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The Campaign for the University at Albany

## Robert Wann Jr.: A Philanthropist at Age 21

By CAROL OLECHOWSKI

Many people begin supporting their *alma mater* once they are established in their careers. UAlbany senior Robert Wann Jr., 21, couldn't wait. He is already a philanthropist, and UAlbany is one special cause.

The New York City native was not born into a privileged life. "My parents worked hard to get to where we are today. Along the way, they taught me to be fair and to help others," said Wann, who as a high school student did volunteer work for nursing homes and other non-profits. He and his parents, Robert Sr. and Shirley, started The Wann Family Foundation in 2002 to support worthy causes. "We wanted to contribute to society and help out by whatever means we could," he explained.

Through their foundation, the Wanns support soup kitchens, local libraries, cancer research and other humanitarian causes. Another of their interests is education, and the University at Albany is the first aca-

demically institution to receive funding from them. With a \$42,000 contribution, the Wanns have endowed merit-based scholarships in finance/marketing and East Asian studies. The family's goal in setting up the funds was to help the University attract and keep dedicated students.

Robert Wann Jr., the foundation's vice president and treasurer, has a special interest in providing for students. When he was accepted by UAlbany, "I was very honored to be offered the Presidential Scholarship," he recounted. He was interested in business and had also been accepted by private universities, but a visit to campus convinced Wann that UAlbany, "a great school," was the place for him. He majors in business with a concentration in finance and marketing.

Wann is grateful for his experiences at the University. "I developed friendships with professors, especially William Danko (chair of the Department of Marketing) and



Photo: Mark Schmidt

Robert Wann Jr. works as an intern at the Legislative Office Building in downtown Albany

Susanna Fessler, (chair of the Department of East Asian Studies) after taking classes with them. I was truly impressed by their teaching, and I was able to get to know them because of the small class sizes. We established the scholarship funds in those areas because of the professors and their programs."

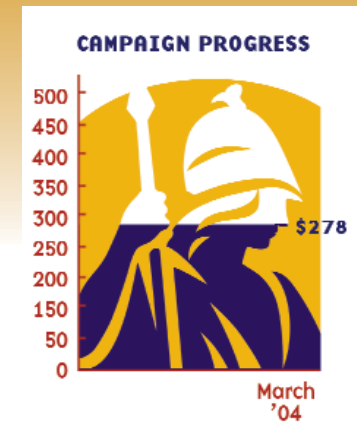
In addition, Wann cited Danko's own philanthropic example as an inspiration. A few years ago, *The Millionaire Next Door* co-author established the Milton and Mary M. Danko Golden Rule Award in memory of his parents.

Currently, Wann is completing a semester-long, 15-credit internship in the office of New York State Sen. Caesar Trunzo, who represents part of Suffolk County. At the Legislative Office Building in downtown Albany, Wann handles research and other duties that assist the veteran lawmaker and his constituents.

Asked if he might decide to run for political office himself someday, the soft-spoken Presidential Honors Society member smiled and responded, "Hey, you never know." After graduating in May, he will move on to law school; he has already been accepted at the University of Maryland and St. John's, Washington and Lee, and several others. Wann plans to return to New York

to practice corporate law.

This spring, the first two recipients of the Wann Scholarships will be selected. If he has an opportunity to meet them, Wann will say: "Congratulations on your academic achievement and your high standards. I am very proud that UAlbany has students like you. You are examples for other students to follow."



Total support for the Campaign for the University at Albany has reached \$278 million, fueled by gifts from UAlbany alumni, faculty, staff, businesses, foundations and other friends.

An anonymous \$1 million gift to support life sciences research is one recent major donation, and brings to \$5.4 million the amount contributed by donors to the Campaign's Life Sciences Research Initiative. This initiative aims to build nationally competitive programs in the life sciences that prepare students and position UAlbany to address the critical scientific challenges of the 21st century.

The University was recently informed of an anonymous bequest intention, currently valued at \$1.9 million. Upon the deaths of the donors, the bequest will establish a trust to fund the Grenander Scholarships, providing full tuition, room and board for four Humanities students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The University's National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA) received a \$50,000 gift from Verizon to boost CELA's efforts to improve student learning and achievement in English. And Stewart's Shops, based in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., donated \$50,000 for support of the Life Sciences Research Building. Other gifts are building the University's endowment to provide support for doctoral students and expand library collections.

"UAlbany has ambitious goals, and the support of our donors is necessary to achieving them. We are very grateful for the support of so many for the Campaign for the University at Albany," said Ruth Killoran, Campaign director and associate vice president for University Advancement.

For information about ways you can make a difference through the Campaign for the University at Albany, visit: [www.albany.edu/campaign](http://www.albany.edu/campaign) or call (518) 437-4969.