

UC Berkeley

The 150 Women Project - Holding Series

Title

Preface to the Project Celebrating 150 Years of Women at Berkeley

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Preface to the Project Celebrating 150 Years of Women on the Berkeley Campus

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As the 150th year of women at Berkeley approached, I was pleased to establish a series of committees to undertake the work of commemoration and invited Professor Emerita Catherine Gallagher and Dr. Sheila Humphreys to serve as joint heads of a History Project, which was to chronicle the story of women faculty, students, staff, donors, and alumnae at UC Berkeley. I hoped that the 150W History Project would set up a website where organizations and units throughout the campus could share their research, recording and analyzing the role of women in the various disciplines and communities. I also hoped that it would establish a lasting archive for future generations.

My expectations were more than met by the 150W History Project's success. It mobilized hundreds of people—undergraduate researchers, faculty members, staff, emeriti, librarians, administrators, and alumni/ae—to find, record, analyze, and reflect upon the history of women at UCB. Their discoveries were posted on the 150W website and the linked webpages created by dozens of separate departments, so that the public could see the record in the making. Moreover, various campus units and organizations held zoom panels and virtual lectures presenting and analyzing that history. Since the 150th anniversary of women at Berkeley was fated to fall during the pandemic year, when all in-person gatherings were abruptly suspended, it was heartening to see that the on-line progress of the 150W History Project was ceaseless.

The History Project continued to chronicle women's accomplishments and successes as well as the difficulties they had faced over the 150-year span. It explained that although UC admitted women students in 1870, women encountered many structural and unofficial limitations on their full participation in the higher reaches of academic life during the university's first century. And it described how UC women worked to put an end to those limitations so that the proportion of women on the faculty and in the administration could expand ten-fold in the last fifty years. Moreover, the 150W webpages showed the history of women in the context of the larger diversification of UC's student body and faculty; it documented, for example, the earliest Asian American and Black student organizations in addition to the long campaign by Chicana, Asian American, and indigenous students of the sixties to establish an Ethnic Studies Department.

Since the Spring of 2021, the leaders of the History Project have been working to preserve the material that was posted on the webpages. In partnership with Dr. Anne Maclachlan of the Center for Studies in Higher education and Dr. Catherine Mitchell of the California Digital Library, they have created this on-line pdf archive, which includes the essays, profiles, timelines, and interviews posted during the anniversary celebration as well as essays on Berkeley women's history written since the anniversary year and a collection published in the early 1990s. Thus, an extraordinarily rich, diverse, and multi-layered record of UC women's lives and works has been assembled at a single location and made available to the public online.

I want to express my gratitude to all those who generously volunteered their time and effort to produce this archive. It is a remarkable achievement that could only have been accomplished through the cooperation of hundreds of people in the campus community. It provides a valuable record of the role that women have played in shaping the institution over the years. It serves as a reminder of the progress that has been made and as a call to action to continue the fight for gender equality. It is a testament to the ongoing efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity on campus and will undoubtedly be an important resource for future generations.