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WOMEN'S PRESS RELEASE

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MERRIMACK COLLEGE WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY TO BEGIN PLAY IN 2015-16

Wakefield, Mass. - The Merrimack College Athletic Department has announced that the women's ice hockey program's first varsity season will begin in 2015-16, as unveiled by President Christopher E. Hopey, Director of Athletics Jeremy Gibson and Hockey East Commissioner Joe Bertagna on Thursday.

Introduced as the College's 24th varsity sport, the women's ice hockey team, guided by head coach Erin Hamlen, will join the Division I and Hockey East ranks as the conference's ninth member to sponsor a women's program.

"We are excited to bring a quality women's hockey program to Hockey East," said Christopher E. Hopey, Ph.D., President of Merrimack College. "This varsity program will allow Merrimack to expand its recruiting efforts and meet the growing student-athlete demand of finding a rigorous academic experience coupled with a competitive and diverse set of athletic offerings."

"It was a great day for our Athletic Department when we hired Coach Hamlen this past summer, and today's announcement is equally exciting," Director of Athletics Jeremy Gibson noted. "Merrimack has a rich history in the college hockey world, and I am thrilled that with the support of President Chris Hopey, we will be introducing a women's ice hockey team to a college and community with such strong passion for the sport. I am grateful for the support received from Hockey East Commissioner Joe Bertagna and the representatives of the other schools across the league throughout this process."

"I am incredibly excited that Merrimack Women's Hockey will be a full-fledged, varsity, Division I program in 2015-16," Hamlen stated. "Our staff has made great headway over the past few months, and we are confident that our program will be highly successful because of what Merrimack has to offer our student-athletes. We look forward to competing in Hockey East in our inaugural year, and appreciate their support as we begin our journey into one of the best leagues in NCAA Hockey."

Hamlen, who led the University of New England women's hockey team during its inaugural season of existence in 2012-13, will chart the course for the Warriors during the next two years. Prior to UNE, Hamlen spent a decade at the University of New Hampshire, a perennial power in the Women's Hockey East Association. During her tenure, Hamlen helped guide the Wildcats to four straight Hockey East tournament titles, six straight regular season crowns, and two appearances in the Frozen Four.

Hamlen and assistant coach Brent Hill have already begun the two-year journey over the past few months recruiting and building the foundation for a roster for the 2015-16 campaign. When the team begins varsity play, they will join fellow Women's Hockey East Association members Boston College, Boston University, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Northeastern, Providence, and Vermont.

"This is an important day in the history of our Hockey East women's conference," said Hockey East Commissioner Joe Bertagna. "We look forward to significant contributions from the Merrimack women, much as their men have for so many years."

The addition of women's ice hockey came in the midst of a year of expansion not only in the Athletic Department, but across Merrimack College. The College recently celebrated the conclusion of a year-long construction project that added several new townhouse dormitories on campus, and in the Athletic Department, an expanded Merrimack Athletics Complex that featured a second ice rink, a brand-new lobby and box office, a new Merrimack Book Store and Dunkin Donuts, as well as the additions of a new Strength and Conditioning Center, nine new locker rooms, a Center for Sports Medicine and the Academic Innovation Center.

Merrimack also witnessed a historic growth in student enrollment with the addition of over 800 new students as part of the Class of 2017, bringing the College's overall enrollment to 2,490 for the 2013-14 academic year. In the Athletic Department, Merrimack's total number of varsity sports stands at 24 with the aforementioned addition of women's ice hockey and, also, with the women's swimming team's inaugural season set to begin this winter.

Interested student-athletes can fill out a prospective athlete questionnaire online at the following link. Check back online at www.MerrimackAthletics.com for progress updates on the women's hockey team throughout the months ahead.

The Women's Hockey East Association is an eight-team, Division-I college hockey conference which began play in 2002-2003, with offices based in Wakefield, Mass. Member schools include Boston College, Boston University, University of Connecticut, University of Maine, University of New Hampshire, Northeastern University, Providence College and University of Vermont. The league also sponsors a 11-team men's league which began play in 1984.