



## College and University Partner Member Program: Recruitment and Retention

Carol Virostek, C/U Relations Committee Chair

There is no surefire formula for success when it comes to recruiting and retaining college/university partner members. The success of the c/u partner member program relies on building and maintaining meaningful relationships. These guidelines and suggestions can help you do just that.

### Recruitment Basics

#### 1. Do your homework.

- a. Know the AAUW college/university partner member program inside and out.
  - Educate yourself about all the benefits and resources available to an institution and its students, especially new incentives such as the e-student affiliate program, Campaign College, \$tart \$mart Salary Negotiation Workshops, and the Princeton Review SCORE programs. Tell your branch members about these benefits and use the information to reach out to a campus contact.
  - Have at least one branch meeting devoted to c/u issues.
  - Develop an elevator speech and be able to deliver it with passion when the there is an opportunity.
- b. **Know your branch members—especially their academic affiliations.**
  - Survey branch members to find out who has any connection to a c/u, especially alumnae and anyone who is or was faculty or staff. Even if a branch member is not connected to a particular campus, an individual with academic credentials will likely have greater access and insight.
  - Does any branch member have skills or experience that would be of interest to a potential c/u partner?
  - Is a branch member willing to become the branch or state c/u officer or liaison to coordinate outreach and provide a personal touch? Finding the right person— someone with the interest and the credentials—really makes a difference.
- c. **Know the campus. Research the institution and learn who's who.**
  - Do you have a branch member working on campus who might volunteer to serve as the campus representative?
  - How does the school define itself and its mission?
  - What unique advantages—beyond the “benefits of belonging” listed on the AAUW website—can this specific institution derive from the partnership?

#### 2. Use your imagination.

- a. Imagine that you are a president, provost, dean, or career counselor at the campus you are recruiting. What's in it for you if we ask you to pay partner member dues? What can AAUW offer by way of mentoring, programs, scholarships, and the like to help advance your mission for your students?
- b. Think about how to use your branch or state financial resources in different ways. Plan ahead and allocate some money for National Conference for College Women Student Leaders scholarships or for \$tart \$mart Salary Negotiation Workshops, for example. It is amazing what even \$500 can do to attract a potential c/u partner or to keep a current partner in the loop.

- c. Imagine what you and the school can do together for your mutual benefit. A voter registration or voter education program? A panel discussion or a Take Back the Night event on the campus that some of your members attend? A candidate forum that your branch sponsors and opens up to students? The possibilities are limitless for these types of collaborations.

**3. Be persistent.**

a. **Keep yourself on the radar screen at the campus.**

The fact that a c/u didn't join in the past does not mean it never will. Changes in personnel and in the student body (especially now with veterans on campuses) provide new openings and opportunities.

b. **Never underestimate the value of personal contact.**

Follow up an e-mail notice—about NCCWSL, Campaign College, Campus Action Projects, the e-student affiliate initiative—with an offer to help. Lots of e-mail gets deleted, but an invitation for coffee to a women's center director or to the dean of student affairs, especially from a member who is connected to the campus in some way, will get some attention.

## Retention

**1. Be attentive.**

- a. Be sure you know who the campus representative is in each c/u partner member institution. Because the turnover is so great, hold an orientation session so that new campus reps in your area can better understand their role.
- b. Offer to help campus representatives register new e-student affiliates.
- c. Phone a campus representative periodically to see if you can help.
- d. Check the AAUW Campus Connections webpage to see if any partner memberships have lapsed. More often than not, lapsed memberships are due to oversight rather than a decision not to renew. A well-timed phone call can make a difference.

**2. Be generous.**

Build recruitment and retention incentives into your budget either as programs or grants. In these difficult financial times, an offer to cover even half of the \$500 Start Smart Workshop or the NCCWSL registration fee for a student would be a step in the right direction.

**3. Be interested.**

Show up at events on campus. Invite students and faculty to a special program designed for them, perhaps to give NCCWSL students a chance to speak about their experience at the conference.

## C/U State/Branch Chair

C/u recruitment and retention is everyone's business, but it is essential to have someone in charge. At a time when states and branches are having trouble filling the existing positions on their boards, it may seem unrealistic to fill another position, but the success of the c/u partner member program and the growth of college/university relationships overall is directly related to having a state and branch c/u liaison or chair.

Every branch near a campus should have a c/u liaison. Every state should have a c/u officer on the state board to serve as a link to AAUW staff and to coordinate broader outreach to campuses in a region or in places where no branches exist. Finding and recruiting a c/u liaison with the requisite skills and interests might be the biggest challenge of all, but it is the single most important factor for any successful c/u recruitment and retention strategy.