

## Doubly Good

Simmons consummates agreement with Campbellsville and graduates "Class of 2006" in same day

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Monday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> was a doubly good day for Simmons College of Kentucky (SCK). In one day, she both improved and met her primary mission of educating and equipping individuals to fulfill their God-given life purpose.

At 10:00 that morning SCK announced in a press conference on campus, the details of her partnership agreement with Campbellsville University (CU), which includes technical assistance from CU for Simmons' newly formed Samuel Plato School of Technology Training. The Plato School hopes to improve the lives of the underprivileged, unemployed, and underemployed area residents, by teaching them job skills.

Then at 7:00 that evening, Simmons celebrated the equipping of ten graduating students, at her 2006 commencement ceremony.

Monday's press conference was held to present the final partnership agreement with Campbellsville, originally signed on March 8, 2006, and finalized in a special meeting held on CU's campus, May 18<sup>th</sup>. In the May 18th meeting both university presidents, Dr. Michael Carter, and Dr. Kevin Cosby, signed a "Modified Articulation Agreement", which allows the transfer of SCK general education credits to CU on a student by student, credit by credit basis.

The computer industry uses the phrase, "Access without the excess" to market products such as WAP (wireless access protocol), and DSL connections (digital subscriber line), that give their customers fast, easy, and productive Internet access, without excessive costs or cumbersome equipment. This same phrase could be used to describe the new partnership between SCK and CU, since SCK students will now have easy access to a fully accredited university, without incurring the excess cost common to them. Simmons is still one of the least expensive private colleges in the nation.

Additional advantages of the partnership are: 1) Faculty exchanges – single lecture to full course 2) Shared faculty retreats 3) Shared research projects 4) Access to CU library/resources 5) Technical assistance in accreditation and athletic program development.

Campbellsville University, founded in 1906, is a predominantly white rural university in Taylor County, Kentucky, led by President Dr. Michael Carter. Simmons College of Kentucky, founded in 1879, is a predominantly black urban college in Jefferson County, Kentucky, under the leadership of President Dr. Kevin W. Cosby. While the schools might appear to have nothing in common, they actually have a few very significant things in common.

Both schools have presidents who are acknowledged “leaders of extraordinary vision”, vice president for church and external relations and executive assistant to the CU president, John Chowning said.

Each school’s leadership has the sincere desire to improve lives. “Lives are transformed through the power of education, and our partnership with Simmons should be very fruitful.” President Carter said.

And both schools have taken steps to overcome their community’s economic challenges.

In June 1998, Taylor County’s major employer, Fruit of the Loom, closed its doors and pushed unemployment rates up to nearly 30%. With a largely working class, high-school educated work force, untrained for high-technology jobs, CU took action and opened a technology training center that taught Taylor County residents employable job skills. As a result, the unemployment rate has plummeted to approximately 5% today.

Simmons, located in the poorest census tract in Jefferson County, with a 48% unemployment rate, and 27% of residents with no high school diploma, has taken action also by launching a technology training center. The Samuel Plato School of Technology Training, opening this fall, will offer area residents General Education Degrees (GED), training in nursing, computers, general construction, public speaking, and interviewing skills.

“Where there is joblessness, there is hopelessness.” President Cosby said. “We’re looking forward to bringing something positive to this community, that will eradicate the hopelessness, nihilism, and violence that is so prevalent right now. We hope to one day have a success story similar to Campbellsville University.”

Simmons also hopes for the future success of the following 2006 graduates and honorees recognized at the Zion Baptist Church hosted ceremony: Derrick Phillips and Yolanda M. Foster Washington – Bachelor of Theology; Jerome Evans, Davine E. Graves, John D. Lemaster, Jr., Jade V. McQueary, and Mattie Peden (Valedictorian) – Bachelor of Arts; Delores Thornton and Lena Williams – Diploma of Christian Education; Ramont P. Bradley – Certificate of Christian Ministry; Caren Lyons Flewellen and Charlie W. Johnson – Honorary Doctor of Civil Law; Kevin B. James and Joseph V. A. Winsett – Honorary Doctor of Divinity.

Simmons’ doubly good day lasted well into the evening, as the commencement speaker, Dr. Joseph Owens, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, stepped up to the pulpit at about 8:15 p.m. and encouraged the graduates to value godly character over credentials. He explained how Elisha asked for a double portion of the prophet Elijah’s spirit (character), and how we should ask God for a double portion of character as well.

While I’m *asking* God for a double portion of character, I think I’ll also be *giving* Him a double portion of praise, for such a good day.