

President's Script, Faculty/Staff Convocation, 2013

**Welcome and welcome back!**

I hope you all had a great summer and got some time away to relax and recharge. It's an exciting time in our college community—and more changes are in store. We're welcoming a large group of new students, opening a brand new building at the heart of our campus, and kicking off our provisional year of NCAA Division III membership. And we're moving ahead in our search for the next president to take the helm at Alfred State. There's so much to share, but before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to recognize some special guests.

Patricia Fogarty, Chair of the College Council

Carla Coch, College Council

Barbara Bates, Director of the Allegany County United Way

Josh Altamoos, Student Senate Chair

My husband, Bob

As you know, the college and its employees have been strong supporters of SEFA over the years, providing financial support as well as volunteering for committees and events. Here with us today to kick off this year's campaign is Barbara Bates.

*Barbara speaks*

Thank you, Barbara.

**Over the summer, I reread “The First Sixty Years”**, a history of the college from 1908 to 1968. As I stand here today, surrounded by some of the most passionate, talented professionals in higher education, I can't help but be reminded of the words Director Orvis spoke in his annual message to the faculty and staff in June 1953 and repeated in

the book. At that time, the college was still reeling from an influx of army veterans in need of training and reintroduction into civilian life. Alfred State's reputation was growing and the school could barely keep up with demand—the faculty, staff, and facilities were stretched thin. Although everyone worried about a slump after the enrollment bubble burst, the slump never came. In fact, so many applicants continued to seek an Alfred State education that some had to be turned away. Director Orvis remarked, (and I paraphrase):

“The reason that Alfred State has grown despite all obstacles, the reason the students will come to Alfred State without dormitories and live 12 miles from campus, the reason the students apply for entrance in ever increasing numbers...with classes in barns, basements, and attics; the reason they will come and work with facilities that would have been condemned and closed years ago...the reasons, I repeat, are not tangible. Rather, and I say this with greatest sincerity and deepest conviction, they come to Alfred State because of the faculty and staff—a faculty and staff of warmth and understanding...composed not only of sagacious teachers but of loyal, devoted counselors who understand and believe in the job they are doing, and, above all, are thoroughly and completely dedicated to the Alfred State way.”

**A lot has changed since then.** We have state-of-the-art facilities and cutting-edge technology at our fingertips, but the one constant continues to be the devotion of our faculty and staff to the Alfred State way. Our core principals have stood the test of time and have since become a mission—a mission of immersing students in their passions, transplanting them from the classroom, and planting them on the ground floor of their fields, a mission that makes a difference in the lives hundreds of students each year

and gives them a head start in an increasingly competitive world. Our faculty and staff don't just want our students to succeed, we want them to thrive.

When local manufacturers couldn't find the highly skilled manufacturing professionals they needed for both traditional and cutting-edge fields, our faculty and staff (headed by Dean, John Williams) got to work spearheading a new initiative called Retooling the Southern Tier, a program designed to create up to 300 highly trained graduates in manufacturing fields each year. And this past June, Governor Cuomo awarded the project a \$15 million SUNY 2020 Grant that will allow us and three other collaborating colleges the funds we need to expand, update, and revitalize our facilities in order to accommodate those students. This initiative is estimated to open up some 2,300 jobs in the region over the next decade and will be a tremendous investment in the college's future.

Those who don't know us assume we're sheltered. We're a rural college set in a tiny valley community, but one thing we pride ourselves on—one of those core principles that goes back to the founding—is the importance of student engagement, not just within our region, but with a global focus.

**Our students are traveling** the world and gaining experiences that few other colleges provide. Projects like the 2013 Solar Decathlon saw our students traveling to Datong, China this summer to join forces with Alfred University and Guilin University of Technology in China to design, build, and operate a solar home of the future. Team Alfred, as they were called, designed their home to go beyond what previous decathlon homes had done. They competed with colleges and universities across the globe for

weeks, combining cutting-edge engineering and traditional Chinese architecture. And they made it home with a first place award for energy balance and a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Our students and faculty have invested time and energy into competitions like the upcoming 2013 Fireball Run, which pits 40 teams against each other in an eight-day, 14-city, 2,500-mile trivia game across the United States, all in an effort to raise awareness for missing children and spread Alfred State's mission of experiential-based learning. This opportunity arose when last September, through the efforts of Gretchen Hanchett and the Greater Allegany Chamber of Commerce the 2012 Fireball Run teams visited Allegany Country and made our School of Applied Technology one of their stops. The organizers were so impressed with what they saw (and ate!) that they not only sponsored a team of our students for this fall's run, but they also brought the Automotive Services students a classic 1978 Rolls Royce Silver Wraith II to restore. So overwhelmed was JJ Sanchez, the Rolls' owner and executive producer of the Fireball Run online series, that he has arranged for a 1966 Lincoln presidential limousine, previously used to transport Henry Kissinger, to be restored by our students this fall!

**With a new academic year about to begin**, we have more to offer our students than ever before, including our first year of provisional membership in the NCAA Division III. This move is a big step toward offering our students a four-year intercollegiate athletic experience, and we owe a great debt to the members of the college family who developed, supported, and implemented the plan that made this possible. The provisional membership is four-year process that will fully integrate Alfred State into the

NCAA and our coaches and players are excited to have you watch them compete at this new level.

These opportunities are really the lifeblood of the Alfred State community. We know our students can't thrive in a vacuum; they need to get out into the world and make a difference; they need opportunities to shine. **That was the inspiration behind** building the new Student Leadership Center, a state-of-the-art facility that will provide students with unprecedented opportunities to become active citizens and leaders. Our ribbon cutting ceremony will be September 27 at 3 p.m. and I sincerely hope you all can join us in christening this new facility.

**We've had a lot of new construction** over the last few years with more waiting in the wings. You may have heard that capital construction was not funded this year. What that means is that we can't initiate certain categories of new projects at this time. Although it's disappointing, SUNY is diligently working to secure capital funding in next year's budget while we finish up our ongoing projects as well as our residence hall rehabs. Residential projects do not fall under the state's capital construction so we are putting the finishing touches on a major upgrade to Burdick Hall entrances and lounges. In the meantime, our excellent Facilities crew continues to give facelifts to various residence hall bathrooms and a campus team is working with an architectural firm to develop a proposal to rehab the MacKenzie Complex. On the School of Applied Technology Campus, work is still continuing on the Workforce Development Center. Our students are also busy working on the new College Home, Pioneer Landing. Showcasing our student work in Alfred has been a long-term goal that is coming to fruition with this project.

So even though there is a pause in state funding, we're very optimistic about the future of our facility master plan.

**Alfred State's self-study to be** submitted to the Middle State Commission on Higher Education has passed initial benchmarks, including receiving approval on its design following Dr. Christy Faison's preliminary site visit to Alfred State in April. This fall, working teams will submit their chapter outlines to the Self-Study Steering Committee for review. This process and several other steps will take us into fall 2014, when the Self-Study Steering Committee prepares and submits to Middle States, the final version the Self-Study Report and spring 2015, when the Evaluation Team conducts its Site Visit and Report. I want to thank Steering Committee Co-chairs Jayne Swanson and Mike Ronan as well as the numerous members of our faculty and staff who have and will spend many hours preparing for this visit.

**Students across the country are seeking** out an Alfred State education, and we owe it to them to provide the best possible tools with which to build their futures. Some of our students need more flexible access to educational options, which is why our online course offerings and processes are being updated and streamlined. Recently, the College was awarded a high needs grant based on a proposal submitted by Terry Tucker, to transition our Bachelor in Nursing from a hybrid program to fully online. It is our hope that this grant will not only be instrumental in transforming the nursing program but will provide tools and information invaluable to all our online programs.

You may have heard of the recently proposed initiative, Open SUNY, which is intended to provide students with broader access to SUNY's 64 campuses and some 88,000

faculty through one comprehensive online learning environment. The initiative is still in the planning stages and there are many unanswered questions. SUNY officials have only just begun providing a framework for what this will look like, but we are optimistic that everyone will find the best path moving forward. Next month I will be traveling with Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Craig Clark; Chair of the Faculty Senate, Jim Grillo, Chair of the Faculty Senate e-Learning Committee, Danielle Green, and Chair of the Student Senate, Josh Altemoos for an Open SUNY regional discussion hosted by System Administration. As information rolls out we will keep the campus community informed and allow every opportunity for input.

What we do know is that students today have options and that higher education is a major avenue to success in a competitive job market. Students from around the world are turning to schools like Alfred for a real-world education. That positions us very well to meet our enrollment targets which is crucial to our operation.

**Over the last couple of years**, we have been telling you that SUNY System Administration was developing a new methodology to distribute funding to the campuses. For many reasons, that methodology has been tabled but one change was made. When we speak about the College budget, we typically are referring to state support and tuition revenue. Until this year, the tuition we used to build our budget was based on an artificially low 3295 headcount. This meant that for every student over the budgeted enrollment the tuition would essentially go in the bank to be available to address any shortfalls in the following year. Beginning this year, we are required to build our budget on our actual expected enrollment headcount of 3650 meaning there will no

longer be excess funds unless we exceed our target. This makes meeting our enrollment plan even more critical than it has always been.

Our enrollment plan basically contains three parts: new full-time students, continuing/returning full-time students, and part-time students. Friday is final registration day, and at this point, we appear well on track to meet and perhaps even exceed our new student full-time enrollment plan goal. While part-time students are a small portion, of our enrollment, the majority are online and our work on our online portal as well as the development of Open SUNY will have a major impact on the educational experience of those students. Continuing/returning enrollment is more difficult to predict. Retention has been a major focus and the impact of initiatives such as MAP-Works and our modified academic status process is hoped to be reflected in this year's enrollment. At this point, we are cautiously optimistic that we may meet our continuing/returning full-time target, but we won't know until close of business Friday. We currently have slightly less continuing students eligible to return than last year while our enrollment plan was based on growing by 34 more continuing students so retention is key. As always, we must give our currently enrolled students the same level of attention and commitment that we do our new students. This makes full support of initiatives such as MAP-Works so critical. I want to thank you all for the extra steps you take to be sure ALL our students feel welcome and supported.

**In a few moments, I'll ask** Chair Fogarty provide an update on our search for a new president. We are all anxious to know who will be embracing our mission and leading us into the future. While we have had a number of changes, I believe they have helped to build an ever stronger foundation beneath our core values.

**As described in the First Sixty Years**, in the spring of 1938, a group of students who could not afford tuition came to Alfred State and gained an education in exchange for their hard work. Director Orvis explained:

“Our boys have constructed shops, painted buildings, done over floors, put in new lighting, built laboratory furniture, and completed many other odd jobs. In return, 30 young men have received training in electricity, dairy manufacturing, floriculture... Our 28 young women have mimeographed lesson plans, kept records up to date, and ...the young ladies have received a thorough grounding in shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping...In addition to the preparation they have received...I believe the experience of group living and social training they have had while here has been of great benefit, the extent of which cannot be measured in mere dollars and cents.”

We do this now. Our facilities are different and the projects are different but this is still why they come. This is what makes the Alfred State experience a life changing experience for so many. Students here love to learn because they do so *beside* all of you, a faculty and staff dedicated to creating an exceptional educational experience. You value them; you trust them; you challenge them; and you give them opportunities to become the very best. That is the Alfred State way and it is because of you all that it remains our guiding principal.

Thank you.

Valerie Nixon

Interim President