



Strategic Plan Frequently Asked Questions

What does this shift mean for our K-12 work [or other specific focus outside of higher ed]?

The strategic plan is meant to hone AAUW National's focus on advancing gender equity in higher education, which aligns with the work we set out to do at our founding and meets the current moment. AAUW National continues to support K-12 programming for girls through our Community Action Grant program. AAUW also relies on our AAUW branches, many of which work on K-12 issues in their communities. We view this as part of AAUW's overall impact – a complement and alignment of branch and national work to create pipelines of success for women and girls. Branches are encouraged to continue with their K-12 initiatives as part of their mission-based work.

Why are we prioritizing women in higher ed when women are already going to college at a higher rate than men?

While it's true that overall, more women are currently enrolled in higher education institutions, there are many programs and fields where women remain underrepresented such as STEM, where women represent just 35% of graduates. Women also carry more student loan debt. Women of color, particularly, disproportionately face challenges to completion and success in higher education and remain underrepresented in corporate leadership positions. We are also in a moment where higher education is under attack, and believe we need to do everything we can to protect the progress we've made in advancing gender equity in higher education, while continuing to pave more pathways for women in higher education.

At a time when we're seeing a rollback of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in higher education, why are we choosing to focus on that area right now?

It is precisely because of these attacks that we are doubling down on our commitment to advance gender equity in higher education. Given the rollback or ending of programs that support women's enrollment and achievement in higher education, our grants, fellowships and advocacy are urgently needed. AAUW's roots have always been in higher education, and we are dedicated to continuing to be a leader in the space.

How is this plan different from the work we're already doing?

The purpose of the strategic plan is to focus our work at the national level and to better align AAUW National and the branches in order to have the greatest impact. By centering our work in higher education, we are recommitting to the mission AAUW was founded on and ensuring we are functioning in the best way to serve this mission.

How are we going to continue this work for future generations when our average member is over 60?

Our strategic plan was developed with the express goal of bringing in new members who can continue our growth and impact, including younger women. Through National and branch alignment and a focus on mission-based work, AAUW National and branches will have the opportunity to better reach more women to achieve our equity goals.

What happens if a branch isn't able to meet these new requirements?

The Five-Star Program provides a clear framework for branches to align with AAUW's strategic priorities, reinforcing a cohesive and collective approach to advocacy, local community engagement and financial sustainability. Branches that struggle to meet these requirements will be supported in a variety of ways from AAUW National, their state affiliate (if applicable) and member peers. Our intention is to work with all branches to ensure they meet the requirements and contribute to our collective impact.

What happens if a branch does not complete the mandatory survey?

We would like to have 100% participation from branches in our survey. Participation is important for AAUW National to better understand what different branches are focused on and to support greater alignment between national and branch efforts. If a branch is not able to complete it, we will work with them and their state leadership to ensure that we can get the information that we need.

How can I be sure my concerns are reaching the right people at AAUW?

At AAUW National, the feedback of members and branches is incredibly important to us. We invite you to share your feedback and thoughts to executive@aauw.org or connect@aauw.org. Liaison calls will also continue to be a space where you can bring your questions and feedback, and AAUW National has regular calls with state presidents to brief them on our work and hear from them about the issues that matter

most to their state. We also encourage you to reach out to your state board. While we can't implement every suggestion, we deeply appreciate hearing from you and take your thoughts into consideration as we advance our shared mission.

Does the focus on higher education mean AAUW is no longer committed to open membership?

AAUW National is steadfastly committed to eliminating the degree requirement for membership. The intention behind open membership is to make AAUW a place where all people who wish to help advance our mission are welcome to join, and our focus on higher education does not change this goal.

How do we provide more support for undergraduate students?

AAUW's advocacy work helps women at all levels of education as well as in the workplace. With this strategic plan, we envision branch-level efforts to support undergraduate women complementing AAUW National's focus on graduate-level work. Moving forward and with greater resources, we hope to engage Student Associates and develop undergraduate programming more broadly across AAUW.

Is AAUW no longer committed to []?

- **Pay Equity:** AAUW remains committed to pay equity, which is one of the inclusive policies we support to remove barriers to success in higher education and the workplace. We will continue to offer our salary negotiation and financial literacy programs to students, staff and faculty at our C/U member campuses. At the same time, aligned with our strategic plan, our policy and advocacy work will focus heavily on policies directly related to higher education, as well as defending the Department of Education and its programs.
- **Leadership:** Due to funding constraints, AAUW phased out direct service leadership programming for the public over the last few years. We remain committed to advancing women's leadership in academia, which is supported by several of our fellowship programs.
- **Research:** AAUW has and will continue to be committed to timely, effective and impactful research. Research is indeed embedded in our mission statement. Our commitment to research is best demonstrated by our support of women through our Fellowships and Grants. We also continue to produce research like the [Simple Truth](#), which was updated this year. AAUW will invest in research when funding is available and are primarily focused on short, timely and relevant pieces that speak to our policy priorities.