

Lehigh Coeducation Timeline

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1865 – Lehigh is founded by Asa Packer¹

1878 – The Lucy Packer Linderman Memorial library is dedicated, becoming the first building named solely for a woman. It was built by Asa Packer as a memorial to his oldest daughter, who died in 1873. Her Daughter, Sallie, checked out the first book, a bible.²

1881 – In the Minutes of a faculty meeting Secretary Merriman recorded that President Lamberton presented a letter from Miss Elsie E. Warner asking if any arrangements had been made for the admission of females to courses of study. The idea was discussed informally by the faculty for some time.³

1885 – An unidentified young woman registers at Lehigh and passes the entrance exams. Though the Registrar at the time stated that the university is for the education of men, there is apparently no written rule prohibiting women from matriculating. William Lamberton, professor of classics, persuades the student that she would be happier at a college with other women.⁴

1887 – Mary Packer Cummings, Asa's last surviving child, donates a large sum of money to build Packer Memorial Church as a memorial to her family, aid students, and help with university operating expenses. President Drinker notes that this makes her the second largest benefactor to the university, after her father.⁵

1902 – The first summer extension course specifically for teachers, Methods of Teaching History and Civics, is offered. Summer extension courses are designed to let adults further their education. 15 of the 24 students enrolled in the 1909 summer courses are women.⁶

1910 – Coxe Mining Laboratory is dedicated. Sophie G. Coxe, widow of Eckley Coxe, continues the tradition of Mary Packer Cummings by making major contributions to Lehigh to honor family members.⁷

1917 – Women are employed as secretaries at this point. One of the first, Helen G. Ryan, joins the President's office and works as secretary to six Lehigh presidents until her retirement in 1965.⁸

1918 – Women are first admitted as graduate students.⁹

1918 – Percy Hughes begins lobbying for undergraduate coeducation, after helping to pass a measure allowing women to take graduate courses at Lehigh.¹⁰

1921 – Bessie Edna Kast, Mary Alice Schwaninger and Edna Grace Tatnal become the first women to receive M.A. degrees from Lehigh. Schwaninger later became the first woman to join the Alumni Association.¹¹

1923 – Edith A. Seifert joins the new bursar’s office as a secretary, and is eventually promoted to bursar, becoming the first woman named to the administrative staff.¹²

1927 – Ruth Miller, daughter of Benjamin Miller who was head of the Department of Geology, and Bertha Sprague Fox, wife of Professor Dr. Charles Fox, begin taking undergraduate courses because of their close family ties with influential faculty members, making them the first women to take undergraduate classes legitimately.¹³

1937 – Lehigh enrolls its first woman as an undergraduate engineer due to a misunderstanding of names. The student was a French woman named Jean; the registrar believed that it was simply a male named with the French version of John. Jean attends two to three months before accepting President Clement Williams offer to transfer her to a coed engineering school.¹⁴

1939 – In a survey by the *Lehigh Review*, 31% of undergraduates favor admitting women as undergraduates, while 69% are opposed.¹⁵

1943 – Margaret Lams, a graduate research assistant in chemical engineering, becomes one of the first women ever to receive an industrial fellowship at Lehigh. Her work is researching various uses for leather in industrial processes. Lams is the first of what is expected to be a growing number of women graduate researchers at Lehigh due to a shortage of men serving in WWII.¹⁶

1944 - The Brown and White makes an argument for coeducation saying it would create more well rounded graduates and that wholesome contact with women better prepares men for marriage. They also made the argument that with the Army ASTD program vacating the dormitories; it created an opening for women to move in.¹⁷

1946 – The Lehigh Dames Club, composed of wives of Lehigh students, organizes with 186 members. With a flood of married veterans returning to campus after WWII, membership soon exceeds 500. The club sponsors social events and other similar programs.¹⁸

1947 – Mrs. H. Barrett Davis is appointed an instructor of journalism, becoming the first woman to hold a full time position as a regular member of the faculty.¹⁹

1952 – New legislation permitted corporate giving to higher education in 1952, allowing Lehigh to benefit from Bethlehem Steel’s interest in Lehigh’s engineering education, giving Lehigh an additional stream of revenue.²⁰

1961 – A policy is adopted to increase emphasis on graduate programs. This led to a 50 % increase in graduate enrollment by 1964, which in turn led to an increase of the number of female grad students on campus.²¹

1962 – Catherine Drinker Bowen is the first woman to receive an honorary degree from Lehigh University. She speaks of growing up at Lehigh as the daughter of Henry Drinker, the University’s 6th president. Bowen began her career as a historian with the book [A History of Lehigh University](#), published

by the Alumni Association in 1924. She received the National Book Award in 1956 for The Lion and the Throne, a biography of English jurist Sir Edwin Coke.²²

1964 – In his short personal reflection on university life that he gave at the end of each faculty meeting, Ralph N. van Arnem, Secretary of the faculty, reflects on the changing culture at Lehigh by commenting that Lehigh's all male status will not last very much longer.²³

1964 – Associate librarian Anne S. Flannery is promoted to the rank of assistant professor becoming the first woman professor.²⁴

1964 – Dr. W. Deming Lewis is selected as president of Lehigh to replace Harvey Neville.²⁵

1965 - Edna DeAngeli, a language professor in the classics department becomes the first woman on the teaching faculty to be promoted to the rank of an associate professor.²⁶

1965 – The *Alumni Bulletin* says 252 women including 56 taking 9 or more hours, are enrolled in the Graduate School, the greatest number ever. According to the article "Most graduate seminars in the humanities have for some time included women".²⁷

1968 – Dress Code requirements loosen, reflecting the changing culture at Lehigh and the willingness to move away from strict tradition and the ability to adapt to changing times.²⁸

1969 – As part of the Joynt study, Alumni are surveyed as per their opinion on the issue of coeducation. Of the 39.1% of alumni that responded 50.6% were in favor and 42.6% were opposed. Though when graduates' responses were broken down by decade (1930 to 1968) there was a trend showing that the more recently they had graduated, the more likely they were to approve coeducation.²⁹

1969 – The Joynt Subcommittee concludes and presents its study of Desirability and Feasibility for the JCUL; they recommend undergraduate coeducation by a vote of 12-1.³⁰

1970 – Anna Pirscenok Herz of the department of modern foreign languages and literature becomes the first woman promoted to full professor. In 1972, she becomes the first woman named a department chairperson at Lehigh.³¹

1970 – With Trustee Chairman Rathbone and President Lewis both in agreement that it is in Lehigh's best interest to become coeducational, the final decision is made by the Trustees to admit 800 women over the next 4 years, starting in the fall of 1971.³²

1971 – Ruth Hurley Vihon is hired as associate dean of students to help plan the transition to coeducation.³³

1971 – Patti Ota becomes the first woman faculty member in the college of Engineering. Ota later became vice provost for the academic administration.³⁴

1971 – 169 women, well above the agreed upon maximum of 150, become the first coeducational undergraduates in Lehigh's history.³⁵

1971 – The Marching 97 votes not to allow women to join the group. Women do not join the band until fall of 1973, when during the Lehigh – Delaware game, seven coeds doff their hats as the band plays “There is nothing like a dame” to reveal that the gender barrier had been broken. ³⁶

1971 – Powder Puff Football becomes the first women’s sport. Players use the men’s locker rooms and some even borrow the men’s spiked shoes. ³⁷

1972 – Deborah Greene (Lynott) class of ‘76 becomes the first woman to receive the class flag at the Alumni-Freshman Rally. ³⁸

1972 – The Women’s Study program is established and expands from a few courses to nearly 30 with a Major, and as of 2008 a Minor and a Graduate Certificate are available. ³⁹

1973 – A study by the Coeducation Review Committee recommends that coeducation be adopted permanently, saying the admission of women has had “a salutary effect” on the operating budget and on Lehigh’s goal to achieve academic parity among its undergraduate colleges. ⁴⁰

1974 – The Women’s Caucus is refused recognition because men are not permitted to join. Approval is granted after the group modifies its by-laws. ⁴¹

1974 – Louise Tutelian, class of ‘75 becomes the first woman editor-in-chief of the Epitome, Lehigh’s yearbook. ⁴²

1974 – Jane Kurzeja ‘78 becomes manager of the freshman football team. ⁴³

1975 – Alpha Phi, followed by Alpha Gamma Delta and Gamma Phi Beta, become the first sororities recognized by the university. ⁴⁴

1975 – The Women’s Resource Center, sponsored by the Women’s Caucus, opens in the University Center. ⁴⁵

1976 – Berry Richards succeeds James Mack as director of university libraries. Richards joined Lehigh in 1969 as associate director in charge of Mart Science and Engineering Library. Under her leadership, the university libraries become computerized information centers with CD-ROM technology. ⁴⁶

1976 – Women constitute more than 20% of the undergraduate student body for the first time. Also this year, Eileen Canzian ‘77 becomes the first woman editor in chief of the Brown and White. ⁴⁷

1977 – Nancy Maginnes Kissinger is the first woman elected to the Board of Trustees. She is the daughter of the late Albert B. Maginnes ‘21, a former Lehigh trustee for whom Maginnes Hall was named and wife of former secretary of state Henry Kissinger. ⁴⁸

1977 – The first woman class president, Susan M. Bschorr, addresses the class of 1977 commencement. Bschorr also becomes the first woman to be an assistant director of the Alumni Association in 1979. ⁴⁹

1978 – The university bans Delta Tau Delta’s annual wet T-shirt contest during Greek Week. The fraternity ignores the ban and is charged with violating Lehigh’s code of conduct. ⁵⁰

1979 – The Glee Club, an all male vocal ensemble, merges with the Women’s Chorus to form the Lehigh University Choir. ⁵¹

1979 – The Women’s Roundtable is formed by the provost’s office to suggest ways to improve life for women at Lehigh. Its survey of undergraduates and alumnae shows that women want more help in making career choices and looking for jobs. ⁵²

1980 – Patricia Chase ’74, associate director of the physical planning, is the first woman to win the Alfred Noble Robinson Award for outstanding performance in the service of the university and unusual promise of professional achievement. Chase joined the office of physical planning in 1974 and has directed it since 1985. ⁵³

1980 – Women make up 25% of undergraduate student enrollment, the highest percentage at this time. ⁵⁴

1981 – In proclaiming a year-long celebration of 10 years of coeducation at Lehigh, President Lewis writes, “The advent of women has made a positive and profound difference in quality of university life. Their presence and contributions have enriched our lives together in many ways –academic, social, cultural and athletic.” ⁵⁵

1981 – Spouses are invited to attend the annual dinner of the Asa Packer Society for the first time. ⁵⁶

1983 – Marsha Duncan becomes Lehigh’s first vice president, taking charge of student affairs. ⁵⁷

1985 – Women make up roughly one third of undergraduate student enrollment. ⁵⁸

1988 – Sharon L. Coe and Lisa Cawley become the first mother and daughter to receive bachelor’s degrees at the same commencement. ⁵⁹

1988 – In response to an incident of sexual harassment on campus, 500 students, faculty and staff members rally to demand an improvement in relations between the sexes on campus. Three months later, two commissions of faculty, students and staff, one on minorities and one on women, are created to study how Lehigh could better address the needs and concerns of women and minorities. The commissions make 53 recommendations. ⁶⁰

1990 – Alpha Chi Omega and Delta Zeta become the first sororities to live on the Hill, temporarily occupying the houses of suspended fraternities, which will eventually reclaim them. ⁶¹

1990 – The Lehigh University Child Care Center opens on the Murray H. Goodman Campus. ⁶²

1990 – *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are removed from the university bookstore because “they don’t portray the positive relationship the university is trying to develop between men and women.” Opponents call the ban censorship. ⁶³

1991 – Women sweep the major campus offices: Christine Cobb ’92 is elected co-chair of the University Forum, Susan Lanter ’91 is class president; Pamela Brady ’91 is president of the Student Senate, and

Eileen Riehm '91 is president of SAC. Louise Weston '91 and Robyn Suriano '91 are editors in chief of the Brown and White; and Corinne Abate '91 is the editor of the Epitome.⁶⁴

1991 – The Lehigh University Women's Center opens in Johnson Hall. A result of the commissions on women and minorities, the center provides services to students and staff.⁶⁵

1991 - Karen Stuckey '75 is elected president of the Alumni Association. A partner in the New York office of Price Waterhouse, she is a former treasurer and director at large of the association.⁶⁶

1994 – The Class of 1994 is the first to graduate with all women class officers: Lori Owen, president; Meredith McGowan, vice president; Erika Giemza, secretary and Carolyn Gredys, treasurer.⁶⁷

1995 – The first woman appointed dean of a Lehigh college, Joan Straumanis is named the Herbert J. Siegel and Ann L. Siegel Dean of the College of Arts and Science. Barbara Turanchik '75 becomes the first woman executive director of the Alumni Association.⁶⁸

1995 – Women make up 39% of the incoming Class of 1999, the highest percentage to date.⁶⁹

1996 – Alpha Phi, the university's first sorority, accepts an offer of a house on the Hill for fall of 1996, becoming the first sorority to obtain permanent housing there.⁷⁰

2001 – Lehigh celebrates 30 years of coeducation

2006 – Lehigh appoints its first female President, Alice P. Gast.⁷¹

2007 - Karen Stuckey '75, '10P is the first female recipient of the Lehigh Club of New York's L-in-Life Award.

¹ Yates, p. 31

² Rita M. Plotnicki, "A Century of Influence" *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 6

³ Ibid, p. 6

⁴ Ibid, p. 6

⁵ Ibid. p. 7

⁶ Ibid. p. 7

⁷ Ibid. p. 7

⁸ Ibid. P. 7

⁹ Yates, p 121

¹⁰ <http://www.lehigh.edu/~ineduc/percyhughes/index.htm>

¹¹ Rita M. Plotnicki, "A Century of Influence" *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 8

¹² Ibid, p. 8

¹³ Ibid. p. 8

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 8

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 8

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 8

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- ¹⁷ “For Students, Faculty, Lehigh, Let’s Have Co-eds”, *Brown and White*, March 1, 1944, 2
- ¹⁸ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 8
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 8
- ²⁰ Mary Frances Donley Forcier, Transforming Institutional Gender identity, p. 222
- ²¹ Ibid, p. 218
- ²² Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 8
- ²³ “The Impact of Women” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, November 1964, p. 21
- ²⁴ Mary Frances Donley Forcier, Transforming Institutional Gender identity, p. 217
- ²⁵ About Lehigh, Past Presidents, W. Lewis, <http://www3.lehigh.edu/about/lupastpresidents.asp>
- ²⁶ Mary Frances Donley Forcier, Transforming Institutional Gender identity, p. 218
- ²⁷ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 9
- ²⁸ “Attire for Meals May Be Altered” *The Brown and White*, 13 April 1968, 5
- ²⁹ Report of the Joynt Committee, “Lehigh and the Problem of Coeducation: A study in Desirability and Feasibility”, September 1969, 7, C.B. Joynt Papers
- ³⁰ Yates, p. 263
- ³¹ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 9
- ³² Yates, p. 269
- ³³ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 9
- ³⁴ Ibid, p. 9
- ³⁵ Yates, p 269
- ³⁶ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 10
- ³⁷ Ibid, p. 10
- ³⁸ Ibid, p. 10
- ³⁹ Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴⁰ Yates, p. 265
- ⁴¹ Rita M. Plotnicki, “A Century of Influence” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 10
- ⁴² Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴³ Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 10
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. p 10
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. p 10
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. p 10
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- ⁵¹ Ibid. p 10
- ⁵² Ibid. p 10
- ⁵³ Ibid. p 10
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. p 10
- ⁵⁵ Ibid. p 11
- ⁵⁶ Ibid. p 11
- ⁵⁷ Ibid. p 11

⁵⁸ Ibid. p 11

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁰ Ibid. p 11

⁶¹ Ibid. p 11

⁶² Ibid. p 11

⁶³ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁶ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁷ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁸ Ibid. p 11

⁶⁹ Ibid. p 11

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 11

⁷¹ About Lehigh, Past Presidents, Alice P. Gast, <http://www3.lehigh.edu/about/lupastpresidents.asp>