

Role of Women at UNH Celebrated during Women's History Month

By [Erika Mantz](#)
UNH News Bureau

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DURHAM, N.H. -- It started with an idea and a gift from the Class of 1950. The result is a photographic exhibit focusing on women's experiences at the University of New Hampshire that will have its first public showing March 27-29 in room 203 of the Memorial Union Building.

"A Century of Progress: A Photographic Exhibit of Women at UNH" documents the role of women at the university from 1891, when Lucy Swallow enrolled as the first female student, to today, when more than half of the student population is women. An opening reception will be held March 27 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

The exhibit is free and open to the public Tuesday, March 27 from noon to 8 p.m. and March 28 and 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"By the 1920s, nearly 20 percent of the class at UNH was women," says Phyllis Abell, a UNH alumna and coordinator of the project, "but for the last 20 years the majority of students have been women. There are two books that have been written about the history of the university, and both of them have been by men and are generally about men's experiences. The purpose of this exhibit is to educate the campus and the state about the presence of women at UNH. It puts women's experiences up front."

In addition to looking at the student experience, the exhibit documents the first female assistant professors in 1913 and the fact that since 1995 half of the university's higher administration positions have been held by women. The nine thematic panels illustrate women's initiatives, struggles and accomplishments

from the late 19th century to the new millennium. Their stories demonstrate how this college, which initially perceived education primarily as a male domain, became a university that welcomes the presence, participation and influence of women.

The UNH President's Commission on the Status of Women and the Women's Studies Program will also sponsor two talks on women who played important roles in the state. On March 28 at 2:30 p.m. Carol Aronson-Shore, Professor Emeritus Art, will discuss "Sarah Josepha Hale: The Creative Process" in room 203 of the MUB. On March 29 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Barbara White, Professor Emeritus Women's Studies, will talk about "True Light: The Life of Marilla Ricker" and give a video presentation in room 334/336 of the MUB.

The project was sponsored by The Center for the Humanities. It was a gift from the Class of 1950 with support from the UNH Alumni Association, the departments of history, women' studies and family studies, the Affirmative Action office, Intercollegiate Athletics, the President's Commission on the Status of Women and anonymous donors. Appreciation also goes to the classes of 1940, 1941, 1955 and 1960.

The exhibit was created by Abell, Kimberly Swick Slover, Sharon Ellen Caulfield, Monica St. Pierre, Hetty Startup, Julie Pardus-Oakes and Sean Roche.

For more information on Women's History Month, call the women's commission at (603) 862-1058 or visit <http://www.unh.edu/womens-commission/>

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