I am delighted and honored to take up the role of Dean of the School of Management. I am deeply committed to and passionate about the school, our mission, and our enterprise. What makes my job so energizing is that we have faculty, staff, students, and alumnae who share this commitment and passion. With this level of engagement, I am confident about our ability to build a stronger SOM and to take the school to the next level of excellence and enhanced reputation.

What does it mean to build a stronger School of Management today? It means being true to our mission of educating women for power and leadership, while recognizing that we are competing increasingly with business schools that have included women and leadership in their core messaging and are actively recruiting female students. It means recognizing and buttressing our core strengths — our emphasis on teaching excellence, our rigorous curriculum, our intellectual depth in the field of women and leadership, and our powerful network of alumnae and friends of the SOM. And, it means being innovative and responsive to the needs of our current and future students, business community, and our alumnae.

Innovation is a key part of both our legacy and our future. This year we have reviewed and revised our strategy to ensure that we remain at the cutting-edge of what it means to be “a management school designed specifically for women.”

While this is still a “work in progress,” let me highlight several of the new initiatives we have launched to help us compete more effectively.

- **MBA Certificate in Entrepreneurship.** Recognizing the growing role of women in the entrepreneurial sector, we are launching our MBA Certificate of Entrepreneurship this fall. This program will supplement the MBA with an additional semester of course work and practica to ensure that the women who complete the certificate have the education they need to start their own businesses. I am proud that the Coleman and Hancock Foundations have both recognized our innovative and practice-oriented program by committing $250,000 in funding to support fellowships and externships for our students.

- **Principled leadership.** Recognizing the value that many women place on achieving great results in their organizations while at the same time having a positive impact on their communities and society, we are strengthening our curriculum to focus in more depth on issues of ethics in leadership, social and corporate responsibility, and the “triple bottom line.” I want to position the school as a thought and practice leader on how these goals, often perceived as competitive, can be integrated and attained successfully.

- **Flexible offerings.** Recognizing the complex choices that women make throughout their careers and their lives, we are adding new program and track options to provide more flexibility. This fall, we are rolling out a new, two-year part-time track during the day designed primarily for women taking a leave from work to care for children. This new track allows them to earn their MBA and, thus, improve their opportunities for securing a good job when they reenter the workplace. We are also introducing an integrated BA/MBA program that will allow students to earn a rigorous management education with reduced cost and time investment.

- **Thought leader.** Gaining increased visibility in national and regional press is a key component of our strategy to position the SOM as a leading authority on women, leadership, and management. To fuel the pipeline, we have partnered with several organizations — Hewlett-Packard, Bright Horizons Family Solutions, and the Inter-American Dialogue — to undertake surveys on topical issues. This research has resulted in extensive press coverage.

These are some of the ways we are responding to the question of what it means to build a stronger School of Management. In fact, the work of our faculty and staff represents only a piece of the puzzle. The other piece rests with each of you. To build a stronger and better known SOM, I need your help.

First, I need each of you to be an active ambassador for our school. Each time you introduce yourself, please mention that you are an alumna of the Simmons School of Management. This is a powerful grassroots mechanism to enhance our visibility and reputation.

Second, continue to send us strong prospective students. The alumnae community is the most important source of referrals for MBA students. In fact, 87 percent of Simmons MBA applicants referred by SOM alumnae become students.

Third, refer prospective employers to the SOM. Our career services effort is a priority for the school. Just as the MBA marketplace remains competitive, so does the job market. Please send postings of MBA-level jobs in your organization to the office of career services, and support our efforts by providing informational interviews to our students and alumnae seeking new positions.

And, finally, please contribute generously to our Annual Fund. It is alumnae gifts that allow us to undertake critical initiatives and pursue new business opportunities. Tuition only covers 75 percent of the full costs of providing an excellent education to our students. Support for these initiatives is even more crucial now as we seek to compete in a challenging market with MBA enrollments declining nationwide.

Our commitment to you is to continue to build the visibility of the school within and outside of New England; to enhance the value of your degree; to serve as a resource by sponsoring events of value; to provide career advice and support; and to shine the spotlight on alumnae success and strengthen the power of the SOM alumnae network.

Please join me. I believe that alumnae participation is critical to building a stronger SOM. If you have engaged with the school in the past, I encourage your continued involvement. If you have not participated recently, I ask you to reacquaint yourself with us now. Attend an event, reconnect with a professor, send a prospective student to the admissions office, or begin a dialogue with the Dean’s office. In short, discover — or rediscover — what the SOM is in 2005, and help us to build an even stronger SOM for the future.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Deborah Merrill-Sands
Dean