

Grad students help secure grant from Wendt Foundation

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Erin Ostrum of East Amherst, NY, and Suzanne Engel, of Webster, NY, both second-year school psychology graduate students at Alfred University, have helped to secure a \$27,188 grant from the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation in Buffalo, NY, on behalf of the Office of Special Academic Services (SAS). The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation is a private, philanthropic organization that focuses its work in Western New York and is devoted to the development of a stronger Western New York Community. It helps to fund education, the arts, and social services; support is also given to churches and religious organizations, health organizations, public interest organizations, and youth agencies. SAS currently services approximately 13 percent of the students enrolled at Alfred University who have been identified with some type of a learning, physical, and/or psychological disability. Support services offered by SAS to students with disabilities include tutoring, remedial instruction, testing accommodations, reading of tests, consultation, and advocacy. Provision of such support services reflects the University's commitment to ensuring success for all students, including those who come to college with learning disabilities. SAS will use the \$27,188 to benefit all of the students who use their services. SAS will purchase special equipment including Dragon Naturally Speak software, which creates typewritten text from verbal commands; Kurzweil 3000 software, which transforms typewritten text into accessible audio files; and computer equipment (hardware, workstations) as well as additional accessories that would allow for the facilitation of this software within SAS and the University library. Funds will also support software training as well as a camera monitoring system. The goal is to provide students with disabilities the benefits of improved academic performance and personal independence during testing periods, which the software makes possible. Students served by SAS will be the primary population to benefit from this project, although members of the greater Alfred community will also have access to this technology through the University's library. Further, the graduate programs in education and school psychology will receive training and, in turn, educate graduate students as to the uses and benefits of this technology and methodology in their subsequent careers, allowing rising teachers and school psychologists to integrate the technology into their future schools, assisting more students via one program but multiple potential points of contact. Founded in 1836, Alfred University became the first coeducational institution in New York State and the second in the nation. About 2,000 full-time undergraduate and 400 graduate students work and live in 52 buildings on a scenic 232-acre hillside campus adjoining the village of Alfred. The nonsectarian University is comprised of the privately endowed AACSB-accredited (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) College of Business and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as the NYS College of Ceramics (Kazuo Inamori School of Engineering and the School of Art and Design). Bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees are awarded.