; Scott T. Misture, Inamore Professor of Materials Science and Engineering; Susan P. Morehouse, professor of English; Steven Pilgrim, professor of materials science and engineering; Joseph W. Rosiczkowski, professor of mechanical engineering; Jeffrey Sluyter-Beltrao, associate professor of political science; and G. David Toot, professor of physics. A native of Great Neck, Miller earned a bachelor of arts degree, cum laude, from Alfred. While at AU, he was a member of the golf team and a brother and president of Klan Alpine Fraternity. He was also the piano accompanist for the University choir and performed as a jazz pianist on and off campus. After graduation, Miller entered Syracuse University College of Law, receiving his J.D. degree, magna cum laude, in 1969. He was admitted to the NYS Bar in 1970 and the California Bar in 1971. He earned a judicial clerkship position with the Appellate Division Third Department of the New York Supreme Court in Albany until 1970, when he joined Hanson, Bridgett, a law firm based in San Francisco, CA, with offices in Sacramento and Larkspur, CA. He became a partner in 1974 and managing partner in 1984. Miller's law practice centers on the transportation industry. For more than three decades he has served as general counsel for three of the principal mass transportation agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area: the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District; the San Mateo County Transit District; and the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board. He has lectured nationally on a wide range of transportation, real estate and labor relations issues, and was recognized for his contributions to public transportation when he was awarded Caltrain's Silver Spike Award in 1988. The award is given to "individuals, groups and organizations that have made a significant contribution to Caltrain," the commuter railroad system that connects the cities of San Francisco and San Jose. Also in 1988, Miller was the recipient of the Peninsula Coalition's Community Leadership Award. He also has received recognition annually since 2005 as a California Super Lawyer by Super Lawyer Magazine. He also joined the Alfred University Board of Trustees in 1988, serving his first three-year term as an alumni-elected trustee before gaining a long-term appointment to the board. He has chaired the Academic Affairs Committee of the board, and has been a member of the Executive, Finance, Human Resources, Strategic Planning and Student Affairs committees. While he has been an active member of the AU Board of Trustees for nearly a quarter of a century, it is his talent as a jazz pianist that makes him well-known on campus. Miller says he's been told he began playing the piano by ear at the age of three, and studied classical piano and music theory through high school. During his college years, however, he switched to jazz piano. Shortly after he arrived in San Francisco, he met percussionist Bill Belasco, and formed an enduring musical partnership with him that has continued for nearly four decades. Ten years ago nationally renowned bassist, Mario Suraci, joined the Dave Miller Trio. The new ensemble has recorded several CDs. Rapture, issued on the Summit Records label in 2010, reached No. 14 on the national jazz charts for radio air play. Most recently, the trio has been joined by David's daughter, vocalist Rebecca DuMaine. Their CD, Deed I Do, was released by Summit Records in

2011. In addition to the performances with his band, Miller frequently has performed solo at professional, social and political events, including having had the honor of entertaining at three United States Senate Democratic Caucus Retreats in recent years. Whenever Miller has been on campus for Board of Trustees' meetings, he has performed at jazz sessions with faculty, staff and students and drawn enthusiastic audiences from the community.