1890  Lucy Swallow and Delia Brown are accepted.

1891  There are eleven women students at New Hampshire College.

1892  Board of Trustees add a "general course" of study to existing curricula which was advertised for women because it waived requirements for shop and surveying.

1894  Trustees' Report advocates housing for at least 40 women, to be run by a "competent matron." Housing request vetoed by Governor Busiel 3/29/1895.

1896  Women's residence is opened under Mrs. George Wiggin. President Murkland says a "competent matron could do fully as much for women as the whole corps of instructors can do." Building burned in 1897 with no funds to replace it.

1897  First women to get degrees from New Hampshire College are Carrie E. Bartlett, Mary B. Bartlett, Carrie L. and Mary E. Comings. 1897 is the first class to have spent four years at Durham.

Movement made to change the school's name from New Hampshire College of Agriculture and the Mechanical Arts to the University of New Hampshire.

As Liberal Arts grow, non-Aggie students find that their degrees are misinterpreted and this particularly affects women.

1899  Trustees ask legislature for $15,000 for a women's dormitory "provided with the necessary facilities for a complete course in domestic economy." Funds are not granted.

1907  Gertrude Whittemore is first librarian in the new Hamilton Smith Library; she is succeeded by Mabel Hodgkins.

All-male student council is formed.

Legislature appropriates funds for a women's residence hall. Alice Hamilton Smith had promised $10,000 towards construction of a women's residence and the dormitory opened September, 1908. At this time, women who did not live at home were required to live in Smith Hall, thus limiting the number of women students at UNH. Men students had no dormitories at the time but were allowed to live off-campus.

1911  First sorority Alpha Alpha Alpha is formed (later a chapter of Chi Omega).
Girls' council is formed to supervise enforcement of rules for women students: Women have to live in Smith Hall or at home; women can have callers on Friday and Saturday evenings until 10:00 p.m. in the parlor; women can only attend entertainments approved by the Dean and have to be chaperoned on all occasions.

1913 To fulfill an inaugural promise of President Fairchild, the Trustees start the Home Economics Department, under Helen B. Thompson (also made the first Dean of Women).

Women's League is formed “to promote better fellowship and closer feeling between women undergraduates” (membership includes alumnae, alumni wives, faculty wives and women students). First project is a women’s restroom for commuters in Thompson Hall; money is raised with card parties and plays.

Branch of YWCA is formed at UNH with Helen Plumber as the first president and Miss Hodgkins as the advisor.

1913 Girl’s Council sponsors publication of New Hampshire songbook.

1914 The enrollment of women doubles to 64 due to the Home Economics program, and women students were housed in Smith Hall. To help alleviate housing problems, the college encourages fraternities to build houses on college property with long-term leases.

Three sororities (Alpha Alpha Alpha, Pi Alpha Phi, Phi Delta) form an inter-sorority council, Sphinx.

1916 Elizabeth A. Rollins is hired to start an athletic department for women.

Women represent 22 percent of the student body. Half of the male students belong to fraternities and two-thirds of women belong to sororities. All women eat at boarding clubs or work for meals in private homes.

Chi Omega is offered a prize of $10 for the best Sociology thesis written by a woman.

1917 In January, women students organize a chapter of the National College Equal Suffrage League. (The 29th amendment giving women the right to vote became effective in 1920.)

In April, women students begin taking hikes each afternoon at 4 pm so that they can be physically fit for any national emergency during World War I. Women attend lectures emphasizing Red Cross work, making bandages and canning food.
Rules are relaxed to allow senior women to go riding, driving, motoring and boating with chaperones.

1919 Girls Dramatic Club is established (men admitted in 1920).
Women students present first May festival.

1920 Another women’s dormitory opens with funding from the Alice Hamilton Smith Fund—Congreve Hall.

1921 Women’s athletic Association is recognized; varsity letters are awarded to women for the first time.

1924 The first sorority house is established on campus (Alpha Xi Delta).

1926 Elizabeth Virgil is the first African American woman to graduate from UNH.

1931 Elizabeth DeMeritt retires as Dean of Women, succeeded by Dr. Ruth J. Woodruff. (DeMerritt House bears her name.)

1937 Housing study is completed, finding the number of women is limited due to insufficient number of rooms.

1944 Clara Knight is the first woman to edit *The Granite*.

1947 Trustees decide to admit 25-50 out-of-state women to achieve a better balance between men and women and to accommodate the daughters of alumni.
Veterans returning to college include a few women among their numbers.

1950 The Association of Women Students (AWS) is formed. The Student Council is comprised of all men.)

1952 Trustees are asked that equal opportunity for Lord Scholarships be given to boys and girls.

1969 Stoke becomes the first “co-ed” dorm. Women are assigned to one wing, and the doors between it and the men’s portion are kept locked except during designated visiting hours.

1971 First Public Hearing on the Status of Women held, coordinated by the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women. The Hearing lasts one full day.
Faculty women speak of the inequality of pay, promotion and tenure. Staff women describe their inability to move up in the administrative ladder; and
students describe being silenced in the classroom and being told that they were asking for it when they tell police about their experiences of sexual assault.

First draft of an Affirmative Action Plan and Program for UNH prepared by the office of the Vice President for Research and Special Programs Administration.

Six women organize “Disadvantaged Women for Higher Education, Inc.” A day care center for their children is established in the Durham Community Church. No state or federal funds are available to them.

1972 The UNH President’s Commission on the Status of Women is formed on February 16, 1972. The UNH Commission is to serve as a sister organization to the State Commission on the Status of Women. The mission of the Commission is to explore conditions and attitudes within the UNH community relating to the mobility and functional equality of women.

In December, the Commission sponsors a fair on career planning called “Open Doors for Women.” The program features resource people who provide information on various career opportunities from personal experience relating to the careers.

The UNH President’s Commission on the Status of Women is formed.

Lolita Trotter is hired as first Director of Affirmative Action.

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Committee is established to help draft a formal plan for submission to the office of Civil Rights, HEW.


The first annual report to the President and the Provost on the Status of Women is prepared. The report includes the status of women in the following areas: faculty women, support staff women, administrative women and students.

The Women’s Commission submits recommendations to President Bonner calling for more women’s studies courses, counseling and career advising for women, obtaining full administrative support for the Affirmative Action program, opening channels for women and employees to voice grievances and creating awareness of women’s potential.

First women enroll and compete for scholarships in ROTC.

Women’s Center is founded.
1974 Women's Commission recommends establishment of a daycare center for children of University staff and students.

1975 The Women's Commission studies proposals and policies related to parental leave, disability leave, job reclassifications, staff handbooks, retention of the ombudsman, the Women's Studies committee activities, Title IX, and the Women's Athletic Commission activities.

1976 The Women's Commission circulates an Operating Staff Upward Mobility questionnaire. The study focuses on clerical workers only. At the time, women comprise 92.3% of clerical workers. The study points out that women are interested in advancing their careers at the University, but there is a significant lack of promotional opportunity for them.

UNH restructures its Affirmative Action Plan to conform to a new format established by the Office of Civil Rights.

1977 The Women's Commission publishes a series of articles, entitled "NH Women and the Law" in the Campus Journal. Issues covered includes: maternity leave policies, taxes, social security, credit, mortgages, prohibited practices, the Equal Pay Act, Title IX, Title VII and age discrimination in employment.

The Women's Commission and the Forest Park Tenant's Association recommends that the Civil Defense building at Forest Park be used for a University Child Care Center.

The Women's Studies Program is founded by Josephine Donovan.

The Women in Athletics is founded by Mary Leslie Ullman.

The Women's Commission Director becomes a paid position.

1978 The Women's Commission revises the maternity leave policy. The proposed changes are passed through SPPC and receive approval from Operating Staff, PAT and Faculty Councils, Affirmative Action and Personnel Services.

1979 First issue of "Connections" is published by the Women's Commission with money from UNH Undesignated Gifts Fund obtained by Laura N. Provan and Ellen Berry.

The Durham Infant Center is established at Forest Park; it is given a 10-month lease; lease is subsequently renewed.

Catherine O'Brien is the Coordinator of the Women's Commission.

1980 April 13 is the first "Take Back the Night" ceremonal march at UNH.
Evelyn Handler is named President of UNH.

Keene State College names first female president--Barbara Seelye.

The Women’s Commission publishes Hiring Handbook.

1981 The Women’s Commission and the Women’s Studies Program co-sponsors an intensive course, “Exploring the Female Experience: Weaving New Connections” during semester break. Local educators, UNH faculty, staff and students attend.

The Women’s Commission publishes a retention handbook: “Closing the Revolving door: The Retention of Women in Higher Education.” The report includes results of on- and off-campus surveys, in-depth interviews and data analysis for women faculty at UNH.

Cathryn Adamsky is named as Women’s Studies Coordinator.

First National Women’s History Week Program is presented.

1982 Underwood House, a non-traditional student center, is established.

1983 The Women’s Commission office expands to three rooms on the second floor of Batcheller House.


The Tenured Women Faculty group initiates a salary equity study to determine if salaries of tenure-track female teaching faculty are systematically lower than comparable male faculty members. The results of the analysis find that tenure track faculty women were being paid an average of $1,828 less than comparable male faculty members.

UNH adopts non-sexist language policy and publishes Guidelines For the Use of Non-Sexist Language (Gordon Haaland, President).

1984 Carol A. Aldrich is named first woman dean of the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at UNH.

The Women’s Commission conducts a survey to assess the childcare needs of the University Community. The Child Care Task Force is established. President Haaland announces that space is to be given to Forest Park Group Day Care.
President Haaland makes an effort to close the gap that exists between male and female faculty member’s salaries. To compensate, he offers women faculty $1000 annual raises.


1985  UNH Women’s Lacrosse team wins National Championship under Coach Marsia Didio.

Underwood House (Non-traditional Student Center) gets a sign at the corner of Garrison and Main Streets in Durham.

The Annual Women’s Commission Award is instituted. The faculty award is presented to Cathryn Adamsky.


The Child Care Task Force presents recommendations to President Haaland. The Child Care Information and Referral Service was established in September.

Forest Park Day Care moves into a space previously occupied by a table saw.

1986  First woman Chancellor Clair Van Ummerson is appointed.

Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures are reviewed, revised and supported by President Gordon Haaland.


Jan Harrow is Coordinator of the Women’s Commission.

1987  In May, the Women’s commission participates in a sit-in at the Dean of Student’s Office, Huddleston Hall, to protest a judicial board decision on a gang rape that had occurred in Stoke Hall.

In response to the Stoke Hall gang rape, The Violence Against Women Committee is formed. The Women’s Commission sends a strong message to the campus community for the need for positive changes regarding the safety of women on campus.

The Child Study and Development Center is established in September.
The Women’s Commission sponsors a reunion; celebrates to commemorate its 15th year on campus. Bernice Sandler is the keynote speaker at the event, and she speaks about the status of women in higher education on a national level.

Underwood House (Nontraditional Student Center) is slated for demolition to make room for a new health center.

Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP) is established for students.

1988 The Family Studies Department opens the Child Study and Development Center which houses both a childcare center for University families and the well-established pre-school program.

Judy Spiller is Coordinator of the Women’s Commission.

Sexual orientation is added to the UNH non-discrimination statement.

The Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program, SHARPP, becomes a full-time program at UNH. The Women’s Commission helps recruit and train volunteers.

In September of 1988, the first issue of “Quick Connections,” a monthly newsletter of the Commission, is published. The issue is part of an educational campaign to acquaint the campus with a new sexual harassment policy and issues that arise from behavior defined as harassment.

1989 UNH Affirmative Action Office is established under the President’s Office (Gordon Haaland, President).

1990 Cindy Cohen is hired as the full time coordinator of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women.

President Dale Nitzschke announces that the Commission Coordinator would be part of weekly President’s Cabinet Meetings.

1991 Departments develop their first action plan for establishing five-year affirmative action goals to increase the representation of women and minority faculty and staff.

The first “Women in Science” posters highlighting UNH women faculty, students and their research projects are displayed.

The Commission helps coordinate Family Policy and Child Care Task Forces and assist in development of the Women’s Issues Resource Center.
The Women’s Commission helps implement a program for first year women that deal with issues such as homesickness, conflict, alcohol and violence. The project is called “Fresh Voices” and centers on a play written by Susan Kisslinger.

The Women’s Commission initiates “Transforming Ourselves and Our Communities”, a project involving the UNH community in documenting and celebrating women’s lives. Collected oral histories, photographs and developed exhibition shown on February 25th. Also helped sponsor an artist-in-resident, Jane Stapleton.

1992 Office of Multicultural Student Affairs is established; it is directed by Carmen Buford, Associate Dean.

Holly Near performs on campus as part of Women’s History Month.

Cindy Cohen leaves her position as Commission Coordinator. The Coordinator position is taken out of President’s budget, replaced by three, one-year term appointments.

During an educational program for UNH athletes, SHARPP volunteers are harassed by student athletes. The event sparks a major campus debate about the specifics of the incidents and the general topic of athletes as perpetrators of sexual violence. The Women’s Commission facilitates conversations around these two issues and helps to establish “Athletes for Awareness”, an athlete peer education group focused on sexual violence and homophobia.

1993 Two special issues of “Connections” are published. One focuses on faculty retention. The other addresses the Johnson theater incident.


The Commission starts a campus-wide fund-raising effort to raise money for a campus climate study.


Kathleen Grace-Bishop is Coordinator of the Women’s Commission for the 1992-93 academic year.

1994 Trustees settle out of court in UNH v. J. Donald Silva, creating a chillier climate on sexual harassment issues.

Julie Weiss is Coordinator of the Women’s Commission for the 1993-94 academic year.
The University, with initiation for the Women’s Commission, hires an outside consultant to conduct a climate study.

The Women in Leadership Initiative is sponsored by the Women’s Commission. The Initiative has the goal of offering four leadership workshops per year.

The Women’s Commission develops a plan for a Women’s Endowment.

1995 Helen Brewster is Coordinator of the Women's Commission for the 1994 academic year.

Interim President Thomas Fairchild changes task force to review the mission of the Women’s Commission. He reinstates the Coordinator position at 75% for a three-year term. Jane Stapleton is hired as Coordinator of the Commission.

The Commission creates a Gender Impact Statement to budget task force process.

Additional gynecological services at UNH Health Services are recommended.

The first Women’s Health Fair in collaboration with the Women’s Issues Resource Center is sponsored.

1996 A task force affirms the role of the Women’s Commission on campus.

The Women’s Commission sponsors artist Amy Bartell to paint, “This Green Earth” mural on the lobby area of the renovated MUB. The piece celebrates the 75th anniversary of the 19th amendment, women getting the right to vote.

With women’s commissions and women centers at New England Land Grant Institutions, the UNH Commission helps to establish “Vision 2000.”


In November, the Women’s Commission sponsors a public hearing on the status of women to commemorate the public hearing held in 1971 that helps to establish the UNH Commission on the Status of Women. The hearing includes testimony on how far women have come since the original hearing, as well as specific examples of what still needs to be done to increase the status of women on campus.

President Joan R. Leitzel is hired as UNH’s second female President. During her first days on campus, President Leitzel signs the revised Guidelines for nonsexist language use. The Women’s Commission distributes guidelines to the UNH community.
1997 The Commission celebrates its 25th Anniversary on Campus.

The coordinator position is expanded from 75% to 100% time position, with the added responsibility of coordinating the newly formed President's Commission on the Status of People of Color and providing support to the President's Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues.

The number of female computer science majors is 22. (There are 137 men).

1998 The number of female computer science majors drops to 17. (The number of men increases to 143).

A Report on the Status of Women Students is published by the Women's Commission recommending more active recruitment of women of color and international women; improved financial aid for women athletes and more women coaches; more education about prevention of and healing from sexual assault and violence; and continued support for women in science and engineering.

Office Professionals design and implement the first UNH Office Professionals Conference calling on faculty and staff creativity and in-kind contributions.

Women in Science Poster session (instituted in 1991) sponsored by Association of Women in Science continues to encourage the retention of female students in the maths and sciences.

1999 Pay discrepancies by gender are found among operating staff, and a monetary solution was implemented.

The policy committee continues looking at the issue of benefits discrepancies between OS and PAT staff members; for example, OS members who are called to jury duty must use leave time if they have any available.

"Connections" the Commission newsletter continues to cover issues of women in science and math, women's health, and women's physical safety.

The Commission co-sponsors "Women's Rights are Human Rights" and "The 50th Anniversary Of UN Declaration of Human Rights."

"Fresh Voices" (1991) is brought back through a Parents Fund Grant and features oral history documenting issues of violence, drugs, conflict, and homesickness that college women face.

The UNH women's hockey team takes first place in the nation.
Front-page news is written for the men’s hockey team: 2nd place winners in nation.

Inquiry on why the women did not get front-page coverage brought the response that “men draw higher attendance at games.”

Web page is changed to reflect the women’s achievement on the UNH home page.

In cooperation with the Office of Sustainability, the Commission co-sponsors a visit of a Guatemalan woman who works to organize women around economic and political issues.

Three consecutive workshops, co-hosted with the Teaching Excellence Program entitled “Engaging Diversity in the Classroom” attract participants from more than twenty-three programs and departments.

Faculty from Commission-sponsored diversity workshops develop a bibliography of books on teaching topics on difference and managing issues of diversity as they arise in the classroom. They also encourage mentoring of faculty of difference.

Common Purposes, a floor in Devine Hall, is developed. This initiative promotes acceptance and celebration of diversity among students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and different sexual orientation and abilities.

2000 Non-sexist language guidelines booklet is revised.

Commission collaborative formed among diversity support groups to draft a guideline for bias-free language.

Grant invites course development on the exploration of the economic independence of women in Guatemala. Students and instructors spend time with the women of Guatemala and learn how small bank loans and ideas can gain women around the world a place to support themselves and a sustainable community.

The Violence Against Women committee of the Women’s Commission advocates for and support for a study about Unwanted Sexual Experiences on Campus. This study is a comparison of a 1998 study. The results support continued efforts in prevention of violence on campus as well as support for survivor health programs.

The Women’s Commission initiates a collaboration with Growing Places and the University in order to address issues of childcare for faculty, staff and students.
While this initiative does not ultimately result in more childcare, it establishes a relationship between the two organizations and is a strong first effort.

2001  The Women's Commission responds to faculty women's concerns about maternity, adoption, and family leave. President Joan Leitzel charges the Commission with recommending a policy to the University and to the AAUP. Faculty women continue efforts in prevention of violence on campus as well as support for healing survivors.

The Violence Against Women Committee of the Women's Commission develops a four-year strategic plan with the assistance and support of President Joan Leitzel. The plan supports the study from 2000 as well as encourages individual offices and department to consider how they could each further their commitment to these efforts.

In 2001, the President's Task Force on GLBTQ issues is made the President's Commission on GLBTQ Issues.

The Commission releases a position statement supporting unbiased access to family planning and birth control centered on empowering each woman to make her own decisions based on her individual situation.

Lucy Swallow's request for admission (1891) is displayed in Dimond Library Special Collections.

_A Century of Progress: A Photographic Exhibit of Women's History at the University of New Hampshire_ is funded by the Center for the Humanities. This exhibit documents the evolution of the diversity of women's academic and non-academic experiences, describing aspects and eras at UNH, revealing accomplishments from 1890 to 2000 when women were finding a place in an educational institution created by men for men.

The Commission receives a Parents Fund Grant gathers students, faculty and staff to explore the diversity of women's lives through a book group: Reading Women's Lives.

2002  The Commission continues to research faculty salary equity.

The Women's Commission is asked to participate in the Academic Strategic Planning process and offers their ideas and support to this important document.

Mary Taylor is the Coordinator of the Women's Commission.

The Women's Commission meets with the Operating Staff Council to address family friendly leave policies. The OS Council supports these efforts and makes a commitment to considering these issues.
The Child Care Project of the Women’s Commission is reintroduced. The Non-Traditional Student Organization partners in the effort. The work focuses on providing affordable childcare to low-income students; this effort takes its form from a grant from the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program.

The Women’s Commission partners with the President’s Commission on the Status of People of Color and the President’s Commission of the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues to begin work on *Guidelines for the Use of Bias-Free Language*.

Source: Originally compiled by the 1987 President’s Commission on the Status of Women; reprinted from The New Hampshire 2/20/87, pp.5, 18-19; and additional information provided by the 1995 President’s Commission on the Status of Women, Retreat Committee, Commission Annual Reports through 2001 and the 2002 Office of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women.