

Simmons College of Kentucky

Case for
Support



2021



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Simmons Unique Identity

"Simmons' future is based on embracing its unique history and mission to provide a comprehensive education that prepares graduates who have the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, perform quantitative reasoning, and apply knowledge to complex problems in an ethical way."

Simmons College of Kentucky was founded after the Civil War to develop the newly freed Black population that built great wealth for this nation into teachers, ministers, and leaders through a classical liberal arts education. Over one hundred forty years later, Simmons' mission stays true to its founding vision. Despite improvements in our modern standard of living, disparities between black and white populations economically, legally, and socially are nearly as extreme today as they were when Simmons was founded. In a rapidly changing society where Blacks continue to be framed as inferior, Historically Black Colleges and Universities provide a trajectory to a comprehensive, education empowering men and women who will, in turn, shape tomorrow's world.

Research shows that despite the push to gain short-term job skills, employers

seek employees who can communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, think critically and analytically, apply quantitative and logical reasoning skills to real-world settings, use knowledge to solve problems, identify principles and policies behind decisions, and have the ability to innovate and be creative. All of these traits are gained only through a broad foundation of diverse educational experiences offered at Simmons.

Simmons has a long tradition of leadership in social justice initiatives for Black Americans. Simmons will continue to be a center of excellence in social justice thought and in identifying the history and policies that undergird our economic, legal, political, and social systems. It will continue to bring outstanding scholars and thinkers together to comment on the status quo and set standards for a just and ethical democracy.

Simmons Unique Identity

This social justice imperative pervades all of Simmons' degree programs and is unique in higher education because it brings the history and perspective of Black Americans into focus throughout all areas of the curriculum.

Simmons will proudly continue to honor its faith-based heritage, while it avoids sectarianism and welcomes all faiths, races, ethnicities, and gender identifications. Indeed, it is the Black church faith tradition that has long posited standards for social, political, and economic systems that has developed Black leaders with the courage to be a prophetic voice standing for the ideals of justice, liberty, compassion, and economic equity.

Simmons College is an economic engine for the city of Louisville, creating employment, generating revenue, taxes, and renovation projects. Simmons College of Kentucky is geographically situated within Louisville's Black community, thus making it accessible to talented, yet overlooked citizens with great untapped potential. For low-income Black youth, Louisville's only HBCU provides a unique environment in which they can grow and flourish. The college's Black-centric curriculum, is undergirded by faith-based ethics, and

values: Black role models who build strong relationships with students, all work together to instill in its graduates the discipline, and perseverance needed to create a new path for their lives and communities. Being in a community of Black learners and inspiring Black scholars provides a context for learning for students who have suffered the reality of racism and deprivation and enlivens them with a vision of what they can achieve with their good work and dedication.

Simmons' future is based on embracing its unique history and mission to provide a comprehensive education that prepares graduates who have the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, perform quantitative reasoning, and apply knowledge to complex problems in an ethical way. Through its mission, Simmons seeks to build leaders who have the strength of character to define proudly who they are, the vision to articulate social equity for an ethical world, and the perseverance to effect positive change in all phases of their work, families, and communities.

M I S S I O N

Simmons College of Kentucky is an institution of biblical higher education dedicated to educating people in the urban context through strong academic and professional programs in order that they may become productive citizens and agents of change in society.

To be recognized as the premier Christian, liberal arts institution of higher education in the region, known for the integration of faith and learning, whose graduates lead purposeful lives as productive citizens.

V I S I O N

Simmons Long Range Plan



The Teacher Education Initiative - \$4,200,000

Developing a teacher education program for preparing licensed secondary school teachers will be the anchor of Simmons' future identity and organizational development.



Upgrade Academic Offerings - \$12,500,000

Future degree offerings could include Data Science, Psychology, Applied Mathematics, Black Male Studies, Womanist Studies, Music Education, and Sports Management.



Develop Qualified and Accredited Distance Learning Platforms - \$700,000

Online course offerings offer the potential to increase enrollment, tuition, and sustainability.



Create a full complement of HBCU cultural experiences - \$1,500,000

Black students attend an HBCU because they seek a full range of interpersonal and cultural experiences that include Greek life, intramural sports, athletic teams and facilities, student government, and other co-curricular activities



Improve infrastructure and facilities - \$19,000,000

Addition of a student center & library, athletic structures, renovation of facilities, and stable operations.

Simmons Long Range Plan

The Teacher Education Initiative

Developing a teacher education program for preparing licensed secondary school teachers will be the anchor of Simmons' future identity and organizational development. Such a program yields the greatest potential for attracting new students to Simmons, for offering low-income Black youth access to a professional vocation with economic stability, and for addressing the racial inequities in the local and regional public schools.

The lack of Black role models in public schools is well documented in numerous studies as a major cause of under-achievement for Black youth. Jefferson County Public Schools has acknowledged that it has been unable to recruit and attract Black teachers to fill this gap, and even at its highest performing schools, Black students still lag behind their white counterparts. JCPS has also acknowledged that it needs Simmons to serve as a pipeline for developing Black teachers, as it will guarantee employment for qualified graduates. Proportionate to their enrollment, HBCUs have surpassed and continue to surpass their white counterparts in producing qualified Black public-school teachers.

HBCU's are sensitive to cultural differences influencing Black teachers by offering not only catch-up support for often-poor public-school backgrounds, enhanced preparation for qualifying exams, motivation and perseverance skills, and financial support to defray the costs of exams.

The teacher education curriculum at Simmons will include intensive support for completing the professional qualifying exams, and it will also include hands-on, clinical experiences early on and throughout the program.

The program emphasis will be on teaching as a profession, a calling that fulfills our mission, not merely as a path to an income stream. A sense of professional responsibility places teaching within the wider context of community service and community uplift. Teachers with a sense of citizenship and professional obligation are more likely to endure challenges and remain in the field for the long haul. A distinctive feature of our planned program will be providing clinical learning experiences in public schools early in the program, so the students can experience both the joy and the challenges of teaching early on, rather than waiting to experience this in final

Simmons Long Range Plan

The Teacher Education Initiative

year student teaching experiences. Finally, the teacher recruitment initiative will provide strong models through faculty and volunteer mentors who, by their example, pass on the importance of personal relationships with students as a key to character development and persistence in school. Brown-Forman and YUM Foundations have invested initial funding for this project.

In order for the school to meet standards for licensure, the teacher education initiative requires comprehensive development of the institution's economic foundation, educational technology infrastructure, curriculum, along with assessment mechanisms that monitor learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Additional details on the infrastructure and institutional support requirements are included below. It cannot be accomplished merely by adding on new courses and new degree offerings.

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." – Martin Luther King, Jr.



Simmons Long Range Plan

Upgrade Simmons' Academic Offerings

A Simmons education prepares students to succeed in the world of work and in graduate school. We presently offer five BA degrees, in addition to our two-year General Studies and Religion degrees: Music, Sociology, Cross-Cultural Communications, Business, and Religion.

The institution recently announced that it will be expanding degree offerings significantly, rolling out three per year for the next four years, twelve in total. In the fall of 2022, we intend to roll out new majors in Data Science, Psychology, and Applied Mathematics, as well as new minors in our existing majors. Future degree offerings could include Black Male Studies, Womanist Studies, Music Education, and Sports Management. This will require significant funding for instructors; IT, and library resources, in total 12.5 million dollars will be required to develop the new degree programs.



Simmons will strengthen its business degree program to include expanded curricula in statistics, finance, accounting, and banking, as well as business communications and writing.



Its sociology program will include a stronger emphasis on statistics, field research, mentorship, and report writing.

Simmons Long Range Plan

Upgrade Simmons' Academic Offerings

C

Simmons will integrate rigorous writing courses and business communications courses into a revised Communications degree to make it supportive of careers in teaching and in business.

D

Simmons music education program will use its HBCU bands as training laboratories for developing music teachers, choir directors, and bandleaders for the public schools. Studies show that music education is transformative intellectually, personally, and socially. Our music education curriculum will continue to include the history of music that influenced American culture on many levels.

E

The college has secured \$500,000 in funding from JP Morgan Chase to begin building data science and related credentials in our curriculum. This will address the disparities for Black students on the wrong side of the digital divide.

F

Throughout all disciplines, Simmons will emphasize computer applications and technologies, so that students are assured of developing competency in relevant computer applications and empowered to master new digital applications on their own.

G

Simmons' religious studies program will not only provide a degree for those interested Christian church leadership, but it will also form a common core of humanities studies that ground all Simmons students in morality, ethics, personal character, leadership, history, and social justice. Simmons will continue to re-orient its religious studies core courses to be more relevant to critical thinking in social justice, political, economic, and social policy, ethics, and systemic morality. This involves not only understanding the faith-based teachings that support justice, truthfulness, care for the poor and oppressed, but also the personal courage to be a voice taking to task the status quo and envisioning a better world.

Simmons Long Range Plan

Develop Qualified and Accredited Distance Learning Platforms

Simmons has long had the goal of developing online courses, and since 2017 has been laying the foundation of hardware and software infrastructure to support this important move. Online course offerings offer the potential to increase enrollment, tuition, and sustainability. The COVID pandemic accelerated to warp speed the pace toward this capacity. Simmons has received funding from the Humana Foundation, which is establishing the infrastructure & support needed to produce an online distance-learning platform.

These resources will make Simmons competitive in the virtual learning space. In 2020 the college deployed the Canvas learning management system, which can be used in online, hybrid, and face-to-face environments. A Director of Online Learning was hired in early 2021 and ten new online courses (meeting Quality Matters standards) begin in the fall of 2021.



Simmons Long Range Plan

Create a Complement of HBCU Cultural Experiences



Black students attend an HBCU because they seek a full range of interpersonal and cultural experiences that include Greek life, intramural sports, athletic teams and facilities, student government, and other co-curricular activities—all critical to developing physical health, strong friendships, social networking, and peer leadership skills.

The HBCU culture is comfortable and supportive, fostering a sense of belonging. While at Simmons, our students are exposed to role models, thought leaders, and mentors that will position them to thrive after they leave.



Simmons Long Range Plan

Improve Infrastructure and Facilities

A New Student Learning Center

A

The college needs a student-learning center that houses essential services. Concurrently, a library will be constructed at the center of the campus. Such buildings would reflect up-to-date digital technology and house student meeting rooms, art gallery or a lecture hall, co-curricular activities, health services, food services, science & computer laboratories, and data science labs. It is estimated that such a complex will cost \$15,000,000 to accommodate a 400-500 student population, located at the center of its campus.

Renovation of its Facilities

B

Renovation of facilities will require an additional \$3,000,000 for energy efficiency and environmental safety. A \$3 Million gift from the Barnett family addressed operations and facilities resulting in phenomenal restoration work in Axton Hall. Unfinished priorities remain, including a new HVAC system for two historic building, new windows, new elevator systems, and improvements in disability accessibility on the seventh street campus.

Athletic Facilities

C

Within 10 years, Simmons will build a \$5,000,000 athletic complex to support the expansion of varsity sports, physical education, intramural sports, and host HBCU band and dance competitions. This will not only enhance student life on campus, but it will engender a greater sense of pride in the student body.

Operations

D

Establishing competitive employment practices, and strengthening administrative infrastructure will result in effective management of governance and financial resources.

Simmons' Path to Economic Sustainability

To achieve economic sustainability Simmons must attract and retain the best and brightest students who pay tuition and fees comparable with other private HBCUs, improve infrastructure and facilities, and build its endowment to ensure continued growth and stability.

Raising Tuition

Simmons' current budget shortfalls are due to an extremely low tuition rate that covers only 30% of operating costs. This low rate was necessary when Simmons was establishing itself as a more comprehensive liberal arts college and just gaining national accreditation and legal status as an HBCU. Now, pricing tuition so far below the cost of attendance has become a serious detriment to Simmons' future.

The Simmons Board of Trustees approved raising full-time tuition to over 100% at \$16,000 beginning fall 2021. This was the first tuition increase at the school since 2008. This will put Simmons' cost of attendance on par with its private HBCU cohorts yet still below other local institutions. Based on current enrollment projections this increase will allow the college to cover a large percentage of operating expenses through tuition and fees. The impact of the increase on students will be

minimized due to the introduction of Evolve 502 scholarships and the passage of SB 270 by the legislature that will provide students' access to Kentucky Tuition Grants.

Simmons will also launch a Federal student loan program effective Fall 2021. To do so requires that Simmons institute stronger financial counseling and financial literacy training so that students do not default on their payments. High default rates jeopardize the school's continued federal student aid. This may cause a temporary drop in enrollment because of the sudden tuition spike, but it is necessary for Simmons' long-term viability and for its constituents to comprehend and value the true cost of attending college.

Simmons' Path to Economic Sustainability

Increase Student Enrollment by 100%

Continued development of the teacher education program and expanded online learning platforms will stimulate enrollment growth. This critical period will require consistent financial support during this expansion phase for Simmons to attain its projected admission goals.

Teacher education majors will also attain a minor or double major in one of the current disciplines of sociology, communications, business, and music ed., or minors in psychology, history, English (literature, rhetoric, and composition), and math, all content areas where secondary teachers are needed. While many colleges are projecting enrollment drops, partnerships with JCPS and the National Baptist Convention of America International Inc. (which has adopted Simmons as its official HBCU), put Simmons in a favorable position to attract new students.

Raise its Admissions Standards

Raise its admissions standards to attract students who are motivated to join a serious community of learners and scholars, as it continues to strengthen its support network of tutoring, counseling, health, and engagement services to enable bright, motivated students to achieve the foundational, personal, and financial skills needed for a rigorous program of higher learning. This high-touch support from freshman orientation through graduation will have an immediate positive impact on student retention.



Simmons' Path to Economic Sustainability

Capital Campaign and Annual Gifts Fundraising

2021 is the year of the HBCU! The social justice unrest that defined 2020 placed Simmons College of Kentucky as the preeminent Black-led institution at the forefront of dialogue about race, reform, and equity. This palpable momentum puts Simmons College in a position to expand capacity like never before.

Before we can move forward with this critical work, we must first acknowledge that Simmons College, as the majority of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, is under-resourced. Underfunding affects infrastructure upgrades, student services, etc., and in turn, impacts the capacity to fulfill our mission. These challenges notwithstanding, Simmons College has been a beacon of light that has attracted and guided those marginalized learners who seek the opportunities provided by education.

Exciting progress is underway, and the momentum is gaining speed. The institution recently received funding from the American Rescue Plan and companies, individuals, and foundations are investing in the future of Simmons College

There are new dollars earmarked for infrastructure upgrades, the development of a digital literacy program, and the expansion of twelve new degree offerings in the next four years. More momentum is growing from the announcement of our intention to build a new student resource center on the seventh street campus. There is much work to be done and plans are being made to launch a capital campaign that will address the new construction needs along with an infusion of capital into the school's endowment. A preliminary feasibility study conducted by a third-party consulting agency revealed that Simmons College of Kentucky had the capacity to generate nearly 20 million dollars in a capital campaign spanning four years.

The timing for the institution to focus on major donors and a capital campaign is ideal. The college asks for and deserves the transformational funding that will set Simmons College on a trajectory not before seen in the history of the school. The mission of America's HBCU's is critical in creating the leaders, advocates, and visionaries that will redefine what our country's great society looks like in the future. Simmons place in history is now!

Simmons' Path to Economic Sustainability

Building an Endowment of \$25,000,000

Now is the time to challenge our city and donors from around the country to invest in our future and our youth. A viable endowment will allow Simmons College to have funds to assist in capacity expansion. It will sustain the institution through difficult financial times. Since their beginnings, Historically Black Colleges have been chronically underfunded. Nothing less than a large endowment will generate enough income to sustain the school. HBCU endowments are a case study of the haves versus the have nots, with the top college endowments representing two billion of the 2.2 billion dollar total for all HBCUs. Whereas the top ten endowments for predominantly white institutions represent a combined 200 billion dollars.

Your Support is Critical

2020 is remembered as the year of a social justice awakening in America. Causing many people to examine the impact of systemic racism is in this country. Simmons College of Kentucky is one of the 101 remaining Historically Black Colleges & Universities in the United States. HBCU's provide opportunities through education to create pathways to the middle class for Black America. For the largest part of Simmons' history, it has been a "hidden jewel in plain sight." Now is the time to invest in this jewel. During this important juncture of examination in our country's racial history, Simmons stands resolute in its role as an institution that will continue to be a catalyst for change in the world. Significant funding is needed now.... **Will you join us to be an agent of change?**

