

Jacobson named first director of Women's Leadership Center

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Amy Jacobson has been named the first director of the Women's Leadership Center at Alfred University. Jacobson, who has been a supervising attorney for Southern Tier Legal Services, begins her new position July 25. "Ms. Jacobson's experience, and through it, her familiarity with many of the issues affecting women's lives today, makes her an ideal person to inaugurate our Women's Leadership Center programs," said Kathy Woughter, interim vice president for Student Affairs and dean of students. "She has some great ideas about programming, and will be excellent at developing programs that involve both faculty and Student Affairs," said Woughter. Jacobson has worked in criminal litigation, as an advocate for a women's health association, and for a refugee clinic. As a supervising attorney at Southern Tier Legal Services, she has been representing low-income clients who have civil legal problems. A resident of Alfred, Jacobson is co-president of the Alfred Montessori School Board of Directors, has been a guest lecturer in many AU classes and has participated in the Careers in the Common Good program offered by the Career Development Center. She holds a B.A. in political science from Wellesley and her J.D. degree from New York University School of Law. She is a member of the bar in Pennsylvania and New York, and also the federal bar. Jacobson sees the directorship of the Women's Leadership Center as an extension of her work as an attorney. "All through my career, I've been helping people to solve problems, to maximize their experience and skills," she said. In her role as an advocate for refugee women, for example, she was working with women who were trying to become economically self-sufficient. In some respects, helping young women at AU embark upon their careers with a greater degree of self-confidence in their own ability is much the same thing, only "more forward-looking," helping them at the beginning of their professional lives, rather than trying to solve existing problems. "My legal career has been about helping people," said Jacobson, who said she regards her law degree "as a tool for helping people to do what they want to do." Her plans for the Women's Leadership Center include establishing mentoring programs, making connections between AU students and women in the professions the students are interested in. She anticipates working with women in the region, as well as a network of alumnae to provide not only mentorship opportunities for AU students. She would like to provide hands-on workshops that help women build the skills they need to increase their confidence as professionals in their fields, and she's exploring creation of a series of "brown-bag forums" that would bring women from various professions to campus to talk about the skills they needed to succeed, as well as some of what they have gone through trying to establish themselves. Among the events already being planned in conjunction with the Women's Studies Program are an open house panel during new student orientation, as well as a presentation entitled, "Leader or Lemming? Women and the Path to Success at Alfred (and beyond.)," and a student trip to New York City to visit Judge Karla Moskowitz, who is a member of Alfred University's Class of 1963, and was first elected to the New York State Supreme Court in 1991 and named to the Commercial Division in 2001. Jacobson would also like to see the Women's Leadership Center become a resource for the University as a whole. Located in renovated space in The Commons adjacent to the Openhym residence hall, the Women's Leadership Center will have a library of resource materials, as well as facilities for meetings. Jacobson and her husband, Dr. Allen Grove, associate professor of English at AU, are the parents of two children, Abigail, 1, and Nathan, 4. The family resides in Alfred. The Women's Leadership Center at Alfred University was created a year ago with a \$250,000 gift from an alumna, who wished to remain anonymous. The center is "dedicated to promoting the intellectual and social growth of Alfred University's women students." "This is a very fitting gift because of Alfred University's history as the first real co-educational institution of higher education in New York, and only the second in the country and the world," said AU President Charles M. Edmondson when creation of the Women's Leadership Center was announced. "It is appropriate that Alfred University, which has been educating women on an equal basis with men since its founding in 1836, takes this step to address the unique needs of our women students today." Additional support for the Women's Leadership Center came from two former AU sororities. The sisters of Sigma Chi Nu donated nearly \$78,000 from the sale of their sorority house to the University to support the Center. The sisters of Alpha Kappa Omicron are contributing 50 percent of the proceeds from the sale of their house to the Women's Leadership Center. The goal of the Women's Leadership Center is to ensure that Alfred University's women students receive the maximum benefit from their educational experiences.