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Cornell dean to become Simmons' first Black president

Simmons University announced it has appointed Lynn Perry Wooten as its next president.

By [Deirdre Fernandes](#) Globe Staff, Updated February 6, 2020, 11 minutes ago



Lynn Perry Wooten, a Cornell University dean, was named president of Simmons University. SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

Simmons University announced it has appointed Lynn Perry Wooten as its next president, marking the first time that the Fenway institution will have a Black leader.

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Wooten, a business school dean at Cornell University, will start on July 1 and will succeed Helen G. Drinan, who has been president of Simmons for 12 years.

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," Regina M. Pisa, the chairwoman of the Simmons board of trustees, said in a statement.

Simmons, which started as a women's college and now is co-educational at the graduate level, enrolls more than 6,000 students, including 1,800 undergraduates.

Alumni and students have criticized the university in recent years for failing to do enough to diversify its leadership. The issue came to a head in 2018, when Simmons named a white man as the first dean of the Gwen Ifill College of Media, Arts, and Humanities, named after a pioneering black, female journalist. Drinan at the time acknowledged that the university should have broadened its search to include more diverse candidates, but she stood by the dean pick.

Wooten said she was drawn to Simmons' robust graduate programs and commitment to educating female leaders.

"The university's model — with its focus on liberal arts and professional development — is the future of higher education," Wooten said in a statement.

Wooten is a management professor and dean of Cornell's Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. Her research and writings have focused on crisis management and workforce diversity.

Before Cornell, Wooten was a professor and associate dean at the University of Michigan. Her husband remains a chaired marketing professor there. Wooten grew up in Philadelphia.

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