

# SHARPP Anniversary Exhibit in Dimond Library highlights organization's decades-long history

An exhibit to celebrate the 35th anniversary of SHARPP is the culmination of a year-long project for UNH senior Sriyam Rimal.

## Abigail Driscoll, Staff Writer

Just by the West Elevator on the main floor of Dimond Library, a pop-up history exhibit will hang on the walls until May 8. The exhibit opened on April 30 and displays the 35 year history of SHARPP, the Sexual Harassment & Rape Prevention Program at UNH, told through The New Hampshire archives and artifacts kept in the archives of Dimond Library.

Sriyam Rimal, the student behind the project, has been working on the exhibit all year. She spent the year sifting through university archives and interviewing people who were pivotal to making SHARPP into what it is today.

SHARPP began as an idea before the official organization existed, going as far back as the 1970s when students and faculty became increasingly concerned with the safety of women on campus at UNH, establishing the Women's Commission in 1971.

"Now, we've since evolved to include any gender," said Rimal, "but at the time it was just primarily concerned with women."

SHARPP as an organization has grown into what is now – a group dedicated to the safety of everyone on campus, promoted through outreach programs and a multitude of resources available to anyone on campus.

Rimal described that a major catalyst for SHARPP to hit the ground running was the publicized trial of the assault of a UNH student in the 1980s, one that put UNH in the forefront of discussions about how universities handle sexual misconduct.

Yet at the creation of what is now SHARPP, support was not always high; SHARPP did not receive its first round of funding until 1982, more than 10 years after the Women's Commission first began. Rimal said that because of the culture at the time, it wasn't taken as seriously as it is today. This funding was only received once the university elected its first female president, Evelyn Handler. The exhibit includes other pivotal people of SHARPP, like Barbara Kavanaugh, Nancy Schroeder and Kathleen Grace-Bishop, the current director of Health and Wellness on campus.

"It was pretty crazy seeing some of the pictures of the students and just their raw passion for wanting change," said Rimal.



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Sriyam Rimal, the student behind this project, sifted through university archives for over a year for this exhibit.

The most interesting part of her research was the 1980s, which she didn't want to spoil too much for anyone who hasn't yet been able to see it. Rimal thought that the photos from the '80s were especially interesting and that she could not wait for the public to see them on display.

Erica Vazza is the outreach and engagement coordinator at SHARPP. She runs awareness campaigns like Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April, and supervises student workers like Rimal. Her favorite part of the exhibit were the interviews Rimal conducted for the project.

"Reading them actually brings me to tears every time, and I'm not an overly emotional person," said Vazza. "There's this emotional response that comes from reading those quotes of folks that are still here today, that have been here for decades doing this work."

Vazza said that while there have been great strides, viewing some of the history through the archives have felt "eerily similar."

"Some of the conversations are like, 'Oh, I wish we moved the needle a little farther.' I wish it didn't feel like a very similar conversation I had yesterday," she said.

Rimal and Vazza emphasized the role of articles from The New Hampshire and from the archives of Dimond Library.

"[Sriyam] spent like, honestly a full year at this point going to the archives of the library and going through TNH archives online," said Vazza.

Thanks in no small part to the amount of research conducted over the past year, SHARPP hopes this exhibit is one of many to come in the future. Though they cannot give specifics of future displays, the 35th Anniversary Exhibit will be up until May 8.