

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 440

Approved August 10, 2001

WHEREAS, Ruth J. Simmons was sworn in as Brown University's 18th president on July 3, 2001, her 56th birthday. She'd arrived just days earlier, fresh from a two-week vacation in London that she took to avoid sitting idly after completing her duties as president of Smith College. "I didn't want to spend the whole month worrying about moving and doing insignificant things," she said, and

WHEREAS, Ruth J. Simmons first weeks at Brown have been filled with meetings and briefings with senior executives, department heads and the president's office staff, and

WHEREAS, Since Ruth J. Simmons appointment last November, she had kept in close touch with interim president Sheila Blumstein, so she knew the major issues she'd face; financial aid, construction plans, the need for more resources for some academic departments and debates over diversity on campus, and

WHEREAS, Ruth J. Simmons speaks with passion and authority, her voice warm and full, her hand reinforcing her strongest points, she takes on delicate subjects without hesitation, and although Laura Freid, vice president for university relations, is sitting in on the interview, not once does Simmons pause to seek guidance from her on what is safe to say; the limits that Ruth J. Simmons sets are all her own, and

WHEREAS, Ruth J. Simmons is taking the reins at Brown University after three years of turmoil, and expectations for her leadership are high. Many are still frustrated about E. Gordon Gee's short-lived presidency, and in her 16 months at University Hall, Sheila Blumstein faced several situations.

WHEREAS, This spring, racial divisions on campus came to a head after the Brown Daily Herald printed an ad submitted by the conservative polemicist David Horowitz-headlined "Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea for Blacks-and Racist Too," the ad argued that black Americans benefited from slavery; that blacks are indebted to whites because they founded the anti-slavery movement and established a nation where they could enjoy prosperity; and that welfare and "racial preferences" in jobs, contracts and education amounted to "trillions of dollars" in restitution, and

WHEREAS, Having grown up in segregated Texas, where "it was impossible for me to walk to school without carloads of people calling me nigger", she has learned to be resilient, and not allow herself to be personally wounded, and

WHEREAS, The question now, Ruth J. Simmons said, is how Brown can recover, and that's what she hopes to do: "Teach the community how to get back on its feet, quickly and lovingly", because conflicts like this, she says, are inevitable.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Members of the Providence City Council hereby extend sincere Best Wishes to Ruth J. Simmons upon her appointment as President of Brown University.

IN CITY COUNCIL
AUG 2 2001
READ AND PASSED

PRES.

CLERK

APPROVED

AUG 10 2001

MAYOR

Councilwoman Young, Council President Lombardi, Councilmen Allen, De Luca,
Councilwoman Sullivan, Councilman Ayotte, Councilman Jackson, Councilman Clark
* Councilwomen Nolan, Councilman Butler + Agluzzi