

UB Law Forum

Volume 17
Number 1 *Fall 2004*

Article 29

10-1-2004

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UB Law Forum

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2004) "Dr. John B. Simpson's Vision for UB: Academic Excellence," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 29.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol17/iss1/29

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Faculty



Dr. John B. Simpson's vision for UB: academic excellence

John Barclay Simpson was inaugurated as the 14th president of the University at Buffalo on Oct. 15, 2004. Appointed as UB's president on Jan. 1, 2004, he brings more than 30 years of experience in higher education. An accomplished research scientist specializing in neuroendocrinology, physiology and behavior, he is appointed to the faculty of UB's department of physiology and biophysics.

Dr. Simpson's vision for UB as a great public research university focuses on academic excellence as manifested through research and scholarly distinction, outstanding teaching, effective and engaging public service, and institutional leadership on issues relevant to higher education within UB's local communities, our state and nation, and around the world. As both a product and a lifelong proponent of public higher education, President Simpson believes strongly in its diverse and profound impact upon human endeavor, and is deeply committed to the vital societal role of leading public universities, such as UB, in providing widespread access to the benefits and opportunities of higher education.

Chief among Dr. Simpson's priorities upon assuming the UB presidency has been the institution of a clear and strong plan for the university's advancement as a great public research university for the 21st century. Since taking office, he has led the academic community in implementing an ongoing, comprehensive and university-wide process of self-assessment and strategic thinking for the future, with the goal of formulating an academic plan for the university that is supported by a strong foundation in academic support services and an underlying long-term master strategy for the campus.

Prior to his appointment as UB president, Dr. Simpson held the post of campus provost and executive vice chancellor of the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he served from 1998 to 2003. As that institution's chief academic and budgetary officer, Dr. Simpson led the UC Santa Cruz community through a period of substantial growth and development, employing a campus-wide, long-term planning process that has served as a referential basis for the strategic planning initiative he is currently implementing at UB. Under his leadership, the campus population grew from fewer than 11,000 students to nearly 15,000 students. Dr. Simpson guided the campus through significant curricular developments as well, overseeing the creation of new graduate programs in digital arts and new media, bioinformatics, electrical engineering and politics, as well as other innovative interdisciplinary degree programs.

President Simpson's previous appointment was for 23 years

on the faculty of the University of Washington in Seattle. He was appointed as assistant professor in 1975, associate professor in 1978, and professor of psychology in 1982. He served as director of the university's joint physiology-psychology program from 1984 to 1988 and as head of the physiological psychology area from 1986 to 1990 before his appointment as associate dean for computing, facilities and research in the UW College of Arts and Sciences in 1991. He served in this capacity until 1994, when he was appointed dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UW, whose student population then numbered 18,000 undergraduate and 3,500 graduate students. He served in this position until accepting the post of executive vice chancellor at UC Santa Cruz in 1998.

Dr. Simpson spearheaded numerous innovations in the college's interdisciplinary programs, such as the advanced development of a center for humanities research.

A native of California, President Simpson received his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. After receiving his master's and doctoral degrees in neurobiology and behavior from Northwestern University in 1972 and 1973, respectively, he spent two years at the University of Pennsylvania as a research associate of the Institute of Neurological Sciences in the Department of Biology. He has been a visiting professor of physiology at the UC San Francisco School of Medicine, and at the Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology and Medicine at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Dr. Simpson's research is in neuroendocrinology, the study of brain and hormone interaction. He received research support for his laboratory from the National Institutes of Health, and has published widely on the subjects of brain controls of body fluid and cardiovascular regulation, the renin-angiotensin system, and the brain's circumventricular organs. Dr. Simpson is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Society for Neuroscience, and the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior.

An avid cyclist and fly-fisherman, Dr. Simpson is also an active supporter of the arts. A member of the board of directors of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy – the governing body of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery – and a trustee of the Pilchuck Glass School, he is also a former board member of Seattle's Intiman Theater Company and the Henry Art Gallery.

A member of the board of directors of the SUNY Research Foundation, President Simpson serves on the board's finance and audit committees.

In addition to serving as a member of the UB Associates board and as an ex officio member of the UB Foundation board of trustees, Dr. Simpson also sits on the Buffalo Niagara Partnership board of directors and is a member of the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise. Among his many other leadership roles, he is also a member of the Council on Competitiveness and a former commissioner of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The father of two adult children, Dr. Simpson also has two grandchildren. His daughter, Melissa, and son, Matthew, both reside in the Seattle area.

Chief among Dr. Simpson's priorities has been the institution of a clear and strong plan for the university's advancement as a great public research university for the 21st century.