

**WILLIAM JAMES HOLMES, JR.**  
**FOURTH PRESIDENT OF SIMMONS COLLEGE**  
**1970-1993**

William James Holmes, Jr. was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on June 30, 1927, to William James and Libbie (Stodola) Holmes. He served in the United States Army Air Force 1945-1949 and attained the rank of Captain. In 1951, Holmes received the B.A. from the State University of Iowa. He married Joanne Prokop in September of the same year.

Holmes was an instructor of English 1955-1958 at the State University of Iowa. He left Iowa in 1958 to take the position of Assistant Professor and Director of Remedial English at the University of Ohio at Athens. He was later promoted to Associate Professor and was Director of Freshman English and the English Undergraduate Program. Holmes also served as Director of the Honors College. In 1969, he was appointed Assistant to the President. In 1970, he left Ohio to become the fourth President of Simmons College.

During his presidency, Holmes oversaw two major fundraising campaigns: PRIDE I (for renovations to the Main College Building) and PRIDE II (to increase salaries, the endowment, and to provide funding for endowed chairs). In addition, Holmes also oversaw the construction of both the Park Science Center and the Holmes Sports Center. During his tenure, the College added two additional graduate schools (the Graduate School of Management and the Graduate School of Health Studies) and many new graduate programs.

Holmes retired from Simmons College in 1993.

Over the years, Holmes worked with or served as a member of many organizations including: the Executive Committee of the WGBH Educational Foundation, Beaver Country Day School (trustee), the American Council of Education (fellow), the Modern Language Association, the Executive Committee of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (chair and member), and the Massachusetts Rhodes Scholars Selection Committee. He holds an honorary degree from Northeastern University.

In addition to numerous articles, Holmes is the co-author of *Nineteenth Century American Short Fiction 1800-1900*.

Compiled by Peter Carini, The Simmons College Archives, 1994.

## **Developments in the Administration of President William J. Holmes, 1970-1993**

On beginning his tenure in 1970, President William J. Holmes reiterated the goals of the College:

1. Simmons graduates should have both a broad education in the arts and sciences, and a specialization in at least one field related to their career objectives.
2. Simmons is to remain a college focused upon career preparation for women.
3. The Simmons bachelor's degree should imply that the student is either prepared to go to work in the field of her choice or to continue her career preparation through graduate studies.
4. The Simmons undergraduate program should make increasingly rigorous demands upon students by developing courses with high intellectual standards, and to offer more opportunities to develop creativity and imagination through individual study, field work, and interdisciplinary seminars.

Holmes also noted the work of the: Continuing Education Program, which fills a special need for the education of mature women in the Greater Boston area; the Prince Program in Retailing, which represents a major step towards reestablishing Simmons as a college on the front line of career education for women; and the merging of the Public Affairs offices, to bring Simmons the attention it has so long rightly deserved.

In 1975, Simmons established a National Association of Banking Women (NABW) program--supported by the Carnegie Corporation--to meet the needs of working women with professional experience. Theoretically, this program could be a possible model for women in other fields, meeting both high academic standards and the special needs of specific groups within the professional population.

In the following year, The Mellon Foundation sponsored a Faculty Committee to undertake a Self-Study to review the definition of educational process. One question was whether Simmons had failed to make a case for the liberal arts.

In 1977, a new Middle Management Program (supported by the Donner and Sloan Foundations) provided a much needed course and also strengthened the faculty of The School of Management. The Ford Foundation supported a summer program for women in administrative positions.

In addition, Simmons established the first Center for the Study of Children's Literature in the country.

In 1981-92, the Faculty approved a baccalaureate program in Applied Computer Science, another course in International Studies, and a master's program in Organizational Communications. A successor to the NABW (modified for the needs of the current student body) was established with John Hancock. Courses were directed to management and work performance. Hancock asked for a separate collegial course which also could meet general requirements of a degree.

In the following year, programs were established leading to the degree of Doctor of Social Work and a Master's Program in Primary Health Care Nursing. Additionally, the Warburg

Chair in International Studies was established. The first appointee was former Ambassador Robert White, whose twenty-five years in the Foreign Service centered in Central and South America.

In 1984-85, the Trustman Gallery was dedicated, honoring Julia Myerson '24 and Benjamin S. Trustman. The Gallery has been filled by shows of Simmons faculty and students, as well as outside artists. It has also served as the center of some of the College's most stimulating activities.

A number of interesting events occurred in 1985-86:

- \* A Freshman Honors Program was set up to encourage superior students.
- \* A Simmons Semester in Boston was established to encourage students from other colleges to consider a semester or a year at Simmons.
- \* *US News and World Report* included Simmons among the best colleges in the country, (as well as in the Boston area, with only Harvard, M.I.T., and Wellesley). Simmons was also listed as only one of two women's major comprehensive colleges in the country.
- \* Simmons was cited for maintaining a community service with Jamaica Plain and the Jamaica Plain High School. As many as 150 students per semester were enabled with any number of human service, educational, government, and business agencies. When the Massachusetts State Senate was looking for models of possible programs on which to base legislation, the Simmons program was one of those reviewed.
- \* Success in the master's level program in health care administration led Simmons to create a fourth graduate school, Graduate School of Health Studies. A program to attract experienced health care professionals initially enrolled nurses from the metropolitan Boston area. Other new programs were graduate degrees in Nursing and in Physical Therapy.
- \* Automation of the Beatley Library card catalog was completed in 1988, with a later link to outside vendors and other members of the Fenway Consortium.
- \* A particularly well-designed building, the new Sports Center, was dedicated and immediately began to provide a variety of activities from squash and aerobics to the running track and the rowing tank.

In 1991, anticipating the centennial in 1999, task forces of faculty, staff, students, and alumnae/i of both undergraduate and graduate schools set priorities for the future. Their general priorities were recommended for: (1) Financial Stability; (2) Enhancement and New Initiatives; and (3) Long-Term Vitality.

The Mission Statement remained constant:

A comprehensive undergraduate and graduate institution, Simmons College prepares its students for meaningful and rewarding personal, professional, and community lives.... For nearly 100 years the undergraduate College has been a leader in educating women professionals.... Our core undergraduate mission--to educate women--is accomplished by integrating the professions and the liberal arts and sciences.... The College's historical commitment to excellence in educating professionals extends to its graduate schools and programs, which are open to both men and women.... Throughout all of its programs, Simmons is committed to providing students from

a diversity of ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds with the practical and intellectual means to use their skills and knowledge as scholars and future leaders in their professions and as citizens of an ever-changing world.

Compiled by Richard Carroll, The Simmons College Archives, 1996

Reference Notes:

President's Annual Reports, 1971-1991 (with gaps), Office of the President, RG 4, The College Archives, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts.