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NEW BATES COLLEGE PRESIDENT Garry W. Jenkins meets students at a day-long "Get to Know Bates" tour in July.

Attorney, professor, former law school dean—Garry W. Jenkins '92 advances an extraordinary career in education as the 9th president of Bates College.

BY ANNE STEIN

It's been four days since Garry W. Jenkins '92 took the helm at Bates College, and on a hot July morning, the newly appointed president is on a "get to know Bates" walking tour. Clad in tan slacks, a blue sport coat, and maroon tie, Jenkins is visiting everything from the science center and libraries to the theater and dance studio. He's stopping in offices, talking to faculty and staff, and standing in the lunch line chatting with students and alumni. By the end of the day, the 9th president of Bates—and the first Black president to lead the college—is being praised for his approachability and willingness to listen.

"He seems very cool. Very kind," said 2018 Bates alum Elliot Chun '18, a Bates College writer who trailed the new president. Chun, who was on campus over the summer coaching kids in swim camp, said that Jenkins "kept asking me questions about my career and what path it took after Bates, and how I think Bates helped me make the transition."

"He talks to you like he's a friend. I found that amazing," said Bates sophomore Sakina Sadi '26, from Afghanistan. "I asked what I was doing this summer. I felt he included me in the conversation."

Professor Emeritus of History Dennis Grafflin described Jenkins as "accessible, welcoming, warm, and kind. Those are all good things. That's the way Bates is supposed to be."

Jenkins comes to Bates after serving as dean and William S. Pattee Professor of Law at the University of Minnesota Law School since 2016, where he worked for four of those seven years with the university's then-president **Joan T.A. Gabel '88** (now chancellor at the University of Pittsburgh). Jenkins describes his fellow Haverfordian as "a terrific leader, wonderful friend, and generous mentor."

A legal scholar, civil rights advocate, and leader in higher education, Jenkins has been interested in serving as a college president for a long time. "I'm thrilled that this dream has come true," he says. Born and raised in northern New Jersey, his parents were both the first in their families to graduate from college. "My mom was a high school teacher, and my dad became a computer programmer and part-time community college instructor. And from them I developed a strong

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belief in higher education, and ultimately, a passion for the ways that it ignites human potential."

The more that Jenkins learned about Bates during the interview process, the more excited he was about the job. "Bates shares many of the same values as Haverford, so it felt familiar. It felt like the kind of place that I could love, the same way that I love Haverford," Elaine Tuttle Hansen, a longtime professor of English and former provost at Haverford, was president of Bates from 2002 to 2011. "So it's nice to continue that connection between the two schools," Jenkins says.

The Lewiston, Maine, college has been the perfect landing spot for Jenkins, who cites its core values, which come from its founding by abolitionists in 1855. "It's an institution that from its very beginning educated men and women together and has always been open to people of all races, which was highly unusual at the time."

For his part, being the first Black president is an honor. "If my presence offers a sense of belonging and affirmation, or if it signals that Bates is an institution that students or faculty of color ought to consider seriously, I'm gratified to have that opportunity. I know it was important to me to have role models and see them succeed."

Also the college's first president who identifies as gay, Jenkins has been warmly welcomed. At his first speech in March as president-elect, some of the biggest cheers from faculty, staff, and students came when Jenkins introduced his husband, Jon J. Lee, a University of Maine law professor. "He is a remarkably talented and dedicated teacher-scholar," said Jenkins to the audience. "He teaches law, with a focus on ethics and intellectual property. And, to be honest, you all will soon come to realize

that the best thing about my becoming president is that it means Jon will be part of the Bates community."

The two are a formidable team. "It's great to be married to another teacher-scholar, so of course we talk about higher education and law," Jenkins says. "But we have lots of other things to talk about that aren't related to work as well. We try to keep a healthy balance," he says with a laugh.

As a new college president, Jenkins will face some difficult tasks. A month before he arrived, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that colleges cannot make race-based admissions decisions. "DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] and belonging are core aspects of the Bates mission," says Jenkins, "and while I'm personally disappointed with the Supreme Court decision, it doesn't change our values, who we are, or our mission."

He hopes to teach at Bates, focusing on introducing undergraduates to law and the U.S. legal system. When he was at the University of Minnesota Law School, he taught a class titled "George Floyd's Minneapolis: Past, Present, and Moving Forward."

He explains that George Floyd was murdered just three miles from the law school. "So it was a really important moment for our whole country, but it hit home in a different way for us at the University of Minnesota," Jenkins says. "That summer, I put together a course with a colleague that explored what happened from multiple perspectives—and the unrest that followed—to fully understand the historical, socio-political, and legal contexts and implications, as well as strategies, ideas, and ways forward."

Before his time as a law scholar, Jenkins was a political science major and a Charles A. Dana Scholar at Haverford, where



Jenkins meets more Bates folks at Lake Andrews on campus.

his primary activity was the Customs program. He says his Haverford years were transformative. "That's still my touchstone. It shaped my life in ways I'm not sure anything else would have the capacity to do."

He went on to earn a joint master's degree in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School and a J.D. from the Law School, where he served as editor in chief of the *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*.

Before embarking on his higher education career, he was a law clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals, an attorney at international law firm Simpson Thacher, and chief operating officer of the Goldman Sachs Foundation. Jenkins went on to serve as a law professor and associate dean for academic affairs at the Ohio State University, where he was one of the founders of its law and leadership program.

As the law school dean at the University of Minnesota, Jenkins led fundraising initiatives that nearly doubled the school's endowment, while the credentials of admitted students hit record highs as did the school's bar exam pass rate. He also focused on diversifying the school's student population and strengthening its innovative racial justice law and civil rights appellate clinics.

Throughout his career, Jenkins has remained close to Haverford. He was president of the alumni association from 2006 to 2008, then served on the Board of Managers for 14 years (2009–2023)—including nine years as vice chair. "I've been involved with Haverford for so long as a Board member, working particularly closely with recent presidents **Steve Emerson '74**, Dan Weiss, Kim Benston, and Wendy Raymond, as well as wonderful Board colleagues and Haverford's outstanding senior staff. I've learned so much from all of them. I'm so grateful for those relationships. They're all important and relevant, and I carry them with me to my new job at Bates."

Anne Stein is a Chicago-based journalist and a frequent contributor to Haverford's alumni magazine.



(left) Jenkins enjoying an ice cream social with summer admission interns at a staff member's home near campus. (right) Bates alum Elliot Chun '18 got the chance to chat with Jenkins in the lunch line. "He seems very cool. Very kind," Chun said.