



Example of branch newsletter article

FROM YOUR STATE AAUW BOARD: Living our Vision of Equity for All

The Time is — Now?

Is this the time, now, after 140 years, to invite everybody with similar goals to join AAUW? The AAUW California Board of Directors thinks it is and would like you to know why.

We work hard for the AAUW vision of equity for all and the mission of advancing gender equity, education, health issues, and more. But so do others, including many without a college degree. Are we missing out on their energy, ideas, and help? Before you vote, please review the aauw.org home page. It reflects our inclusive mission for equity. Our membership bylaws do not.

Here is some history that may surprise you: Until the late 1940s, only women with four-year degrees from a small list of accredited, elite universities could join AAUW. According to Sharon Schuster, past AAUW National and California president, “Some would like to forget that we used to vote on prospective members — with all of the implications of what that meant.”

The World War II years broadened AAUW’s vision and all women with four-year degrees from any accredited schools were invited to join; applicants were required to present their degree certificates.

The next requirements to be dropped were accreditation and proof of degree. Then the 4-year degree requirement was dropped as holders of 3-year nursing degrees and 2-year associate degrees became eligible. Eligibility was also extended to students working toward a degree. In the 1980’s, men were allowed to join. Now, in 2021, most membership requirements have been eliminated and only one remains: that of the two-year degree.

AAUW California understands why some members might be reluctant to embrace this idea: it has long been a badge of accomplishment for women to earn a college degree, and we all enjoy socializing with others who enjoy the same things. But shared values are not an automatic byproduct of a college degree.

Before we discuss the benefits of removing this last barrier, you should know that quite a few foundations refuse to grant funds to organizations that **discriminate**. Yes, that is how they view this requirement. And this reduced funding pool restricts our work.

The younger generations do not view our restriction receptively either. We believe that they are more likely to join organizations with open membership working for similar goals.

The same can be said for potential members of more diverse backgrounds. We have the same vision for the future of all women and all girls; we should work together. And we can do that more effectively if we welcome everybody. Also, in order to provide support for those excluded or marginalized, we need to stop excluding and marginalizing. We need to LIVE our mission and vision.

So, how **would** AAUW change if everyone could join?

Your enthusiastic Tech Trek moms without degrees want to help our splendid STEM camps. Now they could.

New people might join your board to help with AAUW projects and events. They will bring fresh perspectives.

Remember when you had a friend who wanted to join AAUW but was one year short of a degree? Now she could.

This would be AAUW's future face: more people of all backgrounds and colors, more hands working on our mission; more members to join discussion groups. We would be an organization that welcomes everybody.

And, how would it NOT affect AAUW or your branch?

It will not affect the uniqueness of AAUW. Its uniqueness is its breadth of programming, research, policy, advocacy, fellowships and grants, and grassroots membership.

- It will not change your branch's involvement in local scholarships or interest groups.
- It will not change the mission of the branch. Mission is not determined by a degree, but by belief in and dedication to equality for women.

Sharon Schuster also said, "AAUW has survived because of our ability to change and because our membership requirements have changed over the years."

So, when April 7th arrives, do remember the issues we raise here and cast your vote in the AAUW National election for a positive future for an AAUW that welcomes everybody.. As much as we value the way we have been, we can also value the way we will be. It's time we walked the talk.

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