

Coeds & Cohogs: The Struggle over Female Integration at Dartmouth College

This student-curated exhibit explores the integration of female students at Dartmouth College. Using documents curated from the archives at Rauner Library, it considers the evolution of the College's social character in the decades since the adoption of coeducation in 1972. Each case represents a distinct but interrelated facet of this unfolding process, treating, respectively, the complex and shifting perspectives of men, women, and the Dartmouth administration. Placed in dialogue with one another, each case seeks to lend historical understanding to our own time as the product of crucial transitions and distinct instances of convergence and discord in the ways that women have been seen at Dartmouth. The exhibit was curated by students in Darrin McMahon's "The History of Equality" HIST 08 class during the Summer of 2018.

Case 1: ADMINISTRATION

The implementation of coeducation posed many problems for Dartmouth as an institution. The Board of Trustees had polled its alumni beforehand and found increasing support for the inclusion of women at the college among its previous students. With that knowledge in hand, President Kemeny would spearhead the move towards coeducation with the formation of a Coeducation Task Force in 1971; other administrative initiatives attempted to address the needs of women on campus. However, despite the efforts of several key administrators, a misogynistic culture continued to pervade many of Dartmouth's oldest traditions and events.

"From the Vice President: What is Rape at Dartmouth?" *Summer Assembly Newsletter*, August 1992.
"Sexual Assault and Abuse" Vertical File

This memo clarifies rape and sexual assault for the student body. It states: "It is no longer acceptable for two individuals to simply get laid without communication." The College mandates a verbal "yes" to qualify as consent.

Women's Resource Center at Dartmouth. "Twenty-Five Years of Coeducation." Spring 1998.
"Women of Dartmouth" Vertical File

This schedule of events shows the programming set up to celebrate 25 years of co-education at Dartmouth. The event, the 25th Anniversary of Coeducation Commemoration included events designed on mothering, sexual assault and the integration of women in the 1970s.

Dartmouth College. "Sexual Assault Protocol." October 1994. "Sexual Assault and Abuse" Vertical File

In 1990, the College put its sexual assault protocol in effect to protect students on campus. This updated document urges that affairs remain private and that victims receive any help needed. There are multiple resources listed to call in the event of an assault.

Siobhan Gorman. "Women at Dartmouth: A history filled with controversy." *The Dartmouth*, February 28, 1995. [Reference LH1.D3 D2](#)

This article from *The Dartmouth* details President John Kemeny's role in bringing women to Dartmouth. Kemeny became President in the spring of 1971 and "had an incredible ability to persuade the Trustees [...] and the Board to vote for coeducation." He is further quoted discussing the difficulties of integration: "Women weren't treated as people, they were treated as women. They were sex objects and were typecast as either prudes or prostitutes." This article also includes a reference to the winning 1975 Green Key Hum, "Our Cohogs," which is also showcased in this exhibit.

Dartmouth College. "Options for Women." [1979]. "Women of Dartmouth" Vertical File

This brochure highlights women's support resources on Dartmouth's campus. Examples include a Women's Program Committee, a "Businesswoman-in-residence," and the Women's Studies department.

C. Dwight Lahr and Edward J. Shanahan. Letter to the Members of the Dartmouth Graduate and Undergraduate Student Bodies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Administration, and Staff, May 21, 1987. "Women of Dartmouth" Vertical File

This official letter from the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of the College announces the establishment of a Women's Resource Center. It mentions that a significant source of funding comes through a commitment from the Presidential Venture Fund.

Trustees Study Committee. Report and study concerning coeducation, 1971. Records of Dartmouth College Trustees, 1770-2004. [DA-1, Box 1466, Folder 80](#)

This survey conducted by the Trustees Study Committee captures the views of alumni on coeducation at Dartmouth: the majority proved to be in favor and the percentage would likely increase given time. Alumni from 1893-1925 were least in favor of co-education, with 46% in approval. In contrast, alumni from 1960-1969 were the most in favor, with 81% in favor of co-education.

Case 2: MEN

The documents in this case demonstrate the wide range of male students' perspectives on female students at Dartmouth, beginning in the 1920s and extending into the 1990s. On the one hand, as the timeline shows, eighty three percent of the all-male campus was pro-coeducation in 1970. However, as the letters, photos, and songs demonstrate, a very vocal minority existed as well, consisting primarily of members of homosocial organizations such as sports teams and fraternities. All of these perspectives surfaced within the larger context of a campus culture that objectified women and is best exemplified by the college's annual Winter Carnival celebration.

Anonymous. "Dartmouth Herstory." 1997. "Women of Dartmouth" Vertical File

Originally written for a 1997 Baker Library exhibition, this timeline shows that, in 1970, 83% of the student body and 59% of Dartmouth alums were pro coeducation. Crucially, this

document shows that an overwhelming majority of the student body was in favor of coeducation.

Queen of the Snows Crown. [1940-1949]. [Realia 84](#)

Photographs of Winter Carnival Contestants. 1930s. [“Winter Carnival Queens 1930s” Photographic File](#)

The men of Dartmouth were accustomed to rating women visitors to the annual Winter Carnival pageant. Shown here are various photographs of the candidates and the crown awarded to the Winter Carnival Queen. The advent of coeducation required men at Dartmouth to begin thinking of women as colleagues and not as beauty contestants.

“Sending his ‘little girl’ to the BIG GREEN.” *Spare Rib* 2:1. Hanover, N.H.: [published not identified], 1993. [DC Hist LH1.D3 S63](#)

This spread of the December 1992 edition of *Spare Rib* includes an article describing three men who sent their daughters to Dartmouth and a criticism of the Green Key “Hums” tradition. In it, the fathers offer a positive view of Dartmouth for their daughters and criticize the former campus climate towards women. Additionally, Angela Williams ’99 in her piece on the 1975 “Hums” condemns Dean Carroll Brewster for both awarding first prize to “Our Cohogs,” an offensive fraternity song, and then joining in an encore on stage.

Photograph of Russell Sage Hall. March 1974. [“Women at Dartmouth 4” Photographic File](#)

Informed that the Russell Sage dormitory was to become coed in March of 1974, male residents hung banners from the windows to protest the decision. Slogans varied from the routine (“Keep Sage All Male”) to the absurd (“It’s a damn commie plot”).

Anonymous. Letter to Woodward Hall residents, April 8, 1973. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

According to the April 11th, 1973 issue of *The Dartmouth*, this letter was slipped under the doors of each room in Woodward Hall, a female dormitory. It details a series of vulgar activities “required” of the “co-hogs” on campus. Most likely a component in a Fraternity’s Sink Night (a hazing ritual), the letter is an example of attempts to intimidate the female students on campus.

Dartmouth Staff. “Obscene Letter Angers Campus.” *The Dartmouth*, April 1, 1973. [Reference LH1.D3 D2](#)

This article shows that most of the campus stood in favor of coeducation. Still, there was a very vocal minority against the integration of women. If the “D” is to be believed, the letter that was slid under each female student’s door offended the majority of the male students on campus.

A Dartmouth Sports Team. “Why Beer is Better than Women.” Undated. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

This numerated list describes the reasons why a beer is ostensibly a better companion than a woman. Written by an unknown Dartmouth sports team, this list exemplifies the misogynistic rhetoric women faced shortly after coeducation.

Alpha Chi Alpha. Beach Party Flyer. 1987. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

This graphic was an advertisement for the annual Alpha Chi Alpha Beach Party. The design—an exaggerated sketch of a woman’s body in a bikini—contains a list of the rules for the party, many of which focus on women’s appearance and clothing.

Case 3: WOMEN

Even after the implementation of coeducation at Dartmouth, women faced a continuing culture of discrimination and objectification. As documents in this case show, however, women were very often vocal and outspoken about the enduring misogynistic elements of Dartmouth culture. Their responses against intimidating acts by a small contingent of male students serve to underscore their fierce commitment to thrive at Dartmouth.

Joanna Henderson Sternick. “‘But I love it here.’ – Coeducation Comes to Dartmouth.” *Journal of NAWDAC* 37, no 3 (Spring 1974): 140-144. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

This journal article was published just two years after coeducation arrived at Dartmouth. It helps to articulate the feelings of some of the first female students at Dartmouth while detailing the acceptance of women as transfer students prior to 1972.

Inner Bitch. [Hanover, N. H.]: [publisher not identified], [1990-1999?]. [DC Hist LH1.D3 I54](#)

These graphic issues of the student feminist publication, *Inner Bitch*, suggest that a misogynistic subculture still existed on campus nearly two decades after co-education. The cover on the left depicts a reaction to general beauty standards and stereotypes in the media. The list on the right, from a different edition, details the “Top 10 Things To Do With A Severed Penis”. It contrasts strongly with the list “Why Beer is Better Than Women” in the MEN exhibit case.

Photographs of Student Protests of Women’s Issues at Dartmouth. 1980s and 1990s. [“Student Protests – Women’s Issues” Photographic File](#)

Dating from the late 1980s and early 1990s, these two photographs illustrate protests led by women against violence towards women and about broader issues concerning women and their representations on campus.

Womyn’s Re/view. [Hanover, N. H.]: [publisher not identified], Spring 1986. [DC Hist HQ1101.W669](#)

The cover of this issue of an underground feminist publication from June 1986 features a pornographic photo of a woman. As the editors of this newspaper explain, “[m]any Dartmouth womyn are far removed from the production of pornographic magazines,

movies, books, or videos.” The editors “refuse to ignore pornography” and view the cover as “a political action.”

Anonymous. Letter in response to Woodward Hall letter, April 10, 1973. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

This letter, issued on April 10, 1973, is a direct response to the “Dear Cunts” letter. It shows the wit and humor employed by female students against attempts to intimidate, silence, or degrade them.

Womben to overthrow dartmyth. Letter, October 18, 1986. “Women of Dartmouth” Vertical File

This letter from October 18, 1986, written by the “womben to overthrow dartmyth,” protests the exclusive “Men of Dartmouth” alma mater song and other traditions that the ‘womben’ argue are controlled by the ‘all-male past of the college.’

Frederick J. Frommer. “Hearing Process to Change.” *Valley News*, April 22, 1992. “Sexual Assault and Abuse” Vertical File

This article from April 22, 1992 describes student protests against College procedures for the handling of sexual assault cases. The protests led to “short-term changes” in the administration’s handling of these cases.