

**One Simmons:  
Transforming  
Our Campus**

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**Meet Simmons'  
9<sup>th</sup> President,  
Lynn Perry  
Wooten**

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**Fighting  
COVID-19 with  
Robyn Holman  
Cortese '05**

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# Simmons

SIMMONS MAGAZINE | Spring 2020 | [simmons.edu/alumni](http://simmons.edu/alumni)

A portrait of Helen G. Drinan, the 9th President of Simmons University. She is a woman with short, wavy blonde hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark blue cardigan over a black top, a multi-strand pearl necklace with blue and white pearls, and matching pearl earrings. The background is a blurred office setting with bookshelves and a window.

## *Simmons University President*

Helen G. Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA  
Impact and Legacy

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FEATURES

# 20

**A Visionary Leader**

Excerpts from an oral history by President Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA reveal the incredible impact she's had during her tenure at Simmons and beyond.

*Oral History compiled by Dr. Jason Wood, Simmons University Archivist*

# 28

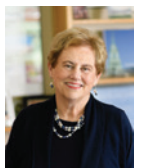
**Preparation for Leadership**

Helen Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA wasn't expecting to become a university president, but her personal and professional paths—including as a Simmons alumna—readied her for presidential success.

*By Bob Dunn*

THE COVER

*Helen G. Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA was photographed in her office at Simmons University on June 19, 2018. Photograph by John Gillooly.*



Helen G. Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA

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# PROLOGUE

SPRING 2020

IN JULY, SIMMONS ANNOUNCED ALL CLASSES WOULD BE ONLINE FOR THE FALL SEMESTER. VISIT [SIMMONS.EDU/CORONAVIRUS](https://simmons.edu/coronavirus) FOR MORE DETAILS.



## Simmons

SPRING 2020  
VOLUME 3 / ISSUE 1

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PRINTING  
**Journeyman Press**

Simmons University of Boston, MA 02115, publishes *Simmons Magazine* two times a year. *Simmons Magazine* is printed by Journeyman Press in Newburyport, MA.

We welcome readers' comments. Contact us by mail at *Simmons Magazine*, University Communications, 300 The Fenway, Boston, MA 02115; or by email at [magazine@simmons.edu](mailto:magazine@simmons.edu). Copyright © 2020, Simmons University. All publication rights reserved.

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## PROLOGUE

LETTER FROM REGINA PISA



# A Thank You to Helen G. Drinan

Helen G. Drinan's term as President of Simmons University drew to a close at the end of June after a remarkable 12-year tenure. I want to take this opportunity to thank Helen for her extraordinary service, leadership, and dedication to our institution. She has been a wise and visionary leader.

University presidents—perhaps more so than leaders in other fields or industries—help define their schools by contributing their own distinctiveness to the mission and fundamental values of the institution. This has, indeed, been the experience at Simmons under Helen's leadership.

Helen was named Simmons' eighth President, and first alumna, in 2008, at a moment not unlike today: a time of worldwide uncertainty and crisis, a time when it wasn't

always clear how we would move forward as an institution, a community, and a nation. Her leadership has been marked with a steady hand, a drive to work hard every day, a determination to do the right thing, despite how difficult the path, and a tenacious belief that all things are possible. It has been Helen's steadiness, drive, determination, and tenacity, working together with our faculty and professional staff, that have enabled Simmons' culture of learning and preparation for life's work and made it possible for Simmons to realize a brighter future for the students we serve.

Helen's accomplishments at Simmons are many, and while I can only convey some of the highlights in this message, they are all marked by her strategic thinking and intense focus on finding creative solutions to challenging problems in order to ensure Simmons' long-term health and sustainability.

Today, due to Helen's fiscal stewardship, virtually every Simmons student receives some form of financial aid, something that would not have been possible before her presidency. Helen was ahead of the curve in realizing the impact of online learning. Early on, she forged a relationship with 2U that brought online graduate programs, and now an undergraduate program in the planning stages. Today, Simmons is a leader in online learning because of her foresight. These programs have not only generated new revenue sources for Simmons, but they have provided access to a Simmons education to scores of students all over the country and the world who would not otherwise have experienced the "Simmons difference."

You can read much more about Helen's presidency, in her own words, here in this special edition of Simmons Magazine. Even as the global health crisis prevents us from commemorating Helen's presidency together on the Simmons campus, I hope you will enjoy this issue's look back at her many accomplishments. I encourage all members of the Simmons community whose lives Helen has touched so deeply to reach out to her directly and join me in expressing our thanks for her steadfast friendship, her wise counsel, and her visionary leadership at Simmons.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Regina M. Pisa". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

**Regina M. Pisa**

Chair of the Simmons University Board of Trustees



# Reckoning with Racism

The past few weeks have been painful, as the United States has been forced to reckon with appalling acts of continued racism and injustices. We have mourned the loss of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others who have been victims of violence. We have watched as thousands have taken to the streets to fight for a more just and equitable world.

We know it takes all of us to realize the full vision of inclusion and equity. Listed below are some resources related to equity and inclusion. These resources are also available on our website at [simmons.edu/ocie/resources](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources), where they will be updated regularly. In addition to the resources listed here, the Office of Organizational Culture, Inclusion & Equity will be hosting regular community conversations with Simmons students, faculty, staff, and alumni in the weeks ahead.

## COVID-19

Explore resources relating to issues involving COVID-19 including financial assistance, where to access free or affordable food, LGBTQ-specific services, and more.

➤ [simmons.edu/ocie/resources/covid-19](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources/covid-19)

## ANTI-RACISM

These resources take you beyond self-education and connect readers to action and advocacy.

➤ [simmons.edu/ocie/resources/anti-racism](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources/anti-racism)

## RESOURCES FOR WHITE ALLYSHIP

Find ways to support members of marginalized groups and how to use your privilege to help others.

➤ [simmons.edu/ocie/resources/white-allyship](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources/white-allyship)

## POLICE REFORM AND ABOLITION

One cannot talk about system change toward being anti-racist without serious consideration of undoing the culture of policing and understanding its origins. It is also important to acknowledge that many communities have moved toward a productive model of community policing.

➤ [simmons.edu/ocie/resources/police-reform](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources/police-reform)

## TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT RACE

Parents must engage their children of any age in a conversation about what the current civil rights movement means for the country and for them. Historical context is important but it is also important to reassure young people that they are safe and everything will be okay. That includes growing and learning together and that we are richer when we are more inclusive.

➤ [simmons.edu/ocie/resources/talking-to-children](https://simmons.edu/ocie/resources/talking-to-children)

## ACTIVISM@SIMMONS

Explore the history of activism at Simmons University through an interactive online exhibit. See how Simmons' students made advocacy integral to their curriculum and solidified Simmons as a place where change can happen.

➤ [simmons.edu/library/activism-simmons](https://simmons.edu/library/activism-simmons)

## BLACK HISTORY@SIMMONS

Delve into the history of the first Black students at Simmons and explore Black history over the University's years. Read how student activism created integral community changes and how the University still strives to make Simmons an inclusive space.

➤ [simmons.edu/library/black-history-simmons](https://simmons.edu/library/black-history-simmons)

## BEATLEY LIBRARY ACTIVISM 101 GUIDE

What does activism truly mean? This guide seeks to answer that question and more through videos, articles, books, and infographics, to name a few. This guide provides comprehensive resources on the foundation of activism and where you might stand in your own activism journey.

➤ [simmons.libguides.com/activism101](https://simmons.libguides.com/activism101)

## BEATLEY LIBRARY ANTI-OPPRESSION GUIDE

The Simmons Library presents a guide to navigating anti-oppression frameworks through a social justice lens. This includes information about diversity, inclusion, and anti-oppression strategies and theories. A must read for the Simmons community.

➤ [simmons.libguides.com/anti-oppression](https://simmons.libguides.com/anti-oppression)

## THE CONSORTIUM OF HIGHER EDUCATION LGBT RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

This member-based organization provides support and resources to those in higher education working towards the betterment of the experiences of those of diverse sexual orientations. Through the consortium, you can receive networking opportunities with like minded individuals, educational and professional development resources, and collaborative engagement—all with the mission to advocate for more inclusive practices within a social and racial justice lens.

➤ [lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/mission-statement](https://lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/mission-statement)



SPRING 2020

# FOREWORD

SIMMONS NEWS AND NOTES

## One Simmons

Taking a closer look at  
how One Simmons  
is Student Centered







# One Simmons

First Look at the New Living and Learning Center  
*By Brendan Hughes*

## One Simmons: Student Centered

One Simmons is more than a building or campus plan: it's a set of guiding principles that are setting the way the university interacts with the many communities it serves. At the core of those principles is the way that Simmons serves its students. The idea of putting students first is articulated in the first sentence of Simmons' mission, and the first of our core values, but stu-

dent needs today are different than they were twenty, fifty, or one hundred years ago. With that in mind, One Simmons has made student services a top priority. Simmons Magazine spoke with Vice President of University Real Estate and Facilities Management Laura Brink Pisinski and Senior Vice President for Organizational Culture, Inclusion, and Equity Debra Perez about what One Simmons has in store for student services.

*"Students tell us we could be doing a better job, and our 'one stop' approach is that better job."*

▲  
**Laura Brink Pisinski**

Vice President of University Real Estate and Facilities Management

## One-Stop Shop for Student Services

A student's campus experience is more than just what happens in the classroom. Figuring out loans or scholarships, adding and dropping classes, or coordinating a work study schedule can be confusing or overwhelming, and the frustration can influence how a student feels about their experience. One Simmons and the creation of a "one-stop" for student business services aims to fix that.

A key element of the One Simmons campus redesign is the co-location of student business services into a lively one-stop center in the Main College Building. The goal is to make student services—like financial aid, student employment, student academic records, and more—easier and more accessible to students who today may visit multiple offices to get a few simple questions answered. Under the new design, these offices and the individuals who staff them will be co-located in a spacious, carefully designed wing of the Main College Building.

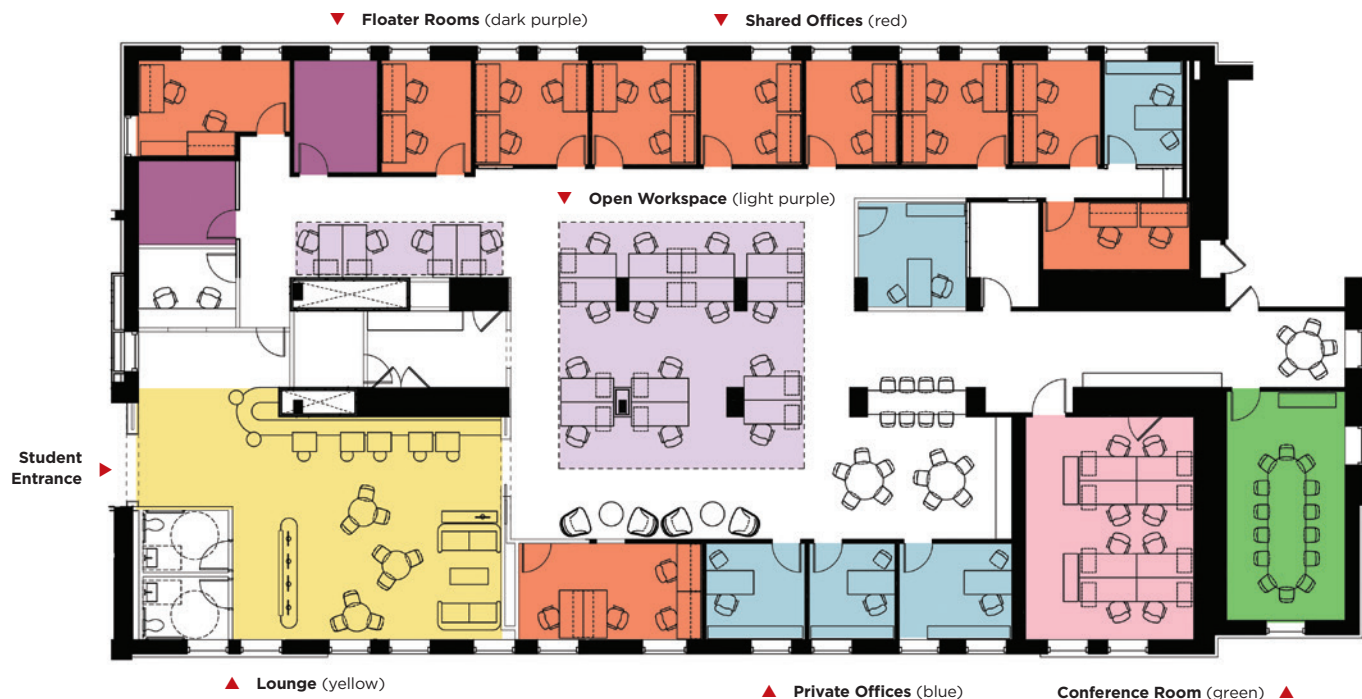
"Students tell us we could be doing a better job, and our 'one stop' approach is that better job," said Brink Pisinski. "Think of how banks used to be: giant marble buildings with a long line to a

teller behind a barrier. It gave you the sense that you didn't belong there—that the services were inaccessible. That's the old model. Now think of a Capital One Café, which is like going to a Starbucks with a banker who sits next to you. That's what we plan to achieve with our one-stop student services center. We will bring all of the business services together into one space; a space that lowers student anxiety."

In addition to the physical co-location of these core student services, staff will be cross-trained in all the service areas, so any staff member will be able to help connect students with the right office or colleague. Part of the training will include student development and well-being so that staff can listen more closely to students' worries and recognize opportunities to connect them to help when they may be at risk. "We're learning from organizations who are well-known for their customer service," Brink Pisinski explains. "Ease of use, speed, and accuracy are key to a successful customer service operation and we're excited to provide all three. A good example is the self-service kiosk that students will be able to use to access information or get simple printouts—without having to wait."

# FOREWORD

CAMPUS UPDATES



Above: The One-Stop Student Services Center

The goal for this one-stop student service center comes from the philosophy underpinning the One Simmons vision, to redesign the campus to better meet the needs of students. Just as the academic redesign created Simmons' four colleges to promote interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration to better serve students and the fields they enter, One Simmons is reinventing campus spaces with the needs of students placed first.

## Bringing Student Activities into the Light

Another element of the One Simmons plan is creating a new student activities center on the first floor of the Management and Academic Building, adjacent

to the Academic Campus quad. Currently, all the student activities offices, as well as the Multicultural Center, are spread through the basement level of the Main College Building. The new vision will unite them in the lobby and first floor of the Management and Academic Building.

"It's going to be a great space, because not only will it include student activities, but the entire lobby will be energized and activated as collaborative space for students to use," said Brink Pisinski. "The visibility and the light with those great big windows will attract students to the space and inspire them to get more involved. It will create a sense of excitement and student energy."

## Elevating the Multicultural Center

Next door to the new Student Activities Center in the Management and Academic Building will be the Multicultural Center, which is currently located in the basement of the Main College Building.

"By bringing the Multicultural Center from the basement of the MCB up to the quad ground level, we raise the visibility of the center and elevate its importance. It is a symbol of what we believe," said Pérez. "It aligns our physical space with the priority we are putting on equity and inclusion. We're not just talking the talk, we're walking it."

Pérez sees great importance in the prominent location of the Multicultural Center facing the quad.

"By placing this vital meeting place at the center of our campus and community, we create more space for the casual interactions that build relationships," she said. "All members of our community, regardless of background, politics, ethnicity, race, gender, and ability, can come together in a space that belongs to all of us; in which we honor our differences as our strengths."

The new homes for the Multicultural Center and the student activities offices in the Management and Academic Building give them the space, light, and prominence they deserve on campus and will ensure students have the collaborative and leadership experiences that are the hallmarks of a Simmons education. ■



# Meet Dr. Lynn Perry Wooten, Simmons University's Ninth President

By Jeremy Solomon



➔ **Dr. Wooten will succeed Helen G. Drinan**, who ends her term in June after serving as Simmons' president for the past 12 years.

"After a comprehensive, nationwide search that attracted significant interest from a diverse group of impressive candidates, we're delighted to announce Dr. Wooten as the ninth president of Simmons University," said Regina M. Pisa, Chair of the Simmons Board of Trustees. "Dr. Wooten's clear strategic vision and creativity, seasoned leadership experience, strong academic record, and collaborative style make her ideally suited to advance our university during this critical period. She brings with her not only a deep understanding of higher education, but as a business school Dean, a strong appreciation of how to manage and lead complex

*"Dr. Wooten is uniquely suited to lead and advance the transformation that has begun at Simmons under President Drinan's leadership. We're thrilled to welcome her to Boston and to the Simmons community."*



**Regina M. Pisa** Chair of the Simmons Board of Trustees

organizations through the inevitable changes that are facing all institutions of higher learning today. Dr. Wooten is uniquely suited to lead and advance the transformation that has begun at Simmons under President Drinan's leadership. We're thrilled to welcome her to Boston and to the Simmons community."

Drinan led a transformational chapter of Simmons' history. Under her leadership, Simmons reconfigured its undergraduate curriculum with a focus on leadership development,

became a university in 2018, developed world-class coed online graduate degree programs, and cemented its status as a premier institution for women scholars.

Dr. Wooten is a scholar and academic, and throughout her career she has assumed a number of leadership positions. Most recently, she served as the David J. Nolan Dean and Professor of Management and Organizations at Cornell University's Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management.

"With its robust graduate programs and commitment to educating the next generation of female leaders, Simmons University plays a significant role in today's world," said Dr. Wooten. "The university's model—with its focus on liberal arts and professional development—is the future of higher education. I couldn't be more excited to join this community and to further the institution's distinctive and vital mission."

Dr. Wooten's expertise lies in crisis leadership, positive organizing routines, strategic human resource management, workforce diversity and competitive advantage, and development of emerging leaders. She has been a prolific author of journal articles and has published two books—*Positive Organizing in a Global Society*:

*Understanding and Engaging Differences for Capacity Building and Inclusion* (2015), and *Leading Under Pressure: From Surviving to Thriving Before, During, and After a Crisis* (2010). Her scholarship also includes 15 edited, authored, and coauthored book chapters, including the recently published chapter, “The Glass Cliff: African American CEOs as crisis leaders.” She has also authored or co-authored 28 scholarly articles, including a 2016 research briefing, “Creating an organization of leaders: A positively deviant approach,” which appeared in the journal *Progress in Pediatrics*.

Dr. Wooten’s research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, and she has been published in journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Human Resource Management*, and *Organizational Dynamics*.

*“I couldn’t be more excited to join this community and to further the institution’s distinctive and vital mission.”*



**Lynn Perry Wooten** 9th President of Simmons University

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with Dr. Wooten and experience firsthand her passion and commitment to higher education,” said Dr. Alison Davis-Blake, president of Bentley University. “She’s a strategic thinker and an excellent communicator. I also can’t think of anyone better to make diversity, equity, and inclusion the centerpiece of a campus, and I look forward to collaborating with her here in Massachusetts.”

Dr. Wooten is Simmons University’s first African American president. Her appointment is the result of a comprehensive search

process, driven by the nationally-respected search firm Isaacson, Miller and a 19-member search committee representing a cross-section of the Simmons community, with student, faculty, administration, alumnae/i, board members, and the community participating. The process featured input from a wide swath of the Simmons community, including dozens of listening sessions and online survey participation. After interviewing a number of semifinalists and finalists, the search committee unanimously recommended Dr. Wooten to the Board of Trustees, which voted unanimously to select her as the institution’s ninth president.

Prior to her position at Cornell, Dr. Wooten served on the faculty at the University of Michigan for nearly two decades, where she was the University of Michigan’s Senior Associate Dean for Student and Academic Excellence and Clinical Professor of Strategy, Management &

Organizations at Michigan’s Ross School of Business.

Dr. Wooten grew up in Philadelphia and is an alumna of the University of Michigan (PhD). She received her undergraduate degree from North Carolina A&T State University, where she graduated as valedictorian, and her MBA from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. She is an active member in a number of national volunteer leadership organizations, including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Jack & Jill of America, Junior League, and The Links Inc. In addition, Wooten currently serves as an advisory board member for the Aspen Institute’s Business and Society Program and is a board member for the Center for Effective Philanthropy and University of Michigan Alumni Association.

She is married to David Wooten, a chaired marketing professor at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business, and they have two children—Justin and Jada. ■

## UPDATE NEW ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Simmons University will unveil a **fully online and reimagined undergraduate offering to complement its traditional on-campus experience** that will be ready for returning students on September 1, 2020. The new program will accelerate Simmons’ digital transformation strategy and mission to educate the next century of learners, while also enhancing access. Hundreds of courses from the existing Simmons catalog will be intentionally redesigned for online delivery with a blend of synchronous and asynchronous coursework, in partnership with global education technology leader 2U, Inc. These high-quality online courses will enable returning students to continue their studies in the fall, while also providing non-traditional prospective students the chance to pursue a Simmons degree fully online, starting in the spring. The new online program will ensure continuity and quality and complement Simmons’ signature undergraduate experience focused on women’s leadership and empowerment. Simmons remains committed to bringing students back to campus as quickly as possible, while prioritizing the health and safety of students and the broader campus community.



# Stories from the Spring of COVID-19

*The following collection of four essays were originally published in CommTracks by 2020 senior Communications students*



## Pause for the Present By Sierra McCaffrey '20

*Sierra McCaffrey is a senior majoring in PR/MarComm. Her most recent internship was at Harvard Medical School developing content for various online publications. She lives in Connecticut.*

➤ **More often than not**, our society is always looking ahead and planning for the future. I am a prime example, a planner. I like to make a routine and schedule, and stick with it. Seeing as I am graduating in May and a naturally social person, I like to keep busy. But there was no way to plan for the impact of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus.

With the development of the global pandemic and the rise of uncertainty about the future, it seems most of the world is worried and scared. People don't know what

will happen days, weeks, or even months from now. Schools and universities have transitioned to online learning, grocery stores have been emptied, and many people have lost their jobs.

Personally, it's devastating losing the last few months of my final year at Simmons—removed from classrooms, friends, and professors. Having to leave my apartment, the city I love, and all the projects that were left unfinished; including a great internship that had to end abruptly. I am upset about all the activities and celebratory ceremonies that were in place to mark the end of my college career.

While the adjustment has been sudden and saddening, being home during this stressful period has welcomed reflection. The heart-breaking news is everywhere—social media, television, word-of-mouth—and it is exhausting. Healthcare professionals are working tirelessly to help and heal those infected with COVID-19, and it still seems this virus's death toll is only going to get worse. But I do what I can to prioritize tasks such as finishing school, staying healthy, and trying to stay positive. Though I still have classes via Zoom and assignments that consume some time, I have more time to live in the present. When I was in Boston, my days were scheduled from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and routine.



## UPDATE KATIE CONBOY NAMED 14TH PRESIDENT OF SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

On February 12, in Notre Dame, Indiana, Katie Conboy was named the 14th president of Saint Mary's College, effective June 1, 2020.

"It is always bittersweet to say goodbye to someone who has invested her heart and soul into our institution and accomplished so much. At the same time, Katie is more than ready to assume a presidential post, and this

couldn't be a better match. Saint Mary's is a nationally preeminent Catholic women's liberal arts college, and it is among a unique tri-college community that includes the University of Notre Dame and Holy Cross College. As Katie told me, the opportunity offers her the perfect combination of her past experiences: a Catholic college with a focus on women's education. It also will move her closer to family and return her to a part of the country she knows so well." says President Drinan.

Conboy was appointed Simmons Provost and Senior Vice President in July 2013 and her

Since being at home, I have less of a schedule but have been able to laugh with my sisters and host themed dinner nights for my family for fun. I have been able to get outside and take walks around the neighborhood with my puppy. Things that aren't so bad. Just the other day, I ran into a family on my street, whom I have never seen before. It turns out they live down the road from me and have been living there for six years now.

This time has presented itself to me, personally, as a pause. A time where the future is unknown so we have to live in the present, day by day.

While it is hard to ignore the world-wide problems of this illness, I have been able to admire the strength of medical personnel, including my mom, who worked in a COVID-19 testing drive-through tent. And I have realized the power of communities—whether it is giving extra supplies to neighbors or creating and donating masks. With all the stress in the world today, it has ignited community and togetherness, and that is something that people are seeming to fail to acknowledge. All we can do is focus on how to help ourselves and others in the present, and hope for the future. ■

*“This time has presented itself to me, personally, as a pause. A time where the future is unknown so we have to live in the present, day by day.”*

▲  
Sierra McCaffrey '20



### **Covid-19 Took Away My Senior Season** *By Lauren Del Vacchio '20*

*Lauren Del Vacchio is a web design and development major and an outfielder on the Simmons University softball team.*

➡ **Softball has been a part of my life** since I was nine years old. In the last 13 years, I devoted myself to this sport as it became one of my top priorities. I spent hours at the gym to get stronger for the season. I've had to wake up at 6 a.m. for team conditioning. I've suffered through long car rides to get to a tournament that was hours away. I was committed to my sport and I loved it. For my career to get cut short due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it feels like a bad dream that I can't wake up from.

It'll be forever ingrained into my brain—the day our coach told us our season was

responsibilities included serving on the President's University Strategy Team, leading the Dean's Councils, and executing overall responsibility for Academic Affairs—including the curriculum, the deans and faculty of the four colleges, and all academic support services, such as Registrar, Library, Technology, Advising, Tutoring, Global Education, the Center for Excellence in Teaching, and the Career Education Center.

She played a integral role in transforming Simmons, moving Simmons from College to University status, thinking about undergraduate and graduate education in a more holistic

manner, and the creation of four new interdisciplinary colleges and the hiring of their deans. Conboy was also responsible for leading the faculty in a complete revision of the undergraduate common curriculum, launching six online graduate programs, and leading the institution-wide strategic planning process that produced Redesigning Simmons: The Plan for 2022, the current strategic plan for the university.

The impact and benefits of this redesign are starting to be felt across the four colleges in many ways, including enhanced undergraduate STEM education; inter-professional education

for graduate students; media and information sources in the age of fake news and information overload; leadership development; and health equity, among others.

Simmons recently hired an Interim Provost, Russell Pinizzotto, PhD, who served as Wentworth's Provost from 2010 until 2015, and as Interim Provost for a number of institutions, most recently for Carlow University in Pittsburgh, where he established the College of Professional Studies for adult and non-traditional learners, and Merrimack College, where he served as Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering.



canceled. We were in Orlando, playing the first 10 games of what should have been a 40+ game season. The entire team was devastated, tears were shed, and we all kept hugging each other afraid to let go. Seniors were crushed. Our senior season started five days ago and now it was coming to an abrupt halt. This was not how we pictured our last season to end. But we all had to toughen up because the next day we had two more games to play and we knew we had to leave it all out on the field.

That next day, we played the best two games any of us had ever played. We gave it our all, down to the last inning. Molly Hennessey, a senior starting centerfielder coming back from an ACL injury that caused her to lose her junior year, played her heart out. On the last at bat of her career, she completed the milestone of attaining her 100th hit. Alex Soqui, our senior pitcher, mustered everything she had and pitched a winning game against Montclair State College. And me . . . well I stood in right field and took it all in. That perfect feel of catching a pop fly into the pocket of my glove, the crunch of the dirt under my cleats as I ran the bases, and that wondrous feeling of hitting the ball on the sweet spot of my bat. All these sensations that I took for granted.

My favorite memory of that day was losing my voice in the dugout because I was cheering too hard for my teammates. We were down five runs and came back to win it in extra innings, and I'll never forget running out of the dugout to hug Dan Carson as she crossed the plate on a sacrifice fly hit by Alex Morang to secure the last win of our softball career.

While COVID-19 took away my last softball season, it didn't take away the passion I feel for softball and it'll never take away the love I have for my teammates. ■

*“My favorite memory of that day was losing my voice in the dugout because I was cheering too hard for my teammates.”*



Lauren Del Vacchio '20



## My Experience in Quarantine By Kenna McCarthy '20

*Kenna McCarthy is a senior majoring in PR/MarComm. She has completed two internships in addition to her coursework. She lives on Long Island.*

➤ **I never thought** this would be how my education ended. Locked in my room, away from my friends, and paying for an apartment I'm not living in. I went home because it made sense. To spend time with my family and hope no one gets sick and that this virus doesn't affect my life the way it could seriously affect others.

I spent my first few days doing absolutely nothing but watching *Tiger King* on Netflix and mourning the fact that my last semester of college was over. Quickly realizing that I was falling into the oblivion of nameless days and numberless months, I decided to make a schedule for each day. That failed when I came down with a cold, and my dad sent me to my room—where I have been quarantined since.

I don't think I have coronavirus because my symptoms are not severe, yet my parents who are in their 60s have the right to be scared of how this virus could affect them. They have decided my fate for the next two weeks, which means living in my bedroom. Now, there is no lack of alone-time, which is nice, and no one barges in on me because they don't want to get “infected.”

Yet, I am completely and utterly bored. I do my schoolwork but lack all motivation to work on anything that isn't necessary.

*“I am angry at but also envy those in our country who don't care about how this pandemic is affecting people. I am angry because their careless actions are why more and more people are dying each day.”*



Kenna McCarthy '20

I seem to have no hobbies and caved in to downloading TikTok.

My screen time yesterday was eight hours, and I am disturbed. Never in my life would I have thought at age 22, I would be sitting in my room having no plans. I am a planner; I like thinking forward and looking towards the next exciting thing I have going on in my life. This is no longer the case. My internship was terminated, college canceled, and all upcoming events I was looking forward to eliminated.

I know I am complaining, I know everyone's situation is different and people have it worse, but everyone has the right to feel these things. I feel sad. This pandemic has caused everyone to put their life on hold. I am angry at but also envy those in our country who don't care about how this pandemic is affecting people. I am angry because their careless actions are why more and more people are dying each day. I envy them because they are going on with their days as usual and haven't put their lives on hold. This has affected the graduating class of 2020 more than some think, and it has really put life into perspective. It has made me realize that truly nothing is certain and you have to enjoy every day because life is unknown. We are living in history and this is a period of time I will never forget. ■

*“My heart ached, knowing that it would be some time before I saw anyone in the COMM-unity in-person again, with that same feeling I had known since moving throughout my childhood: I didn’t feel that any of us got a proper goodbye.”*

▲  
Mackenzie Farkus '20



## This Isn't a Goodbye By Mackenzie Farkus '20

*Mackenzie Farkus is a senior journalism major and co-editor of CommTracks. Her most recent internship is with WGBH News in Boston.*

➔ I was excited, like many other seniors, for my last spring break. The energy in the CommLab had grown frantic. We were holding group meetings for Studio 5, preparing websites, and planning out both *CommTracks* and *CommWorks*. Reality was closing in fast; when spring break was over, we would officially apply for jobs, internships, fellowships, grad school. We charted out where we would live, and with whom; if we would stay in Boston or leave it altogether.

But for this one week, we could all relax. We could go to Montreal, eat a ton of poutine and sift through vinyl, as I did; we could travel to other cities and countries from our final semester abroad; stay in Boston, where jobs and internships continued on; or just go home, spending time with family members and beloved pets.

Of course, these plans fell through. Our futures grew more uncertain as more and more Massachusetts colleges closed for physical classes, on-campus living, and study abroad, until eventually, Simmons did the same.

About two days after I had settled back into my Simmons townhouse, preparing for online classes, I was notified that my approval to stay in Boston by Residence Life had been rescinded, and the date for everyone to leave campus had been moved up.

My life of moving around from state to state prepared me to pack up everything that was mine in the span of a few hours after receiving the email. I left the next morning for Western Massachusetts.

To echo many of my classmates, I didn't expect my senior year to end this way. I was upset that I didn't get to see my roommates before I left; I was angry that I was too nervous to go back into the CommLab one last time to transfer files. My heart ached, knowing that it would be some time before I saw anyone in the COMM-unity in-person again, with that same feeling I had known since moving throughout my childhood: I didn't feel that any of us got a proper goodbye.

One of the things I have realized as I get older, however, is that most goodbyes aren't permanent. Though we may be separated by distance, different time zones, stay-at-home orders, and policies mandating no out-of-state travel, I still see my classmates and fellow CommLab agents in Zoom meetings; I message people in the COMM-unity. I send them stupid memes and random things I've found that remind me of them, like pictures of longtailed furbies, stuffed animal Gremlins, and Animal Crossing villagers. I still feel the love and warmth of my COMM-unity in every digital interaction or long phone call I have.

And when this is over, I'll see you around—even if it's not in the CommLab. ■



# Boston Scholarships

Next steps for  
Isis Rivera '20 and  
Mardoche Telusma '19  
*By Bob Dunn*

➔ **Isis Rivera '20** has been telling people she wanted to be a veterinarian ever since she was seven years old. That goal, and her broad interest in science, put her on a path to TechBoston Academy and from there to Simmons, where she's now pursuing a Fulbright Scholarship. "It's fair to say that Simmons led me to Fulbright in a kind of literal sense," says Rivera, reflecting on her experience at the University.

Rivera learned about Simmons—and its Boston Scholarship Program—from uAspire, a nonprofit that helps high school students overcome financial obstacles that could derail their plans for college. Aware that Rivera wanted a small college (preferably local) with the right science courses for an aspiring veterinarian, a uAspire advisor encouraged her to consider Simmons and apply for the University's merit-based Boston Scholarship. Simmons granted her admission and the Scholarship.

"I don't think it would have been feasible to attend Simmons without it. It would have cost too much," says Rivera.



*"It's fair to say that Simmons led me to Fulbright in a kind of literal sense."*

▲ **Isis Rivera '20** Boston Scholar

The Boston Scholarship is a competitive, four-year, full-tuition award specifically designated for students from Boston public high schools and charter schools who have achieved academic excellence. This year, 40 candidates applied for 9 to 15 spots.

Now in her fourth year at Simmons, Rivera is a biochemistry major on the pre-veterinary track. She says developing close relationships with faculty has been a highlight of her time at the University.

"I've found a lot of really, really cool faculty here, and mentors in those faculty," says Rivera. She credits her

professors with being particularly supportive as she navigates medical care for an ongoing condition.

Rivera says her professors have influenced her growing interest in the environment, ecology, and sustainability. For her Fulbright application, she's chosen a master's program in global sustainability and environmental change at the University of Helsinki in Finland. (For now, at least, Rivera is "still a little bit on the fence" about pursuing veterinary school—especially considering the expense.)

Dr. Nakeisha Cody, Director of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships at

Simmons, has been working with Rivera on her Fulbright application. Dr. Cody also works closely with all students in the Boston Scholarship cohort.

"This group of students is already very talented, and we want to continue to provide them with enhanced support to help them further thrive at Simmons," says Dr. Cody, emphasizing the importance of "community building, strengthening the cohort model, and creating pathways or linkages to postgraduate opportunities."

"These students perform exceptionally well at Simmons when we think about traditional measures of student success, such as first-year retention, GPA, and even graduation rates," says Dr. Cody. She notes that the Boston Scholarship is an important expression of the University's commitment to the Boston community. ■

➔ **Mardoche Telusma '19** says she would not have been able to attend Simmons without the Boston Scholarship. And the freedom of knowing that her tuition was fully covered had a huge impact.

"I can't fathom not having the Boston Scholarship. It allowed me to think about myself and focus on myself as a leader on campus. I was able to engage in multiple organizations and leadership teams at Simmons," says Telusma, who majored in public health and minored in psychology.

Simmons wasn't originally on her list of colleges to consider. But that changed after a rather impromptu meeting with a Simmons admission representative who came to Boston Preparatory Charter Public School. "We had a great conversation about getting more people of color into higher education and pursuing higher degrees," Telusma says she was further inspired by the fact that the Simmons rep was from the neighborhood she grew up in.

"I left that conversation thinking, 'Wow, I have to be at Simmons. Not only is it a

great place for me to pursue my education, it's a great community that includes activism and things I hold dear to my heart.'"

Telusma's guidance counselor alerted her to the Boston Scholarship. The application process included an on-campus interview. Telusma also talked to students and "felt the energy at Simmons," and says she left thinking, "Of course, this is where I have to be!" When a big Simmons acceptance envelope arrived, "I was just ecstatic!"

During her current post-Simmons "gap year,"

Telusma is working as a postdoctoral program coordinator and grant administrator in Brown University's Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, where she's focused on biomed programs. In addition to fulfilling her goal of learning firsthand about the infrastructure of higher education, she is applying to clinical psychology programs. Her mission: to help with mental health advocacy through research and teaching, and expand the inclusion of communities of color and LGBTQIA+ individuals in both the field and its research. ■







# Food for Frontline Workers

Putting Simmons Skills to Work in a Crisis  
By Anna Beasley

➔ **Annie Harriman '21** is grateful to take online classes from home. Harriman, a School of Business student, and her mother, a social worker, were both able to stay at home. But this good fortune made them consider the plight of others. “We both felt a sense of helplessness, thinking of the risk healthcare workers are taking in order to care for sick patients. We set out to find a way we can thank healthcare workers in our community, while also supporting the local restaurants in Scituate.”

From this desire, NOSH—Nourishing Our Scituate Heroes—was created. Partnering with a local bank, NOSH offers Scituate residents the opportunity to donate meals to friends and neighbors—especially those on the front line of the Coronavirus response. Scituate residents can donate to NOSH, nominate a friend or neighbor for a gift card to a local restaurant, or nominate their own family.

As of today, NOSH has nine restaurants to choose from. “My family knows first-hand how powerful a small gesture can be in a trying time,” says Harriman. “A small gesture or ‘thank you’ can go a long way, and that is what I hope to provide to these families.”

Harriman has used skills learned in and out of the classroom. “Over the last year, I’ve been creating websites and graphics for small businesses, and recently developed my own small business, Lantern Media + Virtual Assistance. These skills came in handy as I was able to have the NOSH website ready in only a couple of hours.”

Harriman is also a devoted rider in the Pan-Mass Challenge, and was able to use her fundraising skills for NOSH. She also employed skills she’s learned from three entrepreneurship courses with Professor Teresa Nelson. “Because of her courses, I have a solid understanding of entrepreneurship and socially-minded entrepreneurship. Additionally, I used skills from the first business class I took—‘Foundations of Business and Management’ with Professor Erin DeCurtis.”

Harriman is grateful for the opportunity to give back. “Leadership comes in many forms, but being able to help someone and bring a community together in an uncertain time is a very powerful, and gratifying, way to lead. The messages we’ve received from healthcare workers show their gratitude, and how much of a difference NOSH is making for their families.” ■



## UPDATE SIMMONS LAUNCHES INTERPROFESSIONAL INFORMATIONIST CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Simmons University recently launched a new certificate program, the **Inter-Professional Informationist (IPI)**. The IPI will bridge the gap between traditional and emergent skills in health sciences and biomedical librarianship and aims also to increase the diversity in the informationist workforce. Informationists are librarians or information specialists qualified to engage in research and knowledge management services in clinical care or biomedical research.

The IPI certificate is being launched with funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and in partnership with seven academic health sciences libraries: Harvard Medical School, MCPHS University, Tufts University, Boston University, Stanford University, University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of California at San Francisco. IMLS and Simmons University are offering full tuition scholarships for ten students.

“Students will benefit from the dynamic IPI certificate curriculum, coupled with the real-world capstone experience. Our students will conduct research, assist with grant renewals, manage research data, perform literature searches, or participate in patient rounds and/or medical training in one of our partner hospitals,” said Rong Tang, PhD, Associate Professor in the nationally ranked Simmons School of Library Information Science, IPI faculty and Principal Investigator, and IPI Program Manager.



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**Dr. Johnnie Hamilton-Mason** is a Professor at Simmons School of Social Work. From 2004-2007, Dr. Hamilton-Mason served as Director of the Doctoral Program at SSW. Her scholarship and research interests are primarily on African American Women and Families, the intersection of cross-cultural theory and practice, and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

**Dr. Hugo Kamya** is a professor at Simmons School of Social Work where he teaches clinical practice, trauma, research, and narrative practices. Dr. Kamya's work has focused on immigrant and international efforts to assess mental health and social service needs of people.



# Building Community

School of Social Work Announces  
Endowed Chair Recipients

*By Bob Dunn*

➔ **Simmons University's** School of Social Work appointed one new endowed chair and renewed the appointment of another. Endowed chairs recognize distinctive achievement by providing ongoing philanthropic support for research and salaries. Johnnie Hamilton-Mason is now the E.W. White Professor, and Hugo Kamya will continue as the Social Work Alumni Fund Endowed Chair for the next two academic years.

"Dr. Hamilton-Mason is a nationally-recognized scholar who has shown tremendous leadership in the School, the community, and the field of social work," said Dean Stephanie Berzin of the College of Social Sciences, Policy, and Practice. "We are delighted to recognize her leadership and support her continued work in the areas of equity and justice."

Dean Berzin said the E.B. White Chair, which is a three-year appointment, will allow Hamilton-Mason to continue her work on African immigrants involved in human service work. It will also support growth in the School on integrating the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of foreign-born and people of color who work as human service professionals. That work is expected to culminate in a symposium or special event on the topic, according to Berzin.

"We are delighted that Hugo Kamya will continue to serve as the Social Work Alumni Fund Endowed Chair," said Berzin. "His work is embedded in local and global communities through scholarship, teaching, and strong community engagement. Dr. Kamya's work embodies the meaning of this chair as he is deeply committed to supporting students and providing transformative learning opportunities. It is an honor to have him in this role."

Berzin noted that many alumni reference Kamya's courses as providing life-changing experiences at Simmons that have impacted their social work path. He is originally from Uganda and came to the United States more than 30 years ago. Over the last 16 years, he has facilitated bilateral cultural and educational exchanges between Uganda and the United States. ■



# Traumatized in Life, Objectified in Death

Professor Lydia Ogden Discusses  
Media Coverage of the Police  
Homicide of Eric Garner  
*By Brendan Hughes*

➔ **Lydia Ogden's** 2019 Disability Manuscript Award-winning paper asks clinical social workers to turn a critical eye toward media accounts of police violence, racism, and ableism

When members of the New York Police Department killed Eric Garner on a sidewalk in Staten Island on July 17, 2014, Simmons University Social Work Professor Lydia Ogden noticed something about the media coverage of his murder: “The media reports were talking a lot about his physical health conditions,” Ogden said. “You heard about his obesity or his asthma as if those were the reasons for his death, rather than being stopped by the police to begin with.”

Ogden's curiosity would lead to further research and coauthorship (with Anjali Fulambarker, PhD, of Governors State University, and Christina Haggerty, MSW, of Simmons University) of “Race and Disability in Media Coverage of the Police Homicide of Eric Garner,” which won the 2019 Disability Manuscript Award from the Council on Social Work Education.

In the months after Garner's homicide, Ogden, whose research is centered around disability (although usually psychiatric disability), began to look closer at Garner's story and the way the story was characterized


by the news media. As she uncovered more about Garner's own life, she realized that “his different physical health conditions . . . amounted to a disability. He had worked for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and had to stop because of asthma, but it seemed they were using his disability to discredit the racism underlying why he had been stopped and killed.”

Teaming up with Fulambarker, a criminal justice scholar, and Haggerty, a master of social work candidate at Simmons, Ogden conducted a media analysis, which allowed them to look at common themes and emphases in the news coverage of Garner's death at

the hands of the police. The analysis began with a report from the Pew Charitable Trusts that broadly classified media sources' audience trust by whether they lean to the political left, right, or center. Then, Ogden and her coauthors surveyed media reports from a representative sampling from across the political spectrum, as classified by the Pew report.

What they found was more than 130 archival news sources from the time of the event that Ogden said included “implicit and explicit forms of ableism and racism in the way they talked about Garner and his death—that took away his victimhood





*“When we passively take in the news, we may not be hearing what’s really going on, but if we start looking through the lense of critical theory . . . then you start to see a fuller picture and can begin identifying the systems that lead to racism and ableism and other forms of institutional bias and oppression.”*

▲  
**Lydia Ogden** Assistant Professor of Social Work

by talking about his health conditions. Garner himself was really objectified: they talked about his size, being a 350 pound asthmatic, talked about his children by their number rather than describing him as an involved father, which if you dig a little deeper he actually was. Most of the coverage used completely objectifying language.”

This kind of media analysis is not necessarily common to disability scholarship in social work, or even as a tool that can help social workers in clinical settings, but Ogden believes that it can be just that. “It’s about critical media literacy,” she said. “When we passively take in the news, we may not be hearing what’s really going on, but if we start looking through the lense of critical theory . . . then you start to see a fuller picture and can begin identifying the systems that lead to racism and ableism and other forms of institutional bias and oppression. We propose that this is a skill social workers should have—at Simmons we train them to be clinicians but also clinician activists. If this is what your clients are experiencing when they take in the news, it’s important to consider how that’s going to affect their mental health. It impacts not just society, it also impacts individuals.”

Ogden is quick to note, however, that this isn’t an exercise in media criticism or calling out so-called fake news, but rather a way for practitioners to see the racism and

ableism, and other forms of oppression that are largely normalized in our media and civic discourse, and to consider more deeply how that normalization affects those without privilege. “If you think about even the sources you trust, there are flaws in all of those sources,” Ogden said. “It’s about being cognizant of how people who are like you and who are different from you are being portrayed, and what that can mean to your social work clients. As educators we also need to think about what this means to ourselves and our students, how this affects our teaching and their learning. What messages have we passively accepted about ourselves and others? We may not be totally cognizant of how these things are affecting us [because] biases like these are insidious and commonplace.”

Sadly—outrageously—there have been no shortage of opportunities for clinicians and scholars to carry out the kind of media analysis that Ogden and her co-authors modeled. In the months after Garner’s murder, police killed Michelle Cuseaux in Phoenix, AZ, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., Tanisha Anderson and Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio, and Laquan McDonald in Chicago—and many, many more in the years since. The frequency and seeming normalcy that these killings have assumed in the course of American life is, among other things, a testament to the urgency of the problem of police violence against people of color, and particularly those who are made more vulnerable by intersectional oppressions such as ableism and sexism, and to the need for effective and humane tools with which clinical social workers can expand their self-awareness and approach their clients who experience trauma, racism, and ableism every day. ■







The background of the page features a large, faint, circular seal of Simmons University. The seal contains the text "SCHOOL OF SIMMONS COLLEGE" around the top and "BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS" around the bottom. In the center, it says "FOUNDED 1899" and "ARTS AND SCIENCES".

# A VISIONARY LEADER

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LOOKING AT THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT  
HELEN DRINAN '75MS(LIS), '78MBA AND HER  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

Excepted from Oral History  
by Helen Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA  
and Jason Wood

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN GILLOOLY, MIKE BROGLIO, AND JEREMY SOLOMON





**I**n late 2019, President Drinan sat for several interviews with Simmons University Archivist Jason Wood, creating an oral history of Drinan's presidency. The oral history, which consists of more than 40,000 words of thoughtful and expansive reminiscences of her tenure as President, will be kept in the Simmons Archives in perpetuity, and will be made available to researchers.

*President Drinan and Dr. Jason Wood were generous enough to allow Simmons Magazine to excerpt from the oral history in this issue. The sections below deal with the most consequential moments of the Drinan presidency, as well as her vision and hopes for Simmons' future, and include noted remarks from other interviews, speeches, and messages in President Drinan's tenure at Simmons. The excerpts have been edited for clarity and space.*

*Drinan, who has two graduate degrees from Simmons (from the School of Library and Information Science in 1975 and from the School of Management in 1978), joined the Simmons Board of Trustees in 2003—it would be the beginning of a challenging period in Simmons' history. Drinan, who had just returned to Boston to work as head of human resources at Caritas Christi, a Catholic hospital organization, quickly found herself at the center of things.*

## Returning to Simmons

*The same year Helen returned, Simmons President Daniel Cheever stepped down and, after a search, the Board of Trustees named Susan Scrimshaw Simmons' seventh president. Not long after, Drinan was asked to become Board chair.*

In that period of time [2002-2003], Simmons was having its own interesting conversations about the buildings on Commonwealth Avenue [home to the School of Management and School of Social Work]. I was not aware of the intensity of the conversation, but I did get a call in the spring of 2003 asking me if I would consider joining the board.

I attended my first board meeting in January of 2004 and I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed every member of the board. I enjoyed the work. I enjoyed learning about the undergraduate college. It was just a great experience. My husband had said to me, you

*“I was going to do the best I could to get things in order for the next president, who was going to come along in just a little while—the sooner the better. But on June 30th, I’m sitting in this chair and on July 1, I’m sitting in [the president’s] chair and the world looks very different from this chair then from that chair.”*

HELEN G. DRINAN ’75MS(LIS), ’78MBA

know, it’s going to be fine. Even though you’re starting a new job—you’re not going to be that busy.

The second year I was on the board, we were looking for our new president and I was on the search committee . . . [and] engaged with the whole board in finding the new president. There was a change in the board chair and I was asked if I would do it. I thought, okay, I can be on the board, but I can see that the board chair job can be extremely busy and very committed so I thought hard about it. Regina Pisa was the one who recruited me [for chair], though she wasn’t the board chair at the time. I took the job in July 2007.

## Taking the Job of President

*In the spring of the 2007-08 academic year, Scrimshaw was named president of The Sage Colleges in Troy, New York, setting off a scramble to find a successor.*

When Susan announced that she was going to The Sage Colleges, you can imagine that the board was pretty stressed because it was April and you don’t start a search for a president in April. They put their heads together and decided they were going to create a short list of people close to the college whom they could ask if they wanted to do the job. I was on that list. Other people were too. They asked me if I wanted to do the job and I said I’d love to do the job. We agreed on a three-year term as an interim appointment.

I was going to do the best I could to get things in order for the next president, who was going to come along in just a little while—the sooner the better. But on June 30th, I’m sitting in this chair and on July 1, I’m sitting in [the president’s] chair and the world looks very different from this chair then from that chair.

## Financial Crisis

*In her first days as Interim President, Drinan confronted a fiscal crisis at Simmons—and very shortly after, a different kind of fiscal crisis that extended across the globe.*

I found out on July 1, 2008, that we did not have the cash to meet payroll. The beginning of the month was the big payment day because you had both the full exempt payroll and one week’s worth of the nonexempt payroll. We didn’t have that much cash in the bank . . . so we had to borrow money from our line of credit.

College finances are highly cyclical. You’re waiting for those tuition dollars to come that you’ve just started billing in the summer time . . . and they did, of course, they came and we replenished the line of credit and we had enough cash to start regularly.

But, if you remember those days, a couple of big banks failed—Lehman Brothers was one of them and the only one that the government allowed to just plain old fail. Lehman was Simmons’ bank and we had borrowed a lot of money to do all of this beautiful campus development on the academic campus [including the construction of the Palace Road Building, Beatley Library, and the Academic Quad].

When we borrowed from Lehman, it was at very low interest rates, but that was because it was variable debt. In Simmons’ case, fortunately, those rates had not ticked up, but we borrowed a lot. On that day [when Lehman Brothers failed] we had no cash and lots of variable debt and a bank that failed. Now, they have a way of protecting you with this amount of variable debt by issuing a financial package called a “swap” that protects you from big swings in the rates of your variable debt.

It took us about three and a half years to resolve, but it was a very big hit. We had called a board meeting to talk about the fact that the Management Building was about two thirds built and Simmons had borrowed money to finish that building, but we had used the funds on something else. So we were now with no funds to finish that building. And this was September. The buildings over on Commonwealth Avenue had been sold and we were leasing them back for our students to use them until we finished the building.

*In the months that followed, Simmons borrowed money from its own endowment to complete the work. At the same time Drinan and the Board undertook a financial analysis and came to the realization that Simmons would have to lay off employees to meet its fiscal obligations.*

We started planning on doing a reduction in workforce . . . we reduced 73 people. A handful of those were open jobs, but most of them were real people, and it was very hard on this organization to do that. It was one of those times I was grateful that I had the [human resources] experience because nobody wants to do this. You have to try to do it in a way that’s the most humane, knowing that when you tell someone, it is in the midst of a growing recession. It was a pretty miserable time.



*“I learned that most colleges and universities don’t want to do a strategy because what that means is that you have to say we’re going to stop doing this in order to invest more in that, or to start something that we don’t have the money for.”*

HELEN G. DRINAN '75MS(LIS), '78MBA

*In January 2009, still in the early days of the Great Recession, Simmons’ banks began to balk at the idea of extending credit—indeed, the school had to mortgage its residential campus to maintain access to cash. Later, Bank of America, successor to BankBoston, where Drinan had worked for much of her career, also informed Simmons it would not extend the school credit.*

I thought, this is it for us, because we didn’t have any money. That’s when I called my former boss [at BankBoston], Chad Gifford, at Bank of America. I said, Chad, your not-for-profit lending officer is telling me that the Bank of America wants to pull our line of credit. All the time I worked at the bank, I heard bankers saying the most important time that you’re a banker is when the client needs you, not when they’re doing great. I told him we need this line of credit and he said I’ll send an auditor over to look at your books. Two days later he called me and said you can keep the line of credit.

## Strategy 2015

*By the middle of 2009, Simmons’ financial situation had stabilized to the point that Drinan could consider longer-term strategy and plotting a way forward for the institution.*

We were in a place where we said, we’ve got to start thinking about strategy because you can’t just survive. You have to figure out how you’re going to get better. I learned that most colleges and universities don’t want to do a strategy because what that means is that you have to say we’re going to stop doing this in order to invest more in that, or to start something that we don’t have the money for.

Nobody wants to make tradeoffs. The challenge of strategy is that a lot of people walk away unhappy because you haven’t necessarily chosen their particular thing to focus on. So it’s tough to do in a friendly way unless people are open minded and willing to say what is for the greater good.

## Partnership with 2U

*The strategic planning process that Drinan led resulted in Strategy 2015. In the case of the graduate programs, it was this strategy that led to Simmons’ entry into online education and its successful partnership with 2U. Today, Simmons offers online graduate degrees in nursing, social work, behavior analysis, and public health, enrolling more than 4,000 students from across the country.*

We tried our hand at doing our own online program and it was successful in the sense that we attracted very fine students, but it was not successful in that we didn’t attract many of them. We had a good curriculum. We had great students. We had good professors. We just couldn’t get beyond 30 students.

When 2U came into the environment, it was a game changer for Simmons. 2U had just put themselves together as a company in 2010 and they were enthusiastically asking us to collaborate with them on an online nursing program. It was interesting because they had started out with a relationship with Georgetown University and their nursing area, and their original agreement with Georgetown was there would be no other provider. They quickly found out—both 2U and Georgetown—that there was no way Georgetown could respond to all the interest.

## Purpose, Leadership, Action (PLAN)

*Drinan also led efforts to raise the profile of Simmons’ undergraduate programs, beginning with the appointment of Provost Katie Conboy, the establishment of the PLAN core curriculum, and the academic redesign and transition to university status.*

Katie Conboy was named provost as the recommendations from [the consultant] Art and Science were finalized—and she picked up the ball and went to town. Art and Science had two overarching recommendations. One was you must have a truly robust undergraduate program and a distinctive way to frame that program. Ultimately that was the leadership frame for the program. The second is your students are saying they have no place to have any life other than their room at college and their dining hall because there are no spaces here for students to gather.

We believe strongly that PLAN [the undergraduate core curriculum] was critical in our bringing in our first two largest classes that we ever brought in. Even now, we are still implementing the final piece of it, which we call Passionate Leaders, where each undergraduate receives a lump sum of funding to complete an internship, study abroad, or fund an entrepreneurial experience connected with the rest of their PLAN focus and their academic work at Simmons.



## Transition to University

*The college to university transition at Simmons came with the establishment of new colleges within the university. Unlike many colleges within universities, at Simmons, the colleges were created to be purposefully interdisciplinary and complementary of one another—so that undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty would have the opportunity to collaborate with students and scholars in other areas.*

We had been talking about university status as long as I've been at Simmons. When we did the academic redesign and came up with the new colleges, that was a moment to re-visit university again. We had done market research at the time and knew that undergraduates would be the least favorable because they wanted to hold onto college. We knew that graduate students would be the most favorable because they feel that their degree is diminished by coming from a college rather than a university. We just didn't do it until we were good and ready to do it.

With the creation of the new colleges, Katie developed a cube analogy she uses to illustrate the realignments and opportunities coming out of the academic redesign and university designation. I think the primary opportunity is far more interdisciplinary activity. We know that in many disciplines, people don't just stay very narrowly in a single field, they're doing all sorts of permutations. So for example, I'm not going to just study one kind of engineering, I'm going to study engineering and physics and ecology. It's about all of them. It's that kind of thing that Katie had as a vision for how the colleges would work together.

## Breast Cancer Diagnosis

*In 2015, Drinan was diagnosed with breast cancer, a battle she soon went public with, and in so doing became a model for Simmons students and women globally who confront health issues, while continuing to work and serve as Simmons' leader.*

I have been fortunate to get great care here in Boston at Massachusetts General Hospital. I was just going for a routine mammogram and I remember that the fall was particularly busy and I almost put it off for a month or two. But I went and a week went by and I thought, that's the end of that. Then the following Monday I got a call and they asked me to come in the next day. I had the fine needle biopsy right then and I saw the surgeon at one o'clock that afternoon. It all went really fast. I was lying on the examining table when the doctor told me that they were positive that I have breast cancer. I just thought to myself, well, I don't know what this is going to mean for my life.

One of the things that it has to mean is that I got to talk about this—because you cannot be the president of a women's college and not take



*“One Simmons isn’t just about new buildings, it’s about integrating the academic, the experiential, and the social experiences of our students in the service of preparation for what I call their life’s work.”*

HELEN G. DRINAN '75MS(LIS), '78MBA

responsibility for ensuring that you communicate about this. There is still a stigma about cancer. I think people think once you have cancer, you’re among the damned, and that’s just not true about cancer anymore. There are still cancers that are very, very dangerous, but breast cancer is one that they’ve made a lot of progress on.

I couldn’t have done it if I hadn’t had such good support. Katie Conboy helped me so much by traveling in my place that winter. Regina Pisa was very helpful to me, so were other board members, and my colleagues in the administrative roles were all superb. I think about our nurses, too. After I received my anesthesia, I was rolled into the operating room and my physician said to me, there are three Simmons nurses in this room. They were holding down very important roles in that surgical room. Afterwards, I would see students who had graduated the previous two years because I was in and out of that hall hospital all the time, and everyone would tell me how great the Simmons nurses were. It was just fantastic.

## One Simmons

*As President Drinan prepared to step down from the Simmons presidency in June 2020, she continued to work to ensure that Simmons continues to grow and thrive. The One Simmons project, which seeks to continue what started in the academic redesign, will create spaces that facilitate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural learning, and that further enhance the student experience—all in the service of preparing students for what Drinan calls their life’s work.*

When the opportunity to become president of Simmons came along, honestly, I could never have imagined it. It was Providence that brought me to this role. I’ve been in high-visibility, de-

manding leadership roles before, but not with that sense of the buck stops with me. From the beginning, I knew that was something that I liked about the job, but also something that I had very much to learn about the job. I don’t know that you could have learned more about American higher education, financial banking, and capital building matters than in my first 18 months here. It was like a living tutorial.

As I think about the future, it’s critical for us to ensure that our campus and all of the spaces on it continue to evolve to serve our students in the best possible ways. We have done a lot of work over the last several years to plan for those spaces. The One Simmons plan results in new nursing and science facilities, new student services spaces, and new community spaces around campus.

We are also planning for a new living and learning center on the academic campus. It isn’t just the idea of enhancing the student experience on one campus, it is an affirmation and extension of our academic redesign and the mission set out by John Simmons almost a century and a half ago. It is the idea that learning and preparing oneself for professional work, leadership, and a lifetime of learning doesn’t just take place in a classroom or an internship or on a team or student organization—they take place in all of those settings. One Simmons isn’t just about new buildings, it’s about integrating the academic, the experiential, and the social experiences of our students in the service of preparation for what I call their life’s work.

Life’s work is more than a job or a profession—though we are very proud of the work we do at Simmons to prepare our graduates for good jobs in any number of great professions. Life’s work is something more akin to a person’s calling in the world. The place where their talents and passion and energy meet, and it encompasses not only what they do for work, but how that work enriches their family life and their civic life. I see it in so many of our students.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

This has been a spring like no other in the history of Simmons University. Together, we have taken on challenges no one could have predicted around a global pandemic. This is a defining moment for Simmons and for all of higher education. There is no doubt that some institutions will not survive the pandemic. But I believe that Simmons can not only survive, but thrive after the crisis due to the groundwork we have laid and the investments we have made over the past 10 years.

In a sense, embracing online undergraduate education is a natural evolution for us and will open the doors more widely for new types of students as well, those who would not otherwise be able to participate in the distinctive, excellent education that Simmons provides.

College is an experience. We enter as one person and, if we have chosen and done well, we leave as another, more complete one. Along the way, there are moments and experiences that transform us: coming into contact with more people from different backgrounds and walks of life, engaging in intellectual debate with other members of our community, joining student groups that help us lead well-rounded lives. Through our continued dedication to a high-quality educational experience, whether it is online, on-campus, or a combination of the two, we look forward to educating and transforming the next generation of thinkers, leaders, and critical members of our society. ■

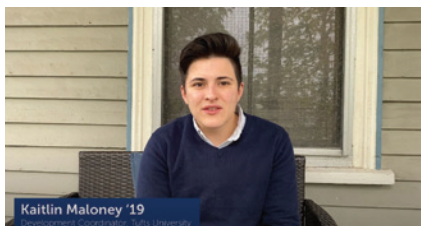
# Helen G. Drinan 8<sup>th</sup> President of Simmons University



**CELEBRATE HELEN DRINAN'S 12 YEARS OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE**

**[simmons.edu/celebrating-helen-video](https://simmons.edu/celebrating-helen-video)**

Watch a short video tribute dedicated to Helen G. Drinan '75MS(LIS), '78MBA,  
featuring voices from around our campus and in our local community.





# PREPARATION FOR LEADERSHIP

**Around the time** Helen Drinan reached third grade, she began walking a mile to a 7 a.m. Mass by herself before her parents and younger sister were even up; then she walked to school. “I had a lot of independence and made a lot of little decisions for myself,” says Drinan, reflecting on her childhood in Weymouth, Mass. “My father used to call me ‘wagon master’—he said I was a boss.”

That reminiscence is among many President Drinan shares in an oral history recorded by Simmons Archivist, Jason Wood. Their wide-ranging conversations offer insights into a lifetime of formative experiences that helped shape Simmons’ eighth president.

“Living in a household where my mom and dad worked so much, and having as much independence and freedom as I did—I think those were important things to me in my early years,” says Drinan. Her latchkey childhood included spending lots of time alone, “not being much of a follower,” riding her bike for hours on end, devouring library books, and earning good grades (her father, a teacher, had high expectations).

Drinan’s studiousness paved the way for “interesting and important” undergraduate years at Mount Holyoke College. “It was a wonderful place for me,” she says. “I was, in many ways, again kind of alone because my life experience really did not align with the life experience of many of the women with whom I went to college, particularly when I was a first-year student.” But she sensed a door had opened, and she stepped through it, unsure what was on the other side.

*By Bob  
Dunn*


“I was very struck by the history of the place,” says Drinan, “you have a sense of permanence and tradition and sustainability.” She was especially inspired by the story of the college’s founder, Mary Lyon. At Simmons, Drinan has focused fresh attention on University founder John Simmons. And, on her watch, Simmons has introduced new traditions—class banners and colors, for example.

Drinan’s perspective-altering experiences began accelerating quickly in college. She and high school sweetheart, David Drinan, married after their junior year (he was at Holy Cross). And just a day after her graduation (and 10 days before his), they adopted their son, Michael, then two years old. By the early ’70s, with two children in tow, the Drinans embarked on “an unbelievable, life-changing experience” as Peace Corps volunteers in the Philippines.

“I learned a lot about diversity and inclusion and equity—particularly inclusion,” says Drinan. “It’s great to learn very early in your life that, while you may see one part of life through your lens, someone else may see the exact same thing through an entirely different lens.” As president, Drinan has overseen the invigoration of Simmons’ commitment to diversity and inclusion. And “preparing students to navigate cultural differences effectively” became an essential goal of the undergraduate core curriculum.







Post Peace Corps, Drinan's love of libraries, reading, and children's literature led her to the School of Library and Information Science.

She loved the program. But she reluctantly shelved immediate plans for a career in children's literature after her job search didn't pan out. The job she did take opened a different door and, as at Mount Holyoke, she stepped through.

A start-up in Cambridge, Mass., called Charles River Associates—now a global consulting firm—hired Drinan as its 33rd employee. She never had any business aspirations, but she got the bug and “one thing led to another.” Among the formative takeaways: learning a lot about what libraries were doing with computers.

Drinan's newfound interest in business motivated her to enroll in Simmons' fledgling School of Management, again reflecting an openness to new opportunities and eagerness to learn. This time she confronted a fear of numbers in required courses such as quantitative analysis and economics.

“I felt like, ‘now I understand why certain things happened

in the world that I didn't understand before. But also, ‘I can see how this is building opportunities for me to do work I never otherwise would have done.’” That proved true in 1981.

“Going to work for BankBoston had a huge impact on me from a professional point of view,” says Drinan. Initially head of systems support in human resources, she ultimately became executive vice president of HR and played a pivotal role in the bank's efforts to navigate turmoil in the financial services sector. It was valuable preparation for later guiding Simmons through dramatic changes in higher education.

“The biggest thing I learned in library school, which has really stood me so well for my whole career, is that there is a world of literature out there,” says Drinan. “If you're trying to solve a problem, once you have a general idea of what you're thinking about, if you go to the literature quickly, you will start to realize how to build that idea.”

A big idea Drinan pursued at BankBoston used data to demonstrate a link between employee and customer satisfaction. She partnered on the project with Judy Danielson, who led market research and analytics at the bank.

“Helen's very innovative, but she's also visionary. She can see what's coming down the pike and prepare for it,” says Danielson, founder and principal of Health Market Planning. “She's a huge believer in using a fact base and data and analytics to understand how to best compete.” Danielson is consulting with Simmons on a project similar to the one she and Drinan tackled at the bank.

“Helen is the most amazing leader I've ever worked with,” says Danielson. “She has such a strong moral center. She always does the right thing, no matter what the cost to her personally. It is so rare these days.”

Drinan first led an entire organization when she became president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, the largest HR professional organization in the world. Looking back, Drinan says “I loved the responsibility of ‘the buck stops here.’ I loved the problem solving—still two things I love about this job at Simmons.”



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Save the Date!

# 42<sup>nd</sup> Simmons Leadership Conference

**MARCH 23, 2021**

Now celebrating its 42<sup>nd</sup> year, the Simmons Leadership Conference remains the nation's premier professional development event for women—a don't-miss experience that motivates, educates, and empowers leaders at every stage of their careers.



## Make HER-Story!

**NOMINATE A VISIONARY WOMAN  
LEADER FOR THE HELEN G. DRINAN  
VISIONARY LEADER AWARD**

In April 2020, the Simmons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership honored Simmons University's eighth president, Helen G. Drinan, for her 12 years of distinguished service with the inauguration of the Helen G. Drinan Visionary Leader Award.

The first Helen G. Drinan Visionary Leader Award will be presented to a worthy recipient on March 23, 2021 at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Simmons Leadership Conference. Details of the nomination process will be announced by November 1, 2020. Meanwhile, be thinking about a visionary woman leader who:

- Exemplifies their values in their actions and leadership style
- Demonstrates a commitment to an organization, compassion to its members, and courage to make challenging business decisions
- Ensures the long-term stability of an organization with vision and action
- Is open and transparent about challenges in an effort to show others that they are not alone
- Demonstrates curiosity and a "work is never done" attitude necessary for organizations to stay ahead of the curve (innovation, anticipation)
- Prioritizes financial stability and fiscal responsibility

**For more information and to learn more about exciting Institute activity  
please visit us at [leadership.simmons.edu](https://leadership.simmons.edu)**



# Etc.

ALUMNAE/1 & FRIENDS • UPDATES & EVENTS • ADVANCING SIMMONS

## Committed to Helping

Any Sacrifice You're Making Today is Truly Saving Lives Tomorrow  
*By Bob Dunn*

**Robyn Holman Cortese '05**, in an online video interview from her home, radiated the reassuring calm any patient might prescribe as the preferred bedside manner for their caregivers. Between shifts working as a clinical pharmacist at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, California—while co-juggling child-care with her pilot husband, also an “essential employee” on a demanding schedule—Cortese discussed COVID-19's impact on her job, and what keeps her going.

“It's a hard time to be at work. I've never seen so many deaths in my career as I have since this started. It has been pretty harrowing in that regard. But it's still a profession I love,” says Cortese. “I think for me, seeing my patients

leave the hospital is maybe why I go back every day. Because I want to know that they are recovering, and they're going to go home. It breaks my heart when that doesn't happen, but 95 percent of the time it does.”

Cortese usually works in the hospital's pediatric or neonatal intensive care units. But the COVID-19 crisis has changed things.

“Even though people are still having babies, more are able to be cared for at home via telemedicine instead of being held for observation at the hospital. The idea is to avoid longer hospital stays than necessary,” explains Cortese, who now often finds herself staffing an operating room or working in the hospital's main pharmacy, or in other posts.

Cortese says the entire hospital was dramatically affected by the unexpected deployment to Los Angeles of the USNS Mercy, which is based in San Diego. “The Mercy is a 1,000-bed hospital ship—about the same size as an aircraft carrier.” The 500-bed hospital Cortese works at contributed staff and supplies.

“We ended up losing about half of our pharmacy staff—almost all of our active-duty staff,” says Cortese. “And with that, about 50 percent of the medications in the hospital were also lost to the Mercy so that they could carry out their mission.” She adds that the COVID-19 virus “can become pretty significant pretty quickly, so you run through a lot of medical supplies very quickly.”

Cortese's commitment to her profession has deep roots. “My mom is a physician and my father's a pharmacist, so I kind of grew up with healthcare in my blood,” says Cortese, who's hometown is Pittsburgh. She also

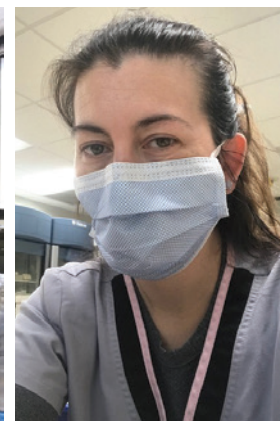


drew inspiration from the late local luminary Fred Rogers.

“There's a phrase from ‘Mister Rogers’ that was always ‘look for the helpers,’” says Cortese. “That always stuck with me. There's actually a Facebook group of health-care providers that I know from Pittsburgh that's called ‘Look for the Helpers,’ and they've been posting a lot of inspirational stories.”

Cortese's determination to be a “helper” led her to Simmons where she majored in biopsychology. She went on to earn a doctorate in pharmacy school in east Tennessee.

“Most of my family had been members of the U.S. military, so I took a military scholarship, and I



became an Air Force pharmacist right after I graduated,” says Cortese. She credits Simmons with preparing her to see things from different perspectives and interact effectively with a range of people. “To really hear what someone else is saying can carry you a long way in life.”

Reflecting on the current crisis, Cortese sees a “helper” role for everyone. “Any sacrifice you're making today is truly saving lives tomorrow,” she says, even by just consolidating trips to the grocery store. “It may not seem it. But from somebody on the inside, somebody who's going to work every day and seeing that, it truly is making a difference.” ■





# Voices Heard, Stories Seen

Mackenzie Lee '14MFA talks about her #MeToo essay and her new book  
By Laura Wareck

Mackenzi Lee '14MFA may be most well-known for her *New York Times* best-selling young adult series that follows the spirited Montague siblings, but her recently published essay tackles a more serious topic, the #MeToo movement.

This winter, Lee was featured in *You Too?*, a collection of timely essays for teens inspired by the #MeToo movement. In her piece, Lee wrote about her religious upbringing and the influence it had on her relationship with sex, sexuality, and sexual assault.

"It was a difficult essay to write, and I found myself falling into an old habit of dismissing my own experiences with sexual assault, as they were not as traumatic as other stories in the book," Lee says. "Working on the essay was a critical moment in acknowledging this dismissal and starting to work to dismantle it.

I hope it adds to a larger conversation and will inspire others to continue building upon truth and destroying stigmas."

Lee is keenly aware of the powerful experience of reading books, and the lifelong impact stories can have—particularly as a child.

"It shapes who you are," Lee says. "Children and young adults are so unbridled in their enthusiasm for the things they love. It's wonderful to write for an audience that is so open to receiving the stories you're telling, and how you have the potential to hopefully positively impact them."

Lee published the first book in her Montague siblings series, *A Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*, in 2017. The idea for the book arose out of "a long frustration with how straight, white, and male most mainstream history narratives are."



**"I wanted to write a silly, fun, tropey adventure novel, but featuring characters who have traditionally been excluded from these narratives in the (false) name of historical accuracy."**

▲ Mackenzi Lee '14MFA

"I wanted to write a silly, fun, tropey adventure novel, but featuring characters who have traditionally been excluded from these narratives in the (false) name of historical accuracy," she says.

Fans of the Montague siblings won't have to wait to much longer for the next book in the series, as *The Nobleman's Guide to Scandal and Shipwrecks* is sched-

uled for release in August. According to Lee, it takes place almost 20 years after *The Lady's Guide to Petticoats and Piracy*. Readers will have the opportunity to experience their favorite characters—Monty, Percy and Felicity—as adults, and see how their lives have progressed and intersect with the little brother they left behind.

Lee earned her MFA from Simmons,

and recalls her time there as pivotal in her writing career.

"My writing skills improved tremendously, but most importantly, Simmons helped me develop the essential skill of taking myself and my work as a writer seriously and prioritizing it, which I think can be very difficult for writers who are just starting out," Lee says. "There were such incredible



resources available to me, and I got to work with mentors who continue to influence my work and career.”

One of Lee’s favorite Simmons memories is a reading evening that took place before commencement, where the graduating MFA class shared excerpts from their creative projects.

“I remember being so proud of how far we had come in two years together, and how we were all working on such different, interesting projects and had been able to support each other,” Lee says. “I felt very lucky. I also remember there were really great cookies afterward.”

When Lee isn’t writing you can often find her working in an independent bookstore or hanging out with her dog.

“I love dogs so much I actually wrote a book about them called *The History of the World in 50 Dogs*,” Lee says. “Most of my writing is done with my enormous St. Bernard snoring in the background, so it’s almost impossible to say anything I write isn’t influenced by dogs.” ■

## Fashioning Change

Jennifer Eckert ’08MSW recounts her Simmons journey  
*By Bob Dunn*

**Trustee Jennifer Eckert** ’08MSW was working in the fashion industry when she felt impelled to make a significant mid-life career change. The experience of being an adopted child had already motivated her to volunteer with adopted teens and their parents, and she decided it was time to refocus her career in that direction.

Eckert is now a licensed clinical social worker and the founder and executive director of Boston Post Adoption Resources (BPAR) in Brookline, Mass. She launched the nonprofit in 2012 to provide education and support for anyone “touched by adoption” and foster care. Clients range from children as young as five or six, to birth or foster parents now in their 80s.

“No two stories are alike. And our goal is to meet the needs of whoever is looking for services and support, wherever they are in their journey in adop-

tion or foster care,” says Eckert. “That includes individual therapy, family therapy, birth-family therapy, search, and reunion—we help a lot of people looking for their birth family.” They also respond to every call they get from people around the world seeking information. “We don’t get paid for that—it’s just the right thing to do.”

“I never would have had my new career and been able to touch so many lives without Simmons—I’m so grateful,” says Eckert, who earned a master’s from the School of Social Work to begin her new chapter. “Simmons not only educates students in their academic fields, it prepares them to be leaders and take risks to keep moving forward.” Her gratitude—and conviction that “Simmons’ most valuable asset is its faculty”—inspired her to establish an



endowed chair at the School in 2015.

At BPAR, Eckert and her team are always learning. Social media, DNA testing, openness in foster care and adoptions, and other changes have introduced issues that can be hard for people to navigate solo—perhaps the sudden discovery of a new half-sibling or other surprises on a family tree. “We also help parents who have used reproductive technologies such as donor eggs or sperm donors and wonder how to tell their children about their beginnings,” says Eckert.

To help meet the demand for support, Eckert co-authored the children’s book *Adoption is a Lifelong Journey* with BPAR colleagues Katie Gorczyca and Kelly DiBenedetto (who is

also the illustrator). They wrote the book from a child’s perspective to highlight common needs among children and families; they included related resources for adults.

“The book is meant to be read by a child and parent or caregiver together so the child feels validated and normalized by their feelings. And parents gain a better understanding of what the child is going through,” says Eckert. The feedback has been very positive so BPAR is working to expand distribution.

Looking ahead, Eckert says she hopes more families will think about adopting children who are in foster care. “There are so many children out there who really need good homes and loving parents and families.” ■





# The People Behind the Archives

Amber Moore '08MS talks about how a personal touch is key to building archival collections  
*By Alisa Libby*

Amber Moore '08MS, Archivist at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Study for Advanced Study at Harvard University, works with collections—and more importantly, with the people behind them.

“I didn’t realize I liked donor relations,” says Moore, whose work at the Schlesinger has focused on the collections of African American women.

Most recently, she processed the collection of Angela Y. Davis, which included traveling with Dr. Kenvi Phillips, curator of *Race and Ethnicity*, to Davis’s house in California.

“We went to Angela’s house to talk with her and see what she had,” explains Moore. “We created an inventory based on what types of items she kept, to help with the acquisition process.”

Once the contracts were signed, Moore, Phillips, and archivist, Jehan Sinclair '16MS, returned to Davis’s house to pack up the collection, which was housed in a 30-year old storage unit, a crawl space under her house, her office, and a shed.

“It’s rare for a processing archivist to build a relationship with a donor, and it gave us the context of the collection,”



says Moore. “She identified people in photographs. She was pulling out stuff she hadn’t seen in 30 or 40 years saying, ‘are you sure you guys want this?’ And we said ‘yes, we do!’”

All of the items were boxed up and shipped to Boston, and it took 20 months for Moore, Sinclair, and colleague, Jenny Gotwals, to process the entire collection. The Angela Y. Davis collection opened on Friday, November 1, 2019, with a conference in her honor. The finding aid is online, where you can explore organized folders to know which boxes you would like to request to view. An exhibition about Davis’s life, which includes highlights from the collection, is on display in the library now through March 2020.

Moore’s career trajectory into the personal papers of African Americans began during her course of study at SLIS. She interned at Boston University, where she and fellow student Steven Booth ’09MS (archivist at the Obama Presidential Library) processed the papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **“My passion is African American history, and that is where my career began. I’m passionate about making these materials accessible to researchers in the future.”**

▲ Amber Moore ’08MS

“My passion is African American history, and that is where my career began,” says Moore, who has been working on the collections of civil rights leaders since library school. The last two collections, of Angela Davis and feminist lesbian poet, Pat Parker, have been truly in line with her mission. “I’m passionate about making these materials accessible to researchers in the future.”

But the road to her current position hasn’t been easy. After graduating, Moore held three different grant-funded positions over a seven-year period. She was project archivist at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans, Louisiana, Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, and Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Her current position at Harvard is her first permanent position.

Reflecting on her time as a contract employee, she

says, “The work of a project archivist is so specialized. You’re there to process a certain collection. But I should have asked for a shift on the reference desk, or maybe shadowed people in other departments. Otherwise, you have one specialized skill. You have to delve in and get other experiences, participate on committees, or network with other people in the library, branch out and notice the different career paths within the library. I may have learned about donor relations sooner and sought it out as a career path.”

She advises students and graduates to maintain relationships with former supervisors, even as you move from one contract position to another. “Check in with past supervisors annually,” she suggests. “It makes it less awkward to ask for a recommendation down the line if you have an ongoing relationship

with them.” Students may consider this approach with faculty, as well. “If a position comes along, they may think of you.”

That personal touch is now at the forefront of Moore’s work, in ways she had never expected. Developing those “soft skills”—how to interact with people, build relationships and trust—has proved vital. She’s now working on the collection of Dr. Florence Ladd, former director of the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College from 1989-1997.

“I’ve developed a bond with her,” says Moore. “Before, when she was donating to the library, she sent boxes over blindly and held stuff back. Now she’s ready to consider giving her diaries because she knows that I care for her and want her stuff to be preserved properly.”

Getting a donor’s perspective can shed light on the entire collection. “I ask

the donors about the most significant events in their lives, so I know what to look for and highlight in the collection.”

Moore and her colleagues presented a panel discussion, “#ArchiveBlack-Women: Preservation and Access to Black Women’s Stories,” at the National Women’s Studies Association Conference in San Francisco in November 2019. Moore’s presentation, “Seen, Heard, and Preserved: Archivist and Donor Relationships,” emphasized including the creator’s perspective in the processing of a collection, the importance of building donor-archivist relationships, and how these relationships can impact your work.

“I’m excited to come to work each day. I’m so glad to be in this position now to be doing something that I love and to make this history available to other people,” says Moore. “I didn’t expect the emotional aspect of dealing with archives, but when you’re processing a collection, you are learning as much as you can about someone. You develop a connection.” ■





# Taking Back Control

Diana Abwoye '20MSN Brings  
“Our Bodies, Ourselves” to Uganda  
By Anna Beasley

**Diana Namumbejja Abwoye '20MSN** vividly remembers the shame and mystery surrounding women's health while growing up in Uganda. According to Abwoye, women were raised solely to become a housewife and a “vessel” for chil-

dren—her own mother having her first pregnancy around the age of 13. Forbidden to discuss this taboo topic, young girls had little to no knowledge of their own bodies.

So imagine Abwoye's culture shock when arriving in the United

**“I hadn't come across such literature before. So many questions had been answered from over the years about birth control and sexuality and self care. It was unbelievable.”**

▲ Diana Namumbejja Abwoye '20MSN

States. As she made friends and began learning new skills such as riding a bike and learning to swim, she also began to ask about women's health—questions she was never able to comfortably ask in Uganda. Eventually

she received a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a book now famous for covering topics on sexuality and reproductive health at a time when information was limited. This gift would ultimately change the trajectory of Abwoye's future.

“When I read it for the first time, my jaw dropped,” says Abwoye. “I hadn't come across such literature before. So many questions had been answered from over the years about birth control and sexuality and self care. It was unbelievable.”

Feeling an urgent need to share this information, Abwoye reached out to the same friend who gifted her the book, a Harvard-tenured professor who was involved with the Our Bodies, Ourselves organization.



Abwoye told her that she wanted to translate this book because the women of Uganda were in desperate need of this information.

“When I came to this country, I told myself that I didn’t want to be the woman who left Uganda and did nothing for her people,” explains Abwoye. “So for me, this was one of the things I was adamant about sharing so I could make a difference in the lives of young women and girls.”

Abwoye set to work even before receiving the official copyright. As she was in a premed program at UMass, she began slowly, working on it at night. She ultimately decided to take a year off of school to complete the project.

While translating to the Luganda language, Abwoye was mindful to include several cultural adaptations to the text. For example, Uganda has a notoriously poor record on LGBTQI+ rights, so she downplayed certain vocabulary about same sex relationships, while also keeping the relevant information in the text. Abwoye also used slang terms when discussing birth control methods in order to “bring the message home” to readers.

After finishing the translation and getting enough funding to publish the book, Abwoye traveled to Uganda. She visited hair salons, food markets, and mothers union groups, and had conversations about the topics in this book. Her hard work has paid off—many women have reached out to Abwoye to share their appreciation.

Now as a board member of Our Bodies, Ourselves, Abwoye continues to advocate for women’s health and works with their global partners on more translation/adaptation projects. In addition to her work on the board, Abwoye currently works as a Community Health Nurse at the South Boston Community Health Center and will graduate this year with a Master of Nursing from Simmons University.

“I am a believer in sharing,” says Abwoye. “It doesn’t make sense to see how privileged my life has turned out to be, and then travel back to Uganda to find the people are the same as when I left. I think I chose the right profession, because you share. You share your compassion, you share your unconditional love—you just share.” ■



## Total Commitment

Professor Erica Moura ’10 Receives 2019 Alden Poole Faculty Mentor Award  
*By Bob Dunn*

**Erica Moura ’10**, Assistant Professor of Practice, Communications, in the Gwen Ifill College of Media, Arts, and Humanities, is the 2019 recipient of the Alden Poole Faculty Mentor Award. It recognizes one faculty member in the College who has had a profound impact on the life, career, or direction of students at Simmons University.

“I am lucky to say I’ve had great examples of mentors in my life, including some of my former professors at Simmons, Jim Corcoran and Len Mailloux. They supported, guided, and were there through all turns of my career,” says Moura, “I am grateful that my path has brought me full circle. I am deeply honored to have won this award.”

The Award is named in honor of Professor Alden Poole for his work in the Department of Communications (1955-1986) helping students achieve their potentials. Among the notable students he influenced was the late Gwen Ifill ’77, ’93HD.

In a letter notifying Moura of the honor, Dean Brian Norman wrote that she exemplifies “our commitment in the Ifill College and beyond to preparing students to become lifelong leaders in their professions and in their communities.”

Julie Taliesin ’18 nominated Moura for the Award, writing, in part, that “Erica continues to work tirelessly as an educator and mentor at Simmons. Her wit, kindness, humor, and no-nonsense attitude is why so many of my peers continue to love and trust her, and rely on her as a resource as we progress in our careers.”

Alumnae/i may nominate any current Ifill College faculty member for the Alden Poole Faculty Mentor Award. The award includes a \$500 honorarium. ■





# University Dean's Council Members

**In fall 2019**, Simmons University inaugurated the University Advisory Council, which is formed by four Dean's Advisory Councils representing each of Simmons' four Colleges. The Dean's Advisory Councils inform the future vision of each of the Colleges and the roles they play in our society. The goal of each Council is to help guide the direction of the work of the deans and the work of each College through the shared perspective of a group of leadership volunteers.

Each Council consists of pivotal leaders in their respective arenas who serve as a think-tank to help build connections with community partners, create mentoring and career opportunities for Simmons students, and forge relationships in the fields and industries into which Simmons students work.

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# Working the Phones

By Bob Dunn

## In a world awash

in emails and text messages, phone calls can feel rather retro. But for a select group of Simmons students, calls are definitely where it's at.

"I have had some wonderful conversations with people who graduated from Simmons long before

I was born, and they have so many things to tell me about their student experience," says Sarah Fleischhauer '20.

Fleischhauer is in her second year as a member of Simmons' Phonathon team—a group of students who engage alumnae/i and parents in conversa-

tions about the University, share campus news—and solicit gifts to The Simmons Fund. Last year, she and her Phonathon colleagues raised \$75,000.

"It's the perfect on-campus job for someone like me who wants to get involved and make Simmons the best it can be," says Fleischhauer, "I've never had so much fun at a job before."

Fleischhauer's enthusiasm for Phonathon is widely shared, according to Helen Brabant-Bleakley. She runs the program in

her role as Annual Giving Coordinator in Simmons' Office of Advancement and Alumnae/i Relations.

"Students love hearing stories about what Simmons was like in the past, and alums can't wait to ask about what classes the callers are taking, or what dorm they're living in," says Brabant-Bleakley. "In this way, calls between students and alums produce so much more than gifts to The Simmons Fund."

Brabant-Bleakley typically interviews

about 20 applicants for Phonathon before hiring a smaller group. The current cohort includes two student managers and 15 callers (the most in years); five of them have participated for multiple semesters.

"Students not only learn how to fundraise, they develop skills in how to advocate for a cause they believe in, which is an asset in any career they choose to pursue," says Brabant-Bleakley.

Annie Hodge '21 started calling as a first-year student and is now in her second year as a Phonathon manager. She says she loves connecting with alumnae/i. Some conversations are particularly memorable.

"I called an alum who answered while she was baking a quince pie with her daughter. I had no idea what quince was, but the alum was very informative—and very generous with her gift," says Hodge. "At first I didn't think Phonathon would mean as much to me as it does now. But I've always been inspired by philanthropy, and I think that this has been a calling for me—no pun intended."

The fall semester Phonathon team. Front (L-R): Sarah Fleischhauer '20, Nina Testa '23, Chiara Beauvais '21, and Caitlin Tolpin '22. Back (L-R): Katie Campbell '20, Hannah Alshech '23, Annie Hodge '21, Rylee Spikener '23, Leah Danforth '22, Cady Sugrue '22, Olivia Hart '20, Alia Jazmati '23, and Katie McCarver '21.







## Making **Connections** Building **Community**

Simmons Network is a new, exclusive online community for Simmons alumnae/i, current students, faculty, and staff to build professional and personal networks.

### **NETWORKING**

Find alumnae/i who share career and personal interests, and connect through groups, messaging, or events.

### **MENTORING**

Elevate your career by connecting to other alumnae/i for mentoring relationships.

### **GIVING BACK**

Share news and job opportunities with your classmates and the Simmons community.

Join with your LinkedIn, Facebook, or email account at [simmonsnetwork.net](https://simmonsnetwork.net) or download the Graduway Community app on the App Store or Simmons Network on Google Play.



# Reunion 2020

Many Voices, **One Community**



While the COVID-19 pandemic kept us from gathering on-campus this spring, it won't keep us from celebrating Reunion! Join us on the **Simmons Network Virtual Reunion Group** to reconnect and share updates, memories and more.



Stay tuned to your  
inboxes for more virtual  
Reunion celebration  
opportunities to come!





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