



AAUW Family,

We are approaching a monumental decision. This April, we will have the opportunity to welcome a new wave of AAUW members. The re-vote to open AAUW to those who do not hold degrees will occur, and we encourage you to vote “yes” on dropping the degree mandate. Voting “yes” is practicing the inclusion we as AAUW members believe.

AAUW was founded to advance opportunities for women and work toward equal treatment with men. The organization grew to as women began to band together to support each other, helping bring to light drastic difference in gender pay scales and widely-believed fallacies that education affected fertility. AAUW was instrumental in paving the way for the first woman to be elected to the House of Representatives and appointed to lead a U.S. federal agency.

As AAUW evolved to meet women’s needs, AAUW’s membership and impact grew. AAUW focused on increasing the number of women attending college, providing direct support through fellowships and increased inclusion and recognition. AAUW also increased its focus, advocating for women, people of color and individuals/communities in poverty. The actions and advocacy of our forerunners led our great organization to be granted permanent United Nations (U.N.) observer status. AAUW capitalized on both the partnership between the U.N. and its expansion to fight for the rights of all people to promote civil rights and an overall deeper understanding and appreciation of those who are marginalized.

Throughout AAUW’s evolution, members never stopped fighting for women’s reform to include policies for maternity leave, reproductive rights, equal pay, and policies against sexual harassment and violence. As studies such as Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith (1990) and Budig, Lim, and Hodges (2021) show, a foundational way to address all of these issues is through increased education. Welcoming those without a degree should allow us to better achieve our goals as we can help educate and advocate for all members through a closer relationship.

At present, we are declining in numbers but not passion. The drive to form AAUW is what causes it to continue – we ultimately strive toward inclusion and equality. As such, opening the membership to those without a degree fundamentally supports the purpose of our organization. Removing the degree requirement is not meant to take anything away from current member accomplishments. Instead, it’s a way to celebrate all that makes our members extraordinary with a larger pool of driven individuals. Treating each other fairly, with love and compassion, is the foundation of AAUW and serves as the catalyst for our current and future efforts.

Our need to support each other is greater than it has ever been. As we enter a time of uncertainty within our country, we need to do what we can to band together and

continue to advocate for a better future. We encourage you to practice the inclusion our founding members worked for and vote “yes” on dropping the degree mandate.

Together in service,  
Inclusion and Equity Committee, AAUW

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