Resolution Honoring Dr. James M. “Jimmy” Simmons
President, Lamar University

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons, a Beaumont native and son of one of General George Patton’s tankers, attended and graduated from Beaumont High School where he played football, ran track, cruised 11th Street, and was a member of the 1960 All-State Band; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons completed his undergraduate studies at Memphis State University (Bachelor of Music Education, 1964) in the home of jazz and the blues, and then completed graduate degrees at The University of Houston (Master of Music, 1969) and McNeese State University (Ed.D. in Music Education, 1979); and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons returned home, taught at Beaumont High, served as Director of the Royal Purple Marching Band and the Purple Queens Drill Team, and performed evening gigs as Jimmy Simmons and the Corvettes; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons wisely accepted an offer and joined Lamar State College of Technology’s music faculty in 1970 beginning more than four decades of service to his beloved institution; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons quickly rose through the academic ranks, earned tenure and high regard, directed the Grandest Band in the Land, was a master teacher and mentor, became chair of the Music Department and later dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communications; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons initiated the renowned Lamarissimo Concert Series showcasing the talents of Lamar faculty and students, grew the Le Grand Bal into the college’s premier fundraising event, and focused the spotlight on the fine arts on Lamar’s campus; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons moved to campus administration as executive director of university advancement where he led the division to new heights of friend-raising and fund-raising; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons, in 1999, became Lamar University’s 10th president and embarked on an ambitious campaign that reshaped, redirected, rebuilt, and reenergized the university by building strength through community; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons led tremendous growth during his 12 year presidency, including the almost doubling of enrollment; the construction of Cardinal Village, a new dining hall, the Sheila Umphrey Recreational Sports Center, the Lamar Soccer Complex, the Garrett Engineering Annex, Provost-Umphrey Stadium, the Morgan Suites, the Dauphin Athletic Complex, and the Mary Morgan Moore Recital Hall, as well as guiding campus beautification and perimeter projects; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons added degree programs and promoted academic excellence; created five endowed departments, six endowed faculty positions, Lamar’s first Ph.D. program, and hundreds of scholarships; established Lamar’s Carnegie Doctoral Research status; placed the university on The Chronicle of Higher
Education’s *Honor Roll of The Best Universities to Work For*; and built the nation’s largest and most successful online master’s programs; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons infused new life into Lamar’s NCAA sports with the return of *Big Red* football, women’s soccer, and softball, plus championships and bookend NCAA men’s basketball appearances; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons restored the campus from the dark and destructive days of Hurricanes Rita and Ike, earning respect and admiration from students, employees, state officials, and the community; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons was twice named *Newsmaker of the Year* as well as *Newsmaker of the Decade* by the Press Club of Southeast Texas; received, with Susan, the *Jay C. Crager Award* from the American Heart Association for service to the community; earned the *Chief Executive Leadership Award* from District IV of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE); was named *King Neches the 53rd* by the Neches River Festival; served as guest conductor of Beaumont’s Fourth of July concerts performed by the Symphony of Southeast Texas; and received the *Paul Harris Fellowship* from Rotary International; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons was honored by Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the oldest and largest music fraternity, as a *Signature Sinfonian* for a lifetime of excellence and more recently was inducted into the society’s *Hall of Fame*; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons received other professional and social recognitions including membership in Phi Beta Mu’s *Bandmaster Hall of Fame*; Christus Health Foundation’s *King of Horn* title, and the *Raul Ornelas Lifetime Music Achievement Award* from the Beaumont Jazz and Blues Festival; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons, an accomplished musician on saxophone, clarinet and piano; performed with Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Janis Joplin, Marvin Hamlisch, Dinah Shore, The Temptations, The Winters’ Brothers, The Four Tops, Chicago, Barry White and many other celebrities; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons designed, launched, and masterfully spearheaded Lamar’s *Investing in the Future* comprehensive campaign which collected more than $100 million in gifts and is sprinting to a new $125 million goal; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons’ passion remains the small, local jazz venue, performing with friends, behind a sultry vocalist in a tight dress; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons possesses exceptional professionalism; warmth, empathy, humility, class, and compassion; energy and vision; and an appreciation for excellence; bringing him the respect and admiration of all; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons, not to *toot his own horn*, but to *end on a high note*, is the only higher education leader to have ever successfully managed by being everyone’s best friend; and,
WHEREAS, Dr. James M. Simmons has received the unwavering love and support from and is joined today by his wife, Susan; daughter, Jennifer; sons, Matt and Mike; six grandchildren (and three more on the way); and many other family members and loved ones; plus, of course, his mentor, Rudy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Regents of the Texas State University System enthusiastically and unanimously adopt this Resolution, thanking Dr. James M. “Jimmy” Simmons for his exceptional service to the students, faculty and staff of Lamar University; to the Texas State University System, and to the Great State of Texas for all are the better for his having passed this way.

Adopted by the Board of Regents of the Texas State University System this Ninth day of October, 2012.