In her 20th year as the director of athletics for the University of Hartford, Patricia H. Meiser has been honored by the America East Conference as a Title IX Trailblazer. Meiser, one of 25 nominees submitted to the National Association of Collegiate Women's Athletics, is participating in a video contest in support of women's athletics programs.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Title IX, a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972 that bars gender discrimination and is best known for its impact on high-school and collegiate athletics. Meiser says she and a small group of women still working today have lived with the personal and public daily impact of Title IX.

"As head coach of basketball at Penn State in the 1970s, I'm proud to have awarded the first women's basketball scholarship there. In the 1980s I became associate athletics director and senior woman's administrator at the University of Connecticut. I was named director of athletics at the University of Hartford in 1993."

Although Title IX had been in place for two decades when she became athletics director (AD), Meiser was one of only 11 female Division I ADs in the United States. Today, she is one of 30 among the 343 Division I member schools, according to the NCAA's race and gender demographics for 2010–11.

"I have always believed in strong academics, the positive health and welfare of the student-athletes, and a commitment to playing by the rules," says Meiser. "These are the core components of a strong program.

"Role playing and mentoring are very important. If I see someone who's several layers below me and needs encouragement, I give them a pat on the back. I have learned that leaders come in different sizes, shapes, and genders. Real mentoring, whether to young men or women, requires us to avoid the status quo and invest the extra time, work, and caring."

Above: Pat Meiser is paving the way for the next generation of women's sports leaders as almost 40 percent of coaches and administrators in the University of Hartford's Department of Athletics are female. Sitting (from left): Nancy Olson, Jennifer Rizzotti, Ellen Crandall, Arline Robbins, and Donna Harris. Standing (from left): Ikea Witt, Kelli Cullen, Rachel Anderson, Susan Ward, Laurie Weinstein, Judy Porter, Sarah Cote, Pat Meiser, Meredith Scarlata, Alex Morley, Samantha Munson, Elizabeth Hutchinson, Kelly Shimmin, Caitlin Cilaza, Diana Corsolmagno, Sarah Kalka, and Heather Patterson.

Unseasonably warm weather in March was most welcome as the Hawks kicked off a spring sports season that featured a baseball no-hitter, an individual New England golf championship, and numerous school records in track and field.

A Diamond Gem
Freshman Sean Newcomb tossed the first no-hitter since the University of Hartford moved to Division I more than a quarter-century ago, pitching the Hawks to a 2-0 victory over Yale in the nightcap of a doubleheader on March 24 at the University's Fiondella Field. Newcomb finished the game facing a total of 25 batters, striking out 10. In addition to sweeping America East honors that week, Newcomb was named National Pitcher of the Week by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association.

By the Dozen
Carter Bender and Scott Kessler, seniors on the lacrosse team, were chosen for the America East All-Conference First Team. Hartford had a league-best nine all-conference selections as well as a trio of America East All-Academic Team members.

Good Timing
What better time to have your biggest offensive output of the season than against a state rival? The softball team registered its highest run total in three years in knocking off the University of Connecticut, 13-7, on April 26 in Storrs. Four players recorded multiple hits for the Hawks, including senior Shannon Simpkins, who had three hits in five plate appearances.

Up to Par
Senior Matt Smith captured the individual title at the New England Division I Championships at the Newport (R.I.) National Golf Course on April 7. Smith followed a par 72 in the opening round with a one-under par 71 on the final day to claim the tournament crown by two strokes and lead the Hawks to a second-place finish in the team competition.

On Track
Records are made to be broken. But the Hawks’ men’s and women’s track teams made a regular routine of setting new school records during their spring campaigns. Senior Andrew Chalmers began by breaking his own school record in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the University of Connecticut’s spring invitational. Two weeks later, five school records tumbled at the University of Massachusetts Invitational. Then, it was on to the Holy Cross Invitational, where six more school records were smashed, with senior Tiffany Harrison having a hand in three of them.