

Brown University's Simmons Hits Federalization of Higher Education

Dr. Ruth J. Simmons
President of Brown University
April 2, 2008

Soundbites from Dr. Simmons's Speech

Affordability of College: Legislators rightly point to the urgency of making colleges available and affordable for a broader and more diverse segment of the population. This has to be applauded and implemented...[C]ertain dimensions of the recent push for specific funding mechanisms, to make this possible, could pose very serious risks to some of the greatest achievements and future promise of U.S. higher education.

Tuition: The Tuition and Fee Benchmarking Amendment will single out institutions with largest increases in their tuition and fees for annual benchmarks, without the necessary consideration of the value that can be added for students based on additional revenue. Pressure on universities to address these concerns could lead to decisions not by need, not by the push for excellence, but by the requirements of outside agencies....

Federalization: The federalization of higher education is an idea whose time has not come.

Diverse Field: We have technical colleges, liberal arts colleges, online colleges, and residential colleges, two- and four-year colleges, local or regional colleges, and national colleges. These institutions make an extraordinary range of access points to education.

Improvement: To seek a uniform model, for an extraordinarily diverse educational system that is for many different purposes, may not be the best route for improving higher education.

Congress: Efforts by Congress to address high tuition and rapidly escalating tuition costs reflect a very sensible concern, to make education affordable to the largest possible number of students. There is no educator worth his or her salt who would disagree with the importance and urgency of such a goal.

Senate Request: Brown University, like some many others with endowments of over \$500 million, recently received a letter from the Senate Finance Committee requesting information about our endowment payout. The goal of this letter is presumed to be that of applying pressure on us to take our endowment gains and apply them to reducing tuition and increasing financial aid. For decades such funds have been used in just that way, to increase financial aid, support the highest quality instruction, underwrite advances in science and technology, and a myriad other useful purposes and do in fact help society.

Self-Reform: let's hope that we in universities are open to correcting any deficiencies in our practices such that we can retain the confidence of our policy makers and preserve the diversity, breath, and independence of higher education. Because, I think, the strength of our universities is in our ability to continue to separate our priorities and make investments in excellence at the forefront of knowledge.

Vernon Jordan

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. My name is Vernon Jordan, I'm president of The Economic Club of Washington and it's a great pleasure to welcome you to the fifth event of the season at the Economic Club. I have one more to go, and it's done. It's great to see you and I thank you for this marvelous response here at noon, and lunch is served, thank you.

[Lunch is served.]

I thought about saying this earlier and then changed my mind. But I think I'd better say it, and that is to share with you what I was thinking at 4:30 this morning when I woke up in New York City and I was actually thinking about how George Bush must be thinking and feeling, and that is that next year this time, he will no longer have the Oval Office, Air Force One, Camp David, or Hail to the Chief. I applied his situation, although different from my own, and I'm thinking that after June, I will not be working for Mary Brady and John Hill. I will not get the opportunity to con speakers into coming and I will not get the opportunity to introduce them. So the confession is, I'm going to miss this, a whole lot. [Laughter and applause.]

I would now like to acknowledge our event sponsors. They are listed in our program, but they have paid for recognition.

Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP, represented by Wendelin A. White;

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, represented by Chairman Bruce McLean and Partners John Dowd, Michael Mandel, and myself; and

BET Networks, represented by Debra Lee.

To all of you, thank you for your support. The proceeds from the sponsorships will benefit the Economic Club's scholarship program. We have one more luncheon in June, and we are taking names for tables. Thank you very much.

Recognition of Special Guests

We have several special guests whom I would like to recognize. Please join me in welcoming: Her Excellency, the Ambassador of Singapore, Chan Heng Chee; His Excellency, the Ambassador of Mexico, my friend Arturo Sarukhan; the Senator from the great state of Rhode Island, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse; Dr. Natwar Gandhi, the Chief Financial Officer of the District of Columbia; and DC City Council Member and member of the Club, Jack Evans.

We are privileged to have as guests today Presidents of Universities in the region. Let us welcome:

The President of the University of Maryland, C.D. Mote;
The President of The American University, Cornelius Kerwin;
The President of George Mason University, Alan Merten;
The President of Southeastern University, Charlene Drew Jarvis;
The President of Trinity University, Patricia McGuire;
The President of the University of the District of Columbia, Stan Jackson;
The President of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, John Childers.
Artis Hampshire-Cowen, Senior Vice President and Secretary of the Board, at Howard University; and
Former President of George Washington University, Stephen Joel Trachtenberg.

The final event of the season will be a luncheon on June 9th at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel featuring Dr. Eric Schmidt, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Google.

In our format today, our speaker will take questions directly from members from the floor, instead of our usual written questions. We ask that you identify yourself, including your affiliation, ask your question succinctly to allow others to ask their questions.

Introduction of the Speaker

It is a long, long way from Great Land, Texas, to the presidency of Brown University, Ruth Simmons has traveled that journey with grace, dignity, determination, and courage, inspired and instructed by her parents, pushed and pulled by students, driven and motivated by the inequity and unfairness surrounding her, directed and guided by hard work, sacrifice, and excellence. The twelfth child of sharecroppers who moved from Great Land to Houston to enable her to enter public school, our speaker graduated summa cum laude from Dillard University and earned her Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Romance Languages and Literature from Harvard University. A rather unenlightened interviewer once asked Dr. Simmons, why she got a Ph.D. in French Literature. Her reply was perfect. She said, "Because everything in the world belongs to me." Dr. Simmons has held academic posts at the University of Southern California, Princeton University, and Spelman College. In 1995, she became President of Smith College, the largest women's college in the U.S. and was named President of Brown in 2001. In addition to her academic life, Dr. Simmons is active in the public and private sector; her directorships include Texas Instruments, Goldman Sachs, and Howard University. She is the recipient of many prizes, fellowships, and honorary degrees. Most important for me, despite all she has to do, she has time to extend to Ann and to me the joy of friendship, and it is because of that friendship, that she said yes to my invitation to join us at The Economic Club of Washington.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, Ruth Simmons.

Ruth Simmons

Thank you Vernon, actually it's because of Ann's friendship.

My thanks to all of you for the invitation to be with you today. First, I want to acknowledge members of the Washington area Brown University family who joined us today, thank you so much for coming, and of course, my fellow university presidents, who are such an impressive group. I especially admire President Mote, who is wearing a Terrapin on his lapel, and I am going to ask you for that later because when I first visited the Maryland Campus and I saw the banners on the campus, announcing the mascots, which are ferocious turtles, I thought there was such promise in that, and it has been such an inspiration to me for such a long time. So, hello to all my fellow presidents. I also want to acknowledge a member of the Rhode Island delegation who is present, so fortunate to have outstanding representation here in Washington and we are grateful for the leadership of public servants such as Senators Jack Reid and Sheldon Whitehouse, as well as, our two Congressional representatives, Patrick Kennedy and Jim Langevin.

Now this is very important to say, because contrary to the good fortune with respect to the positive relations with our delegation from Rhode Island, these are quite difficult times in the relationship between government and higher education. The degree to which U.S. higher education has fueled upward social mobility and economic growth in the United States is a result really of a sustained period of positive coordination between these two sectors. But this is from all appearances under stress today, bringing with it the specter of the diminishing preeminence of U.S. higher education, just as major improvements and paradigm shifts in our once lagging higher education markets elsewhere in the world point to an increasing advantage for those competing economies.

Brown's Horace Mann, an 1819 graduate of the university, led an early effort to make education broadly available to citizens through public education. We are also indebted to Horace Mann for urging the elimination of flogging, by the way. The pursuit of access to education for all social classes was crucial, really, in setting this country on the path to becoming one of the most dynamic and open societies in the world. Recognizing that impact, legislators rightly point to the urgency of making colleges available and affordable for a broader and more diverse segment of the population. This has to be applauded and implemented. However, there are certain dimensions, I think, of the recent push for specific funding mechanisms, to make this possible, that could pose very serious risks to some of the greatest achievements and future promise of U.S. higher education.

Every year, world prizes, such as the Nobel, recognize preeminence in science, economic, and medical discoveries. While the most recent year wasn't, quite frankly, the best year for U.S. winners, one has only to look to 2006 for the stunning success of U.S. scientists in winning these prizes. Aside from those in literature and peace which we should have won also, all Nobel Prize winners that year were U.S. based. Now, that is remarkable. What is really remarkable is the education legacy that the winners share. They belong to a community of scholars produced by leading colleges and universities. The names of these institutions won't surprise you, and don't cheer if I name your university. In chemistry, Roger Kornberg, was educated at Stanford. The physics

winner, John Mathias and George Smoot, were educated at Berkeley and MIT, respectively. The winners in physiology and medicine, Andrew Fire and Craig Mellow, went to Berkeley and Harvard, Mellow after completing his undergraduate work at Brown. The sole economics winner, Phelps, studied at Yale. Today these scholars are at Stanford, Berkeley, the University of Massachusetts, and Columbia and one is at NASA. These scientists come from a period in higher education when universities were able to pursue leads in science and technology with the strong support not only of industry and federal funding, but also that of great research universities, whose growth and extraordinary assets enabled and protected their promising research.

Who would have predicted, a century ago, the environmental degradation that has led to climate change? University science stands ready to identify such problems, raise awareness, change behavior, and bring solutions to bear. This is the miracle of what the modern university and its research capacity offer the world. What an evolution from the narrow missions of colonial universities. Even the report of the Spellings Commission acknowledges, “It is no exaggeration to declare that higher education has become one of our greatest success stories.” So there is agreement even among critics that this sector, encompassing almost four thousand institutions, has been the best in the world. What is driving the current concerns about higher education and how can we address what is at the root of that concern, without undermining the thriving organism that is our system of higher education?

This year, the House approved by a vote of 354 to 58, a Higher Education Reauthorization Bill, along with 27 amendments for debate. The latter included a provision that would have required universities to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Education on their endowment expenditures for “reducing the cost of the programs of instruction,” and a number of other measures that will increase regulations and reporting, thus, diverting university resources away from instruction and research. The Tuition and Fee Benchmarking Amendment will single out institutions with largest increases in their tuition and fees for annual benchmarks, without the necessary consideration of the value that can be added for students based on additional revenue.

Pressure on universities to address these concerns could lead to decisions not by need, not by the push for excellence, but by the requirements of outside agencies, insisting on actions that have no basis in or concern for excellence, however that is defined by the particular institution and the population it serves. As the Higher Education Act works its way through conference committee, I hope that some of the potentially harmful provisions can be changed before the final bill passes later this spring. Now, to be sure, independent institutions should not be immune from criticism, from adherence to the laws of the land, and from working with policy makers to improve the effectiveness of their service to society.

In higher education we should welcome the interest and involvement of policy makers, in pointing to ways in which we can improve our institutions. Secretary Spellings again, in her essay, in *Politico*, noted that we are an industry, “entrenched, insular, clubby and wished to be accountable to no one but ourselves.” But she is only partly right. Clubby,

maybe, arrogant and elitist, perhaps too much of the time, but entrenched, insular, and accountable to no one. No way! Universities and colleges freely share information with others; even the types that businesses would consider proprietary information, for the good of advancing knowledge. I was just talking to someone about the MIT materials that were put online. I went to a meeting at Davos this year with presidents from around the world. I was delighted to learn that some of them, in India in particular, these are the institutes of technology in India, and some of them have abandoned altogether, the teaching of Introductory Physics. You know why? Because of the MIT course. Extraordinary! We collaborate freely across institutions, sharing information about advances in knowledge to even our competitors. What corporation would do that, what government?

One reason for the claim of insularity is the criticism of the accrediting process of our universities. Well, as President of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, past chair of accrediting teams, and president of a university that relies on the accrediting process, I can tell you that these reviews are not as necessarily represented. Much of the criticism that we hear from policy makers relies too often on accrediting failures while largely ignoring the extraordinarily diligent work of thousands of independent-minded educators who, uncompensated, assess their peers and competitors with great independence and integrity. That accreditation can be improved is doubtless true. But the sector is not, from my experience, a vast self-serving activity, providing fake assessments to colleges and universities. Some of the interventions being proposed to address the perceived insularity of higher education would ostensibly institute uniform assessment models and testing approaches for a system that is far from uniform in its missions, its character, and its promise. The current landscape of higher education results in a loose network of different types of institutions that grew out of disparate goals and needs. Miraculously, perhaps because they serve specific and fundamental needs, and because they were allowed to develop based on those needs and not in response to a central bureaucratic design, they flourished and produced a brilliant framework for the growth and development of this country.

The federalization of all of higher education is an idea whose time has not come. Let's look at some of the reasons, most importantly, the diversity of these institutions is their strength and in that strength, I think, is the future of the nation. This diversity derives not merely from the fact that these universities are of many types, and have many different missions, but also from the fact that they are generally independent of each other. Learning is, after all, our business and by learning from each other and adapting to what we learn, we become stronger. In that sense, our differences strengthen rather than weaken us. Let me just say that countries that centrally mandate all curricula and outcome tend to complain today about the seemingly limited ability of faculty and students to create, criticize, and innovate. They often find broad-based energetic discovery and breakthroughs wanting in their system. In more centrally controlled mechanistic practices is the risk of rote intake, narrow testing, disinterested learners, lackluster scholarship, constrained intellectual curiosity, and limited innovation. What a risk that is compared with the purported ills of higher education today.

Our differences are our strengths, I say. We have technical colleges, liberal arts colleges, online colleges, and residential colleges, two-year and four-year colleges, local or regional colleges, and national colleges. These institutions make an extraordinary range of access points to education. They provide access, not merely with the help of government funding, but also with the commitment of untold millions of individuals who have built these universities, because of their conviction that supporting education is the way to support their country. When policy makers talk about efficiency and cost controls, let it be known that, had institutions grown with just these goals as priorities, they would have avoided many of the features that have made U.S. higher education so valuable, in fact, in the world today. We would not have focused on great libraries, advanced technologies, and exceptional laboratories. We would not have focused on mature learners, nor on those with remedial needs, nor certainly not on the underprivileged. We would not have focused on advancing knowledge nor on supporting research. We would not have focused on serving the nation, by offering programs in art, languages, public policy, or education, and we most certainly would not have focused on the brave and brilliant work that exposed governments and challenged injustice.

Imagine the great Francis Wayland, President of Brown from 1827 – 1855, challenging the morality of slavery, in the face of a public fully willing to see this heinous practice serve the economic needs of the states. The fact that he and his university were independent and driven by other than cost factors made all the difference. Institutional efficiency and productivity is an excellent goal when it allows us all to offer lower prices and provide wider access. It is not, when it gives government a toe hold in restricting the ability of colleges and universities to set high educational goals, to carve out new knowledge, and to challenge injustice.

To seek a uniform model, for an extraordinarily diverse educational system that is for many different purposes, may not be the best route for improving higher education. Not all institutions have the intention of creating Nobel-level work and not all should. Some seeking primarily to teach well and prepare students for careers can have a lower cost profile, others may be at the opposite end of the spectrum, providing a range of highly advanced programs. I doubt very seriously that MIT would had had the ability to mount this ambitious worldwide program to offer its course online to everybody across the world, if it had been constrained in the way that some of the legislations would suggest. There is room in higher education for lower cost instruction and lower cost delivery. But there should also be room for universities that serve a more costly purpose. Cost should in fact vary widely, if we are to offer the varied access points that we have come to enjoy.

Now the seeming target of policy makers is a small subset of mostly private institutions in the country, those with endowments of over \$500 million, which by the way is an arbitrary dividing line since there is enormous variability in expenditures among this group depending on the scope of the institution's mission. The fact is that only 9% of undergraduates attend colleges charging more than \$30,000. It is important to note that most of these students choose these colleges, why, precisely because of their significantly higher investments in technology, research faculty, small class instruction, and advanced research, which is largely what makes them cost as much as they do. Institutions that

have a legitimate reason for more significant investments in instruction, advanced training, and research should have the leeway to preserve their mission, to the most effective management of their resources, up to and including setting tuition at an appropriate level and allocating their endowment revenues in keeping with their purpose. Intervention by government to change those allocations might have the unintended consequence of eliminating some of the best features of American higher education.

Imposing spending despite price restraints on all of U.S. higher education may drive this sector away from excellence, consolidating it toward median-level quality and ensuring the rise of university systems elsewhere that would happily assume the mantle of the best university system in the world. In fact, I would say that this is exactly what is driving lots of the activity in the European Union, in China, and in India. Make no mistake about it, their intention is to create the best institutions in the world. How are they trying to do it? To some degree, by imitating the U.S. system of higher education.

Let's not forget that one factor of the strength in this sector is the competition that institutions enjoy with each other, and I don't mean on the athletic field. I am always aware of the fact that when I say competition on the athletic field, people are skeptical about our competition in the Ivy League. But you shouldn't be, we are a power house conference, absolutely! In addition, we all compete for students, faculty, government grants, awards, and prizes, philanthropic support, and rankings. Those institutions that compete most successfully attract good students, good resources, and in doing so, they continue to improve, extending their success in more and more powerful ways. Those institutions that are weaker may fall back and even go out of business. Economists tell us that competition is good and that under most circumstances it leads to improvement. Our competition relies on our differences, the advantages that we can establish, the niche that is uniquely ours. Regulations that reduce the differences that are the basis of that healthy competition may lead to uniformity without excellence and without any incentive to improve.

Efforts by Congress to address high tuition and rapidly escalating tuition costs reflect a very sensible concern, to make education affordable to the largest possible number of students. There is no educator worth his or her salt who would disagree with the importance and urgency of such a goal. The more students we educate, the more we succeed as a society and, by the way, that truth extends across all types of institutions. The data show, no matter what type of college one attends, the chances of an improved life and greater earning capacity increase, no matter what kind of institution. However, the quest for enhanced access fails miserably as an argument for uniformity across institutions. That uniformity would destroy the very assets that bring students to colleges and their particular approaches to education.

I personally found my way, as you heard, to a small unheard of, black college in New Orleans that the drive to uniformity would have eliminated scores of years ago. I was just back on that devastated campus, two weeks ago, with some of my Brown students. Today Dillard is bravely striving to overcome the wreckage of Hurricane Katrina. Not even this ferocious storm could wash away the past achievements and future promise of

its one and a half century existence. The striving of that small black institution, and others like it, saved this nation from its intolerable tolerance of segregation and racial discrimination, giving rise to a generation, generations really, of empowered leaders.

Brown University, like some many others with endowments of over \$500 million, recently received a letter from the Senate Finance Committee requesting information about our endowment payout. The goal of this letter is presumed to be that of applying pressure on us to take our endowment gains and apply them to reducing tuition and increasing financial aid. For decades such funds have been used in just that way, to increase financial aid, support the highest quality instruction, underwrite advances in science and technology, and a myriad other useful purposes and do in fact help society. As we all know, the cost of discovery is very high. Ask any research division of a U.S. corporation. Ask them, too, how they would compare their in-house proprietary research operations to the research engines at universities. Which do you think are more cost effective? The one serves the interest of shareholders, the other serves the interests of the entire world. The one is directed at marketplace demand, the other seeks to answer questions and enlarge the body of knowledge. Removing from certain research universities the flexibility to support this costly endeavor, when they can raise funds to do so, would undermine the long-term public interest. I continue to believe that the real value of American higher education is the unique way in which the network of higher education institutions allows every student to understand that they can aspire to a higher level of achievement across the spectrum of U.S. universities and colleges.

The knowledge of that fact allowed me to study at a small, low-cost college with limited breadth, satisfied that I would be able to move on to a larger university in time. So when people ask me why it was I was able to do well at Harvard, I like to remind them that it was not in spite of my Dillard education, but because of it. The point is that no one is required to attend a costly college to get a good education. Students can thrive at many different types of institutions. Now I don't argue for recklessly higher costs, waste, lack of accountability, or, heaven forbid, limited access to universities. I do not argue that we are immune from reasonable governmental oversight and regulation. I think there are some features of the Spellings report that remind us of ways we can improve on what we are doing. First, this process tells us that, as Lamar Alexander has observed, we need to be better at speaking in plain English about what the Academy is up to. Even more to the point, I think we need to practice better more listening. Secondly, transparency is very important. Why should we fear making information available? We need to find new ways in not simply providing good information about cost and expenditures, but also letting the public see how our internal process of priority setting is often as good as or better than those of most institutions. I think transparency extends to making available reports on outcomes from our universities and colleges. I don't see any reason that our accreditation reports shouldn't be available to the public, provided that the prospect of making them public does not alter the candor, rigor, and value of this process of assessment. However, the creation of such a robust culture of accountability and transparency should not include the kinds of regulations, systems, and strategies that transform this system into a shadow of its current success where innovation is

encouraged, unique approaches are permitted, and discovery is driven to its highest potential.

Peter Heather, writing about the fall of the Roman Empire—if you really want to make a point, you have to talk about the fall of the Roman Empire, so get ready, I'm about to do that. Peter noted that in conclusion, the confiscation of local endowments in the third century caused a major shift in local political power away from town counsels to imperial bureaucrats. This did away with the whole point of the local displays of generosity recorded in early imperial transcriptions. One hopes that, chastened by the efforts of some to redirect their good intentions, donors do not conclude that supporting education no longer offers the promise of helping the world. When the Romans confiscated these local endowments, it led to a drying up of important civic intentions and the building of more self-interested bureaucracies. Let us not make the same mistake in this country. Instead, let's hope that we in universities are open to correcting any deficiencies in our practices such that we can retain the confidence of our policy makers and preserve the diversity, breath, and independence of higher education. Because, I think, the strength of our universities is in our ability to continue to separate our priorities and make investments in excellence at the forefront of knowledge.

Thank you for your attention and thank you for bearing with me. I would be happy to take questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questioner: [Male, did not identify himself.] I once sat at these luncheons between two college presidents, and most of the conversation was what I would call about expletive deleted tenure. How does tenure fit in to making our education better?

Dr. Simmons

Well, this is a very popular question. I will just tell you what I think from my own experience. I love the fact that our university's independence is really won by having a critical mass of individuals whose jobs are not threatened because they work in areas of controversy, because they say, for example, that life came into being a certain way, that those do not comport with popular view, or that they are able to teach their students without being forced to teach them something specific in accordance with what society thinks at the time. I think the answer vis-à-vis Francis Wayland is a very telling one. How did abolition, particularly earlier in Great Britain, come into being? Two students at St. John's College at Cambridge were persuaded that it was evil that happened all over the world. What serves the public interest at the time is not always what is wise, it's not always what is moral. Having a protected group able to advance knowledge, and question what is taking place, is frankly invaluable to us. It is a small cost to us to provide tenure compared with the great benefits that we get from it, in my view. So I think that it really is a critical factor in being able to do this cutting edge research. You know, I have to say as a university president that it is not the favorite part of my job that faculty stand up to

me. That's not the best thing in the world, but nevertheless they can do that. Because they can do that, universities are stronger, universities are better. I believe that you will not find this taking place in places where there is not tenure. I've been in systems where tenure is rarely granted and where faculty is subjected to pressure, threats, and so forth. I've been there. It doesn't work. You can almost see the correlation between quality of scholarship and teaching in those instances where one is present is and the other is not. So I believe very strongly in tenure, and I think one of the things universities have to do is resist mightily the effort to eliminate tenure. Now whether every faculty member needs to be tenured, I think the mix is extremely important. Universities have already moved in the direction, teasing out those areas that require tenure and those areas that do not require tenure. I think going forward it would be a more complex picture than it is perhaps thought to be by the public.

Questioner: Susan Johnson, Head of Commonwealth Academy: We are a college preparatory school for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. Jonathan K. Mooney was a graduate of Brown, a dyslexic and with ADHD who came to speak to our students, and certainly he credits being at Brown with his success and I personally want to thank you for that.

My question is, we have as a school, 70% male to 30% female distribution. The current enrollment statistics for colleges, however, is shifting more towards females. I don't know the reason, or how those two facts correlate, but it is interesting to get your opinion as to how you see this effecting, how colleges approach students, how they approach admissions, and what outcome do you think that may have economically?

Dr. Simmons: You mean the gender balance?

Ms. Johnson: The gender balance or imbalance right now with what is being touted that it is a 60/40 female to male.

Dr. Simmons: It is. First let me say that I believe that every young person should have the opportunity to a first-rate education that is fit for what they need. That's very important, it makes absolutely no difference to me what the balance is. Students should apply, they should get in. We should get over being concerned about how many women are in the seats versus how many men. Now this is coming from somebody who was president of a women's college, don't forget that. Now having said that, I do think something is happening in our country with respect to boys, and I think it is a great concern and that is, the ways in which boys are socialized that may tend to send them, to categorize them, let's say. One should be concerned about the number of boys consigned to special education, because of so-called behavioral problems. One should be concerned about the ease with which we categorize people, young people who have certain difficulties, because it stigmatizes them and it also provides a kind of animosity in a sense towards learning that is really unjustified.

We have to meet students where they are, every student. I think we have to be careful in going back to K to 12 and looking at what is happening with boys, because pretty soon if

we don't do that, we really will have an educated class that is female and that would not, it seems to me, be desirable, because there will be so much potential loss for boys who are stopping out of school at a much earlier age. So I don't deny that I think there is a problem and we should be doing something about it, but that has to take place with parents and it has to take place in the early grades, because actually it starts to happen very early. There is a link in the African-American community, a very strong link between the so-called criminalization of young males and their incarceration that we simply have not dealt with as a nation. I'm very happy to say that we have a faculty member, Glenn Lowry, whose research is on this question, and that's one of the most urgent problems we face in this country, to figure out how to get ourselves out of that mess.

It can reap terrible things for the country if we don't solve it. But I agree with you, I think that is something that is a priority that we need to address.

Questioner: Charlene Drew Jarvis, President of Southeastern University: First of all, Dr. Simmons, thank you for your passion about higher education. There's going to be a demographic shift in higher education as you know, *The Chronicle* just carried another article. Fewer whites and fewer blacks in institutions of higher education, there will be more Asians and more Hispanics, and there will be more students who are of low income and ill-prepared for college. So the question is, what should the country be doing about that and what should universities be doing about that to prepare for this shift in demographics, and what should those of us who are representing some of those students now be looking forward to?

Dr. Simmons: First of all, thank you for asking that. First of all, you cannot teach well, if you do not respect the people you are teaching. The most important thing that we can do as educators is to abandon the notion that there are only certain people who can perform at a high level in intellectual context. That has been our history, the assumption that intellect is the province of a narrow band of individuals, that's number one. Number two, we must not dismiss people on the basis of where they are in their education. Now let me say this is one of the passages I had to delete because it was too long. One of the greatest things about our educational system in this country is that you can wake up at 30 years old and discover that you are excited about learning and then you can start your education at that point. That is rarely true in the rest of the world. There is a window in most countries, if you miss that window, you are out of it and you basically never get a chance to be college educated. There are people still today at 60 going to college, because our society accepts that. That's a tremendous benefit to the economy, by the way, the fact that the people not only go to college the first time, but they keep going back for more education. So the first thing we have to do is not categorize people as being able at a certain age, and, therefore, if they don't make the cut at that age, they have to go someplace else and do something different. Because I think there are different learning patterns that would emerge from this. We have a good deal of rhetoric around the fact that there are drop-outs, particularly in the Hispanic community, and what that is going to do, yes that is true. We should focus less on the fact that there are drop-outs and more on

the fact that we have to encourage people to pursue education whenever they are able to do it. So if they do it at 20 it's ok, if they do it at 24 it's ok.

I love the story of a friend of mine who dropped out of school and then decided that she would go to get a GED. So she got a GED, and then she managed to go to a community college to get started, she did that. Then she transferred into the University of North Carolina, she did that. Then she went to graduate school and she ended up a professor at Princeton University. People think of that as a novel thing, but it's not a novel thing. It's not a novel thing for me to come from a country school and go to high school in Texas in a segregated environment and then go on to a black college and then to go to Harvard. People think of that as unusual, it isn't, it isn't that unusual. So our way of thinking about education really needs to change. We have to make education available, we have to make it open, and continue to be open especially for people who approach it from different points in their lives. That, I think, is going to be absolutely essential if we're going to be able to sustain the educated workforce we have today. Because there are going to be many different patterns that we are going to see in the future. We've got to have a system that is going to accommodate many different patterns. I guess if you didn't get this from my talk, that most important thing to me is that we understand that there are many different kinds of institutions. Community colleges, I work with community colleges because I think they are fantastic. They provide enormous opportunity in our country, and in my inaugural address at Brown I said something that I think was terrifying to people, which I try to do at least once in every speech, but what I said was that I believe universities ought to preserve places for students from community colleges. The reason that we should is that there is a continuum of education. And the forceful statement we can make to the country and to young people is that they can enter. They can get a GED and go to community college, and then they can end up at the University of Maryland or George Washington or at American. That is a powerful thing. We need to embrace that instead of thinking of ourselves as being these privileged areas of education that only admit the select few who come from particular kinds of institutions. The system will be much more robust, much more credible, by the way, to policy makers if we work hard to make sure that the people understand that is the system that we have. Right now I don't think people understand that is the system that we have.

Questioner: Ed Mathias, Managing Director, The Carlyle Group: The leading institutions in the country are engaged in what you might describe as an arms race in regards to financial aid with a few schools having a tremendous competitive advantage. I wonder if you might talk about what the implications of that are, and how you think it may evolve?

Dr. Simmons: Well, I was actually trying to speak to some of the implications and that is, that race, will end up meaning that many institutions spend money on financial aid, instead of spending money on instruction, on research, and some of the other important programs that they would like to do, that's number one. Number two, I think we got into the arms race because many of us did not see the problem coming.

We are not supposed to talk about what we discuss at the Ivy league President meeting, so don't tell anybody I said this. But I remember, when I first became a President of Brown, going naively to my colleagues in the Ivy League and saying, you know, I think it would be very important to us to reach out to certain kinds of students and really demonstrate how involved the Ivy League is in this notion of an educated citizenry. But those kinds of things really did not go very far. I think that what is happening now is a direct result of the fact that we did not see ourselves as part of that direct continuum. This really is a kind of punishment for wealthy institutions, which are, by the way, very few in number. It's a punishment for wealthy institutions because they really did not pay attention to how far away from that educational continuum they were moving. So I think it is an opportunity for us to do some things that perhaps we would have been better off doing some decades ago. So what do I mean by that, I remember talking to the Chairman of the Corporation at Harvard at one point, and they were going around asking questions. Is there anything Harvard should be doing? I remember saying at the time, "Yes, take the money that you are amassing and spend it on something that is useful for society. So here's an example, go and say to outstanding young people, if you will go into education, you can come to Harvard, free of charge and you can go and get a degree and you can teach in public schools." Amazing what that would have done.

We have not been good enough at identifying the kinds of things that we can do, that's one thing. In terms of reducing financial aid, I think that is a very positive thing, reducing loans, I think that is a very positive thing. Loans have gotten out of hand, tuition is growing too rapidly. This is a wake-up call for us to address those very real questions. We can't expect people to come to college and to walk away with loans of hundreds of thousands of dollars. It's not reasonable. Is it reasonable for students to borrow to go to college? Absolutely, it's absurd to say that a student can happily go off and borrow money to purchase a car or purchase clothing or to do all kinds of things and not use those resources to go to college. My big concern is that we are creating an expectation that people will no longer have to pay for college. I think something will be lost if that happens. But I think that most universities certainly won't be able to offer these kinds of rich packages. Some will no doubt go out of business because they are on the margin, perhaps already, and people will increasingly not be willing to pay the cost of tuition, and therefore some places won't survive. I think there is going to be cataclysmic change in higher education. I have seen nothing like it, certainly in my time in higher education, and it is going to force a lot of change. Not all of that change will be good. We have to be very watchful, very attentive, because this could dismantle what has been the best higher educational system in the world. So I am asking policy makers to pay attention, because there are some possibly inadvertent consequences to doing the things that we are currently doing.

Thank you very much.

Vernon Jordan

We are The Economic Club of Washington, but we don't have any money. But we do have this American Eagle from the Steuben Collection as a token of our appreciation and

thanks to you and we can send it to you, or you can tote it back, either way. But thank you so much for being here and we are adjourned.

Ruth J. Simmons

Ruth J. Simmons was sworn in as the 18th president of Brown University on July 3, 2001. She also holds an appointment as professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Department of Africana Studies. She was president of Smith College from 1995 until the time of her appointment at Brown.

A native of Texas and a 1967 graduate of Dillard University in New Orleans, Dr. Simmons received her Ph.D. in Romance languages and literatures from Harvard University in 1973. She is fluent in French and has written on the works of David Diop and Aime Cesaire. In 1983, after serving as associate dean of the graduate school at the University of Southern California, Dr. Simmons joined the Princeton University administration. In 1990, she left for two years to serve as provost at Spelman College. Returning to Princeton in 1992 as vice provost, she remained at the university until 1995, when she became president of Smith College, the largest women's college in the United States.

Dr. Simmons is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the Council on Foreign Relations; she is currently serving as chair of the Ivy Council. She also serves on the boards of Texas Instruments and the Goldman Sachs Group. Active in a wide range of educational, charitable, and civic endeavors, she holds honorary degrees from Amherst, Boston University, Columbia, Dartmouth, Dillard, Harvard, Howard, Mount Holyoke College, New York University, Northeastern, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the University of Southern California, George Washington University, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Vermont, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Miami Dade College, and Morehouse College.

Dr. Simmons is the recipient of the German DAAD and a Fulbright Fellowship to France. In 1997, she was awarded the Centennial Medal from Harvard University, in 1999 the Teachers College Medal for Distinguished Service from Columbia University, and in 2001 the President's Award from the United Negro College Fund. She has been honored with the 2002 Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal and the 2002 "Drum Major for Justice" education award from Southern Christian Leadership Conference/W.O.M.E.N. In 2004, she received the ROBIE Humanitarian Award, given by the Jackie Robinson Foundation; the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal; and the chairman's award of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

In recent years, Dr. Simmons has written and spoken on educational and public policy issues, including institutional governance, foreign language study, diversity, liberal arts, science education, leadership, and women in higher education. She has been a featured

speaker at the White House, the World Economic Forum, the National Press Club, the Association of American Universities, and the American Council on Education.

As an academic leader, Simmons believes in the power of education to transform lives. She champions the university as a haven of reasoned debate with the responsibility to challenge students intellectually and prepare them to become informed, conscientious citizens. She has spent her career advocating for a leadership role for higher education in the arena of national and global affairs.