

# The French Review

## *From the Editor's Desk*

Three years ago we began a new rubric entitled "Professional Issues." Our first offering (October 2001) outlined the pros and cons of block scheduling at the secondary level. In October 2002 we published a hard-hitting piece on the commercialized academy. This year we are delighted and honored to publish an essay entitled "America's Relationship with the World: How Can Languages Help?" by Ruth J. Simmons, the President of Brown University. President Simmons began to study languages as a black student in segregated schools during the 1960s, the time of the Civil Rights Movement. She first studied Spanish in Mexico before going on to earn a Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. Hers, then, is a unique perspective on the importance of foreign languages not only in academic settings, but as an imperative for American society if we are to have a better understanding of the world and more satisfactory relations with its many, diverse cultures and points of view. It is only through learning a foreign language that we can come to appreciate the uniqueness and validity of another culture in sufficient depth.

Dr. Simmons challenges us to confront the complexity of the world and our place in it; to learn about, accept, respect, and tolerate cultural difference. She also advocates a national mandate for the study of foreign languages as one way to promote peace in the world.

Dr. Simmons goes on to make recommendations ranging from language requirements for students who do not demonstrate moderate fluency in a second language, to the consideration of bilingual education in Spanish for all Americans. Hers is the long view and she challenges us to develop our own plan for positive change. I urge you not just to read and applaud Dr. Simmons's vision, but to circulate her comments to your colleagues, administrators, and congressmen and women. In fact, we should all be advocates for the ideas and the program that she sets out. Dr. Ruth Simmons offers us a vision based on personal experience, study, and action. We should take this vision and her recommendations seriously if we are to come to grips with a fast-changing and increasingly destabilized world.

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