SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
SIMMONS
LAW SCHOOL

Celebrating 100 Days as Dean



Dear Alumni,

Today marks my 100th day as Dean at SIU Simmons Law School. I am incredibly proud to be a part of this institution. I have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know our community of students, faculty, staff, and especially our amazing alumni— both near and far. Since arriving on campus on July 1, I have had occasion to travel to connect with many of our alumni in Washington, DC, Chicago, and within the region. I have been so impressed by the wide range of practice areas and professional contexts our graduates are in. There is no question that a degree from Simmons Law School creates so much potential and opportunity. I will be traveling across the country throughout the next year and look forward to building more connections with alumni and friends, and sharing the good work we are doing at home.

I write with some very positive news about the state of the law school. We have a lot to celebrate as relates to bar passage! I am thrilled to report that seventy-seven percent of our first-time bar takers in July passed the Illinois Bar, and eighty-six percent passed the Missouri Bar. Their success reflects a combination of a refined, evidence-based approach to bar support implemented by our faculty and the hard work put in by our students. We could not be prouder of their accomplishments.



This fall, we welcomed the class of 2028. **The largest class in well over a decade, this year's cohort of 134 law students is strong not just in size but also stature.** Our admissions staff is already on the road recruiting students for the next academic year, and this year's applicant pool promises to be even stronger. We have always offered students an affordable legal education, especially relative to many of our

peer institutions and law schools generally. This affordability matters even more now as new federal loan limits take effect on July 1. The total cost of attendance (tuition, fees, and living expenses) at Simmons Law School will fall under the new federal loan cap of $50,000 annually, placing us in a cohort of less than a dozen law schools nationwide. This reality just further underscores the value proposition of a degree from our law school.

One of the themes that emerges from my conversations with our alumni is the profound impact of our faculty. It goes without saying that Simmons Law Schools would not function without our dedicated and talented faculty. We are thrilled to welcome three new professors to Simmons Law School this year: **Caitlin Gossett**, **Thomas Reichert**, and **Kristen Wolek**. Their backgrounds and expertise in critical subjects like systemic poverty and juvenile law, intellectual property and legal ethics, and privacy and the role of legal institutions in the digital age, serve our institution and our students very well. We are currently in the midst of a robust hiring season; the talent pool is extraordinary, and we hope to add another three new faculty members in the fall.



As I reflect on the past one hundred days of my deanship, the vision I have for the future of our law school continues to take shape. I am laser-focused on the success of our students. They are the “north star” that guides everything we do. I envision Simmons Law School as a place where our faculty thrive, in both their scholarly and teaching pursuits, and I will continue to seek ways to support their endeavors. I am also determined to further develop the aspects of our JD program that help support our students become ready to practice law upon graduation, including our legal clinics, externships, and co-curricular opportunities like moot court. It is also important that we remain committed to our roots. The reasons for the founding of our law school, especially the need to serve our Southern Illinois region, are ever-present in my mind. While our graduates can take their degree and practice anywhere, we need to make the case for staying and practicing locally in our rural communities.

On a personal note, Mark and I could not be happier to be in Carbondale. Mark is thrilled to have found a local practice where he can continue his work as a mixed animal veterinarian, and we both feel so welcomed by this community.



If we have not yet had a chance to connect, please reach out! We will soon be launching a new feature on our website to

share the amazing things our alumni are doing, so do keep in touch. I look forward to keeping you up to date on the goings on at Simmons Law School in the coming months.

Warmly,
Hannah
Hannah Brenner Johnson
Dean & Hiram H. Lesar Professor of Law

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