

## DENISE R. SIMMONS



Dr. Denise R. Simmons, PE, PMP, LEED-AP is an associate professor in the Department of Civil and Coastal Engineering at the University of Florida in Gainesville, FL. Denise was born to Carl and Estelle Simmons in Charleston, SC. After being raised in Charleston, she attended Clemson University and became a three-fold alumna, receiving her BS in 1990, MS in 1995 and PhD in 2012. The first two degrees are in Civil Engineering. Her PhD is in Civil Engineering and in Engineering and Science Education. Additionally, Denise completed graduate-level coursework in Environmental Engineering at the University of South Carolina.

After graduation in 1990, Denise worked three years as an associate design civil engineer in the Power Generation Group of Duke Energy Corporation. She later worked as a project engineer at the SCANA Corporation for four years. Her other industry experiences include energy engineer at Memphis Light, Gas & Water; consultant and trainer at Project Management Consultants; and senior functional consultant at Indus International.

Denise has always been drawn to teaching and mentoring. She began her teaching career in 1997 as an adjunct instructor to the Management Institute at Voorhees College. She also has served as an adjunct professor at Midlands Technical College and as a faculty practitioner for the University of Phoenix, one of the first private on-line schools. In 2004, she entered academia fulltime as an assistant professor of Civil Engineering Technology at South Carolina State University (SCSU). She became an assistant professor in the Myers-Lawson School of Construction and the Charles E. Via, Jr. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Virginia Tech in 2013. In 2018, she joined the Department of Civil and Coastal Engineering at the University of Florida as an associate professor.

In 2007, Denise was named the Director of the Savannah River Environmental Sciences Field Station, which is managed by SCSU. As its director, Denise raised more than \$2 million in support of the Field Station's mission to provide hands-on, problem-solving experience for students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) attending minority serving institutions.

Many organizations have recognized her leadership. While at SCSU, Denise received the 2009 Dean's Outstanding Service Award and the 2010 SC State She-Ro Award for her leadership of the Field Station. In 2014, Frontiers in Education named her a Faculty Fellow; and the Civil Engineering Division of the American Society for Engineering Education named her a Younger Leaders Fellow. She was the recipient of the 2016 National Distinction Award for Research from the President, Provost, and Vice-President for Finance at Virginia Tech. In the same year, the dean of the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech honored her with the 2016 Outstanding New Assistant Professor Award.

Her academic research focuses on the intersection of three aspects of the U.S. construction workforce: competency development; demographics and its influence on diversity and labor availability; and strategies in teaching, recruitment, and retention. In 2014, Denise received a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award, the NSF's most prestigious award for junior faculty. Her research has garnered international respect through numerous other grants, best paper awards, and editor's choice selections of her publications.

Denise continues to return to Clemson to share her expertise and experience with our students. She is often a guest speaker in classes, Programs for Educational Enrichment and Retention (PEER), and student organizations. She has been the keynote speaker for the Call Me Doctor program and a program designed to train undergraduate researchers at Clemson and UNC-Charlotte through the NSF Research Experience and Mentoring Program. Denise is an outstanding role model and mentor for women and people from underrepresented backgrounds pursuing careers in STEM fields.