

35 years of Women at Dartmouth

It is an honor to address all of you at the opening of this celebration of 35 years of co-education at Dartmouth. We are celebrating 35 years of learning and progress; 35 years of distinguished women graduates who have led the way for each new class of women, and who have become leaders across a full spectrum of professions.

President John M. Kemeny envisioned Dartmouth's transformation in his 1972 Convocation address when he said, "...the fundamental mission of the College has traditionally been the training of leaders...In an age when it is clear that women will increasingly play roles of leadership in our society, it is important for Dartmouth to train both men and women for leadership roles."

This weekend's celebration is about the women of Dartmouth – the students, alumnae, faculty, administrators and staff – who are leaders, agents of change and societal good, and who make Dartmouth relevant in the world. This celebration is also about the way women have improved Dartmouth: after 35 years of co-education, Dartmouth is stronger and more significant than ever. Your accomplishments and spirit continue to inspire us. This celebration is also about the way that co-education reinforces Dartmouth's most enduring traditions and enables the College to remain a leader in the new millennium.

I'll begin with one of my favorite stories about the start of co-education. It was 1971. The heated debate about the admission of women was coming to an end: the trustees were on campus ready to make a decision. Professor Marysa Navarro, a noted historian who had come to Dartmouth in 1968, was a vocal advocate for the change. For "good Karma" she bet the editor of *The Dartmouth* that if the Board of Trustees voted to go co-ed, she would don full football gear and run around the Green. The morning the decision was announced, Professor Navarro found shoulder pads, a football shirt and a helmet in her Reed Hall office, so she agreed to run. When she rounded the last bend in the Green in full gear, President Kemeny was there to greet her and handed her a bouquet of flowers. All of you who know Professor Navarro will appreciate this story, and see that she exemplifies the spirit, determination and sense of humor and fun that pioneering women must have to be successful.

At the 25th anniversary celebration of women at Dartmouth in 1997, Professor Mary Kelly, another female faculty pioneer at Dartmouth, gave an outstanding address, where she called co-education a *process* that combines tradition with innovation.

Dartmouth is an institution deep with traditions. I would like to highlight three of Dartmouth's most enduring traditions that are exemplified by the women of Dartmouth. First, is the College's long standing tradition of changing to remain relevant and to excel. Bringing women students to Dartmouth 35 years ago is an example of such a profound change. Female students, faculty and administrators have made Dartmouth stronger and more prestigious in the years since we have become a co-educational college. Second, is our tradition of deep personal connection between Dartmouth faculty and students. This bond in its many forms has deepened in the last 35 years, and women – faculty, staff and students – have been leaders in this intensification. Third is Dartmouth's tradition of creating a place and community that keeps us connected to each other and to Hanover for a

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lifetime. No one can doubt that the women of Dartmouth contribute tremendously to this enduring legacy.

My story, like many other women's here, arises from these 3 traditions – change leading to excellence, commitment to teaching and mentoring, and building community and connection. I came to Dartmouth in 1983, fresh out of graduate school in California. I can still remember vividly my early days as a professor at Dartmouth, how exciting it was to get my first academic position, teach my first class, and start my own laboratory.

There were almost no women in the sciences then. When the wonderful, late Karen Wetterhahn (my 1st mentor and another female faculty pioneer at Dartmouth) invited all the women scientists from Arts and Sciences and Dartmouth Medical School to have lunch together, we did not even fill a table – as I remember it, there were only 5 or 6 of us. My early days were a bit lonely. I was a young, single woman in a world of married male faculty, mostly older and involved in their own lives. I missed the rowdy group of graduate students I'd left behind and the excitement of our laboratory, which was filled with people, day and night, working on exciting problems. But in a very short time Dartmouth traditions pulled me in like they do so many faculty who come to Hanover.

It started when I taught my first class – aquatic biology. I found that I loved teaching and Dartmouth students. Our students, more than anything else, tie us forever to this place. The connections that I made with Dartmouth students helped me to find my niche here. Especially in the beginning, my female science students were particularly excited to have a female faculty member – and that was empowering to a new teacher. One student in particular had a great influence on my life at Dartmouth - Becky Todd '84 - who became my very first honors thesis student. She came to work in my lab with her incredible infectious energy, and I suddenly had the start of a research team. For a scientist, this is as important as anything else to our success – my laboratory has not been empty of students, undergraduates and graduates, ever since.

The women's caucus also reached out to me – I met amazing female faculty like Mary Kelly, Mary Jean Green, Peggy Darrow, Brenda Silver and others, and suddenly, everywhere I went on campus, I had a community.

And a few years later, Jim Wright introduced me to Celia Chen '78 another Dartmouth alumna force of nature, who became my graduate student, friend and eventually my closest scientific colleague. Our collaboration has taken us into the world of interdisciplinary and international science and made my scientific life at Dartmouth deep and rewarding.

What I learned from all these pioneering women was the pivotal role that mentoring, exploration, and teamwork could play in the lives of others. That, more than anything else, still guides my work as a scientist, teacher and now academic dean. The power of continuity linked with change is what 35 years of women at Dartmouth means to me.

The early days of co-education at Dartmouth are filled with stories of alienation and isolation together with growth and spirit. We are much closer to parity now, but women still face obstacles. However, when I look around this room I see success and triumph. We've come a long way since Ruth Adams, President of Wellesley, was hired as a

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Dartmouth Vice President to assist with the transition to co-education in 1972. When Ruth retired from administration in 1977, she called Dartmouth, “a men’s college that admits women.” That is not true any longer.

In 1995, we had the first incoming class where women undergraduates outnumbered men. The ratio of women to men in 1972 was 9:1; today it is 1:1. Since women first graduated, the College has produced 14 American Rhodes scholars and roughly 43% of those have been women. Women have led all co-ed student organizations; they have edited newspapers, led the student body, advocated for change and growth, and have been pioneers in the development of social programs in the upper valley and the world. More than 700 women have been Presidential scholars. The Women in Science Project, begun by Karen Wetterhahn and Carol Muller ’77, has trained roughly 1200 women interns since 1990. These are all wonderful achievements.

In 1972, 4% of the faculty were women, but today nearly 40% of the tenured and tenure-track professors at Dartmouth are women – that is the highest percentage of female faculty in the Ivies. Breaking down that statistic by division, we see that the Humanities faculty are roughly 52% female, the Social Sciences faculty are 35% female, the Academic Programs faculty are 38% female, and the Sciences faculty are 22% (though even here, if we look at the newly hired faculty we’re at 32%).

Roughly 40% of the chairs of departments and programs are women. Women have been Associate Deans in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences; they have been the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Dean of the Faculty, the Provost, the Dean of the Thayer School of Engineering, chairs of all the standing committees of faculty of arts and sciences, head of the library, head of computing services, the athletic director, head of development, head of the alumni council, and members of and Chaired the Dartmouth Board of Trustees.

Has Dartmouth grown stronger in the 35 years since co-education? Absolutely. Co-education brought in the energy of the half of the population, who had been previously excluded. These women brought with them a greater diversity of ideas and perspectives, a tendency to challenge norms, and to seek new levels of excellence and recognition. The academic strength of the entering classes since co-education is outstanding, and our women’s athletic and scholastic success is a source of great pride. The faculty has grown stronger too, with unprecedented scholarly activity and recognition together with a commitment to teaching and mentoring that has also grown greatly. For instance, in a typical academic year, Dartmouth faculty teach over 2,000 courses, advise over 200 senior honors theses and worked one-on-one with roughly 200 Presidential scholars.

Dartmouth has changed in the years since I had my children. Women faculty and staff have led the charge for more family-friendly policies. When women came to Dartmouth they also immediately began to seek to open doors for others, playing a leading role in enhancing the racial and ethnic diversity of the faculty, making Dartmouth a welcoming place for lesbian, gay and transgendered students, faculty and staff, and fighting against intolerance in all forms.

So does this support a popular notion that gender equity has been achieved? No. Although the gender gap in college enrollments is reversed (there are now fewer males than

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females), under-representation of women on faculties in many fields and in the upper echelons of the academy remain. Women of color and all minority faculty are still far underrepresented. Studies continue to show persistent economic gender gaps both for women entering college and post graduation. On our own campus, as elsewhere, gender relations are still difficult at times, although the engagement of males and females in these issues is improving each year. We still have work to do.

Before closing, I want to point out what may be obvious to many of you in this room. Fundamental change and growth depends on a coalition of people to see it through – students, faculty, administrators, trustees, men and women, sons and daughters of Dartmouth have all contributed. No one has been more personally involved in this growth than our President, Jim Wright. As Dean of Faculty, Provost and now President, he has been at the helm during a time of unprecedented growth, diversification and strengthening of our faculty and our student body. His unfailing commitment to ideals of inclusivity, excellence and full opportunity, have led to more financial aid, more socio-economic diversity, more international students and greater gender parity, and Jim is pushing still. Together, he and Susan Wright, the gracious and thoughtful first lady of Dartmouth, provide a personal, human touch that is extraordinary and truly embodies the Dartmouth spirit we all love.

In today's *The Dartmouth*, Maggie Severns O'Neill '08 writes, "This weekend, female alumni will flood the Dartmouth campus to celebrate 35 years of coeducation at Dartmouth. Thirty-five years of bold and often brilliant women who have fought, tooth and nail, to gain the traction that women today have." I now join Maggie, and my faculty colleagues as I say, "Welcome home, and let the fun begin!"