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## Billie Jean King named Simmons College commencement speaker

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 27, 2014 02:46 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

Billie Jean King, the former tennis star and gender equality advocate, will speak at Simmons College's commencement this spring, campus officials announced Thursday.



She will also be awarded an honorary doctoral degree during the 109th commencement ceremony for the all-women's undergraduate college, which is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Friday, May 9, at the Bank of America Pavilion in South Boston.

King broke tennis records en route to winning 39 Grand Slam singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles and earning a spot in the International Tennis Hall of Fame. In the famous 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" match, she defeated Bobby Riggs, the world's former top-ranking tennis player.

An advocate for women's rights and gender equality, King founded the Women's Tennis Association, the Women's Sports Foundation and Women's Sports magazine. She also co-founded World Team Tennis.

In 2009, she receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, and has been named one of the "100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century" by LIFE magazine.


King, who is openly gay, [recently traveled](#) as a member of the U.S. Presidential delegation to the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, a country that was criticized during the games for having some political and cultural discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Simmons' campus, located in Boston's Fenway neighborhood, enrolls about 1,900 undergraduate women and more than 3,000 women and men who are graduate students.

The college's graduate schools will have a separate ceremony at 2 p.m. featuring keynote speaker David Weinberger, an expert on the intersection of technology and

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human interaction who currently co-directs Harvard University's Library and Innovation Lab and is a senior researcher at the Ivy League school's Berkman Center for the Internet & Society.

Weinberger will also be awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Simmons College. The college said it will also present honorary doctoral degrees to Dr. Madeleine M. Joullié and Ruth Ellen Fitch.

Joullié is a Simmons alumna and "an internationally recognized champion of women in chemistry." Campus officials said Joullié "holds the distinction of being one of the first female professors to earn tenure in chemistry at an Ivy League institution ... and currently serves on the board of the Chemical Heritage Foundation."

Fitch is "a former president and chief executive officer at The Dimock Center, former partner at a top Boston law firm, educator, and champion for the underserved," the college said. She "blazed a path for future generations of young lawyers of color to follow, having been named Boston's first black female law firm partner while with Palmer & Dodge LLP."

College officials said they will send updates from the commencement ceremonies live on Twitter from the school's @SimmonsCollege account using #Sims14.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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