



Is It Time for AAUW to Open Membership? Let's Break Through Our Own Barrier

An open membership by-laws amendment was not submitted in 2011, but many of us are laying the groundwork for 2013.

Reasons to support a future bylaw amendment to open AAUW membership to anyone supporting the mission:

- ◆ **Strengthen the organization.** AAUW's strength is based on member support of our mission—advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research—not on membership criteria. The more committed members we have, the better.
- ◆ **Increase our credibility.** A degree requirement undermines our credibility in our advocacy work for equity.
- ◆ **Dispel elitism.** We value and encourage higher education for all. However, one does not need a college degree to be an advocate for education, any more than one needs to be a woman to support women's rights. (AAUW bylaws were changed in 1987 to admit men to our membership.)
- ◆ **Facilitate recruiting new members.** Most people join because a member invites them. Doing away with the degree requirement eliminates the discomfort and embarrassment that accompanies inquiring whether a person is “eligible” to join.

Honoring AAUW's past does not mean we should be unwilling to evolve and improve as an organization. Our past accomplishments stem from our commitment to change.



Support “Open Up AAUW”

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How to Support Open Membership

Join the “**Open Up AAUW**” group at OpenUpAAUW.org.

Propose a branch resolution; post it on “**Open Up AAUW.**”

Engage your branch and others in exploring these questions:

- ◆ How important is AAUW’s mission to you and why?
- ◆ Have you ever told someone they aren’t eligible for membership? How did it make them feel? How did it make you feel?
- ◆ List friends, colleagues, and public figures who haven’t pursued an associate degree or higher and why. How does it limit them from working for equity? (See list on our website.)
- ◆ What does a branch gain or lose by accepting members without degrees?
- ◆ What did AAUW lose in 1987 by expanding membership to men? Or in 2005, to those with associate degrees? Or by accepting all accredited colleges and universities?
- ◆ What message does the degree requirement send to the public about AAUW?
- ◆ How would eliminating the degree requirement hurt our efforts to break through barriers for women and girls?

Now that the percentage of women earning degrees equals or exceeds the percentage of men, isn’t it time to open membership to all committed to breaking through barriers for women and girls?



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