On Campus

Virginia Cornish Named Helena Rubinstein Professor

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Virginia W. Cornish and G. G. Michelson at a June event celebrating Cornish's new endowed chair. Photo: Eileen Barroso

Virginia W. Cornish ’91CC was named the first Helena Rubinstein Professor of Chemistry at a June 5 ceremony at the Northwest Corner Building, the site of her laboratory. The endowed professorship was created by a $2 million gift from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, named for the early-twentieth-century entrepreneur who turned her skin-care business into an international cosmetics brand.

Cornish is a pioneer herself, being the first female graduate of the College to become a tenured professor here. In her laboratory, she is using methods of synthetic biochemistry to create new types of living cells for use in detecting diseases that include cholera.

“Madame Rubinstein was a woman ahead of her time, and she believed strongly in the importance of women breaking into new professions,” says G. G. Michelson ’47LAW, the longtime chair of the Helena Rubinstein Foundation and a former chair of the Columbia Trustees. “So it’s fitting that Dr. Cornish should be chosen as the recipient of this chair.”



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