

# Melinda Friedman honored with Distinguished Alumni Award

## Civil Engineer Recognized for Water Quality Research

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After 16 years of working as an engineer, Melinda Friedman '86 '91G took a leap and started her own engineering consulting firm focused primarily on drinking water quality, partnering with her husband, Michael Hallett '85. Her passion for the outdoors and

preserving the natural world paved the way for years of not only profound research, but an award-winning career.

Friedman is the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences' (CEPS) 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for her outstanding contribution to society through research in civil engineering. This is yet another honor in an extensive list of accomplishments that Friedman has accumulated during her 30 years of experience in the field, all leading back to the start of her education at UNH.

Friedman describes her university experience as nonconventional. As an undergraduate, Friedman was initially denied admission in the fall, but she did not let that stop her from attending. UNH was her top school, so she applied again in the winter, was accepted and eventually completed her undergraduate degree in environmental conservation with a minor in chemistry and a graduate degree in civil engineering.

Post-graduation, Friedman joined Economic and Engineering Services Inc. in Seattle, WA — later acquired by HDR Engineering, Inc., — becoming not only its first woman partner but also the youngest at the time. Friedman went on to work for 30 years in drinking water research and engineering services, receiving renowned awards like the American Water Works Association (AWWA) George Warren Fuller Award in 2017, and the A.P. Black Research Award in 2022 for her extraordinary research contributions to water science and water supply.

“Melinda Friedman is a recognized leader in the drinking water industry,” says Cyndee Gruden, dean of CEPS. “She has had a tremendous impact on science, engineering, and public health due to her many contributions to water science since completing her education at UNH.”

Some of Friedman's fondest memories at UNH include her time spent as a graduate student working with her thesis advisor and

mentor, professor Nancy Kinner. Friedman describes the environment Kinner created in her laboratory as “challenging, supportive, inquisitive, and never dull.” She says while the students were working, Kinner was right there with them, exerting more energy than all of them put together.

Friedman’s advice for current graduates as they enter the professional field or graduate school is to never underestimate the importance of making a genuine connection with the people you work for and work with.

“There are countless gifted engineers and scientists out there, but rarely do people distinguish themselves based on their smarts alone,” says Friedman. “It is through the relationships you build that, when you reflect back on your career, you will know in your heart it was all worth doing.”

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