

**AAUW Membership Committee  
Workgroup: How to Better Meet the Needs of Students  
Report Submitted: May 16, 2003**

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**Introduction and Background:**

The membership committee established a workgroup in late January to study and make recommendations as to how AAUW can better serve students.

A conference call was held with workgroup members and it was determined that a survey would be the best and most effective way to ask students how AAUW could better serve their needs.

**Methodology:**

Members of the workgroup brainstormed areas of information we wished to gather from students. Subsequently, members of the workgroup developed questions. [Complete survey in Appendix A]

A final survey of 20 questions was prepared and posted to the current AAUW Student List-Serv of 579 students. Students were given approximately 3 weeks to complete the survey and return it via e-mail to an e-mail address designated only for survey responses. The survey was posted as an attachment and pasted within the e-mail when distributed. One reminder e-mail, again containing the survey, was sent within 3 days of the deadline.

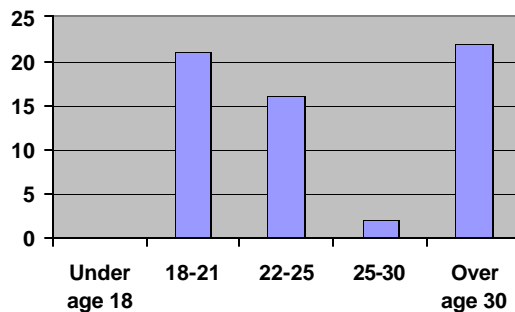
**Results:**

There were 61 respondents, giving an overall response rate of 10.7%. Raw data was compiled for all survey responses. Data was also compiled splitting age groups of those responding. Data from respondents under age 30 was compared to those over age 30. Results for both age groups are only listed on questions where a significant difference between the age groups was noted.

Q1. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

Of those answering the question, 86% were undergraduate students and 14% graduate students

Q2. Age of Respondents:



Q3. In what state do you attend school?

7 California	1 Montana	2 Illinois
2 Washington DC	4 Massachusetts	1 Ohio
2 Georgia	2 Hawaii	1 New Jersey
5 Virginia	3 New York	2 Maine
1 Wisconsin	2 Maryland	1 Wyoming
3 Florida	1 Connecticut	1 Washington
2 Missouri	1 Arkansas	
7 Pennsylvania	2 Texas	1P.R. China (Beijing)

22 states were represented and 1 foreign country.

Q4. Are you currently a member of AAUW?

93% indicated they were a current member of AAUW

Q5. Which type of member are you?

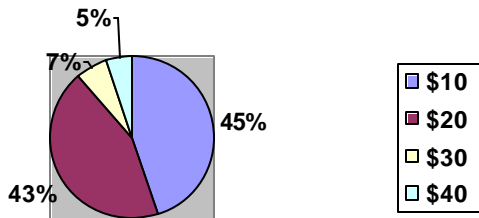
# of responses	Type of Member
21	Student Affiliate Associated with a branch
25	Student Affiliate at Large
5	Full Member at Large
1	Full member associated with a branch
4	Don't know
6	No answer

Additionally, of those that responded to what type of member they were:

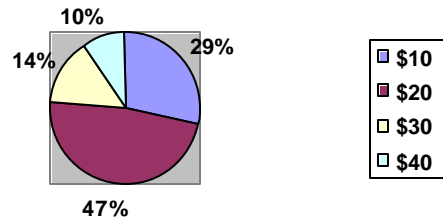
- 4 graduate students listed themselves as Student Affiliate's at Large
- 2 graduate students listed themselves as a Student Affiliates associated with a branch
- 5 undergraduate students responded that they were Members at Large
- 1 undergraduate student listed themselves as a full member associated with a branch
- 1 post-baccalaureate teacher intern listed herself as a student affiliate at large
- 1 person listed herself as a Student Affiliate at Large and attends school in Beijing China
- 1 person had graduated last year and didn't know what to do about her membership since she graduated

Q6. What do you feel is an appropriate and affordable cost of student membership?

**Q6. All survey responses**



**Q6. Responses by those > age 30**



Q7. What is the most effective method of communicating with you during the year?

91% E-mail is best. Of those, 77% indicate attachments can be included. Only 6% indicated they would prefer "snail mail."

Q8. Would you be interested in a student membership that, at a lower cost, would provide all mailings and publications electronically, either via e-mail or website?

88% Yes  
12% No

Q9. Would you prefer the option of an online branch rather than physically attending a local branch?

67% Yes  
33% No

Q10. Would you prefer to be associated with a branch (branch student affiliate) or only associated with eh association (student member at large)?

58% Branch Association  
37% Student Affiliate at Large  
3% Don't know  
2% Neutral

Q11. Are you aware that you can branch shop, looking for a branch that best meets your needs rather than necessarily belonging to the branch in closest proximity to you?

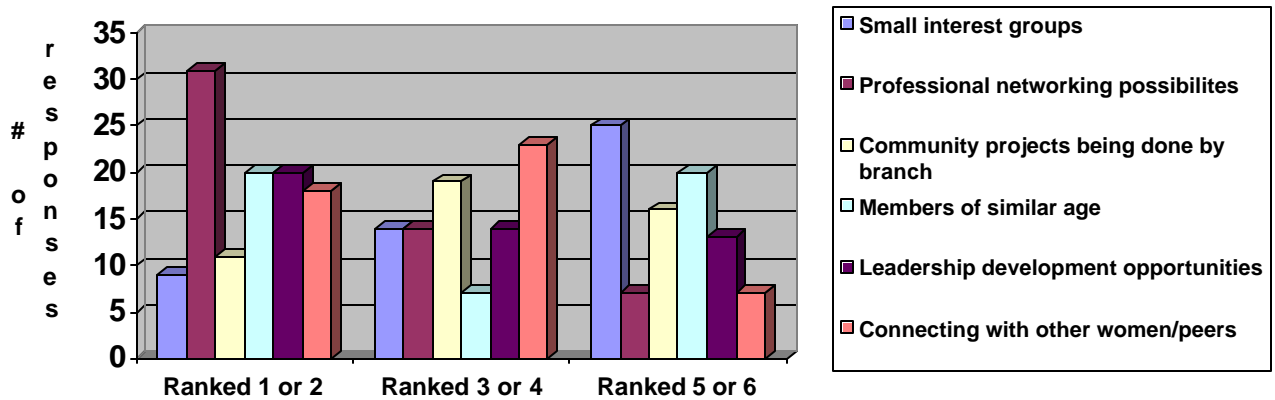
18% Yes  
82% No

*{Results continued on page 4}*

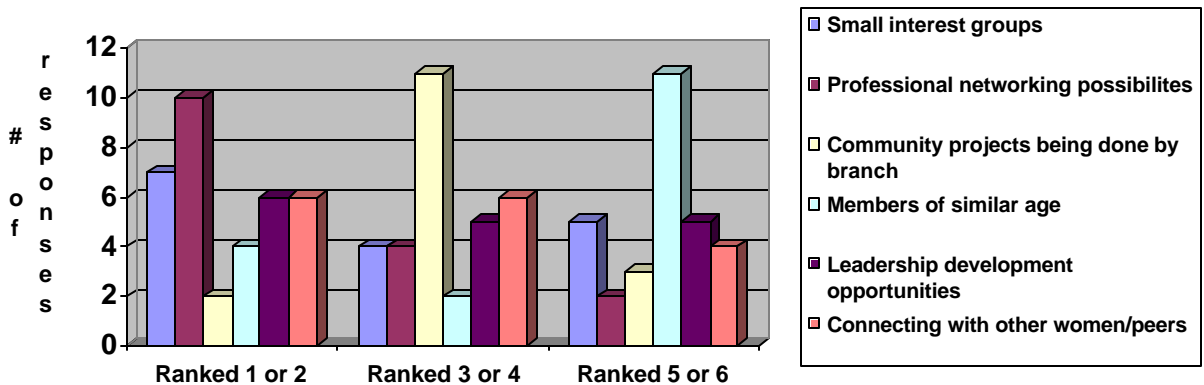
Q12. If you were looking for a branch to join, what characteristics of the branch would be most important to you? Please rank your answers in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

Note: For purposes of data analysis, response to this question have been grouped into three categories:  
 Those responding with a 1 or 2: Item is very important  
 Those responding with a 3 or 4: Item is of neutral importance  
 Those responding with a 5 or 6: Item is not very important

### Branch Characteristics of Importance (All responses)



### Branch Characteristics of Importance (Over age 30 responses)



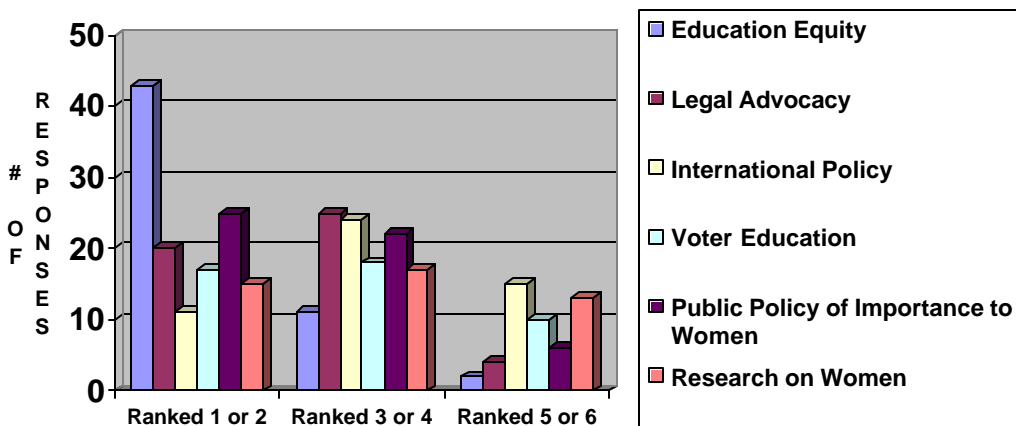
Q13. Where did you first hear about AAUW?

All responses		Over age 30 responses
3%	Media	5%
2%	Family	0%
16%	Friend	32%
53%	School	41%
15%	Online	14%
11%	Other	9%

Other: "Through NCCSWL which my school sent me to."  
 "Book sale."  
 "Attended a workshop for non-traditional women returning to college."  
 "Summer student leaders conference."  
 "YMCA branch."  
 "My daughter got a scholarship from the local branch."

Q14. What platforms of AAUW do you support? Please rank your answers in order with 1 being the platform you support most strongly and 4 being the platform that you support least. *{Note: Many people ranked their answers 1-6 so rankings up to 6 are included}*

**AAUW platforms supported most strongly**



Q15. How can a women's organization best serve you?

All responses		Over age 30 responses
32%	Connection to other women leaders	20%
17%	Ideas on how to be involved in local community	20%
20%	A place to meet and share ideas	20%
29%	Opportunities for learning and growth	36%
2%	Other	4%

Other responses:  
 "connections to leadership positions."  
 "a support network."

Q16. Are you looking for professional development? (All responses)

82% Yes  
18% No

Q17. Are you interested in being involved in current AAUW projects? (all responses)

73% Yes  
27% No

Q18. What types of projects are you interested in being part of (please check all that apply).

% all responses		% from responses over age 30
3%	Membership	2%
17%	Conference Planning	13%
21%	Awareness	28%
27%	Education	28%
17%	Public Policy Efforts	19%
15%	Program Planning	11%

Q19. Why did you join AAUW? (all responses)

4% Friend or family member bought membership for me  
11% Friend or family member suggested membership to me  
34% To network and meet other women/peers  
39% To support the mission of AAUW  
11% Other

Other responses:

"Came with scholarship."  
"To support organization that gave me a fellowship."  
"AAUW scholarship winner."  
"educate women in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries to [sic] & motivate young girls that it is possible to achieve & break men [sic] barriers."  
"accomplishment after earning a degree in my later years."  
"to learn about opportunities of further education."  
"won scholarship & got membership at no cost."  
"to be eligible for scholarships and conferences."

Q20. What kind of programming appeals to you? (All responses)

18% Conference and workshops  
14% Short-term local community projects  
8% Public policy or legislative  
6% Ongoing, long-term projects  
12% Monthly seminars or programs  
18% Professional development  
16% Personal development  
9% Entertainment

Comments from respondents:

"I have enjoyed the Networking group we have in Kansas City. It allows the opportunity to exchange ideas and professional development with other women of all ages, also including women my age. I like it so much I have become the leader of the group that meets monthly besides my branch activities when possible."

"I have only attended one meeting. I joined last year as a student from Penn State. I have since graduated and would like to know what benefits I have now as a member-Do I need to re-join as non student member? I am interested in helping out in on a planning/events committee. If you think there is a need for help in those areas please let me know. . . "

"AAUW needs to work on diversity recruiting, I know this seems to be one of the current goals of the organization, but I wanted to stress the need for it. Thanks for taking the time to listen!"

"There are many women from BOTH parties who are strongly interested in women's issues and in working towards equity. Last summer, I had attended the conference which I found to be informative, however, disempowering for myself and other conservative women leaders in attendance. We were led to believe this was a bi-partisan event. We lobbied on issues that we did not all agree with (without being given a choice), which undermined our perception that we were there for an education in lobbying. Our questions were often discounted when they reflected a conservative ideal, especially when the questions were posed to the higher administrators. These experiences led me to become skeptical towards the mission of your organization, as posted on the website, "to promote education and equity for all women and girls." My suggestion for future events is to provide greater accessibility to future women leaders and, although we may agree to disagree on certain political matters, work together towards promoting a strong women's voice. I personally feel the goal of your organization is drastically undermined, when conservative women, potentially half of all "university women", are discredited and marginalized. I thank you for your time in reading this, and I hope you will consider my sentiments, as well as those of others who attended last years conference, and make your events and activities more accessible."

"I take night classes and the local branches meet at night so I can't attend." *{In response to question 8 regarding the option of an online branch}*

"I am a non-traditional college student (age 36), so I joined AAUW to get educated on issues/concerns faced by women, in college or not. I am now in my second year of membership and am happy to say AAUW delivers the type of information and support I want. Thank you."

"I met with one local branch, and all but 1 other member were much older, and many were retired. It was a nice group, but I really didn't feel that I fit in. They also had dinners, etc. which you had to pay for to attend, and as a student, I couldn't afford \$20 for a meal, plus the cost of a babysitter."

"When I joined, I don't remember being given a choice to join as a member at large, or as part of a local branch. In retrospect, I think joining a branch is potentially more effective, overall. . . .Because my daughter was a direct recipient of the local AAUW's efforts, I have first hand knowledge regarding the benefit of the mission. However, I wouldn't have even known about the existence of AAUW unless that occurred. We need to find a way to gain more exposure in the community and at the university level."

"I have since moved away from where my branch is located and I feel like I have no ties to them anymore. You should have something on the website about branch shopping and relocating after graduation."

"I think a survey similar to this one should be given to all members not just students."

"A.A.U.W. is a great organization and I'm glad I am part of it!"

## Conclusions and Recommendations:

Most students (39%) joined AAUW to support its mission. Additionally, 34% joined AAUW to network and meet other women/peers. Students support AAUW's platform of education equity most strongly, followed by public policy that is of importance to women. When asked how a women's organization can best serve them students said by connecting them to other women leaders. Students over age 30 also indicated that they are served best by being provided opportunities for learning and growth. Eighty-two percent (82%) indicated that they were looking for professional development. These statistics give a good profile of students that AAUW targets for membership. However, further survey data gives cause for further thought.

The results of question #5 asking students what type of AAUW membership they have. Twenty-four percent (24%) of those answering this question indicated they held a membership category that would be, by AAUW standards, incorrect. Many graduate students indicated they were student affiliates, even though they hold degrees making them eligible for full membership. Additionally, a number of undergraduate students indicated that they were in fact members at large (MAL) and given their undergraduate status they are not eligible for membership in this category.

- ? Recommendation: AAUW explore means to more clearly define the membership categories and their requirements on membership sign-up and promotional material. Exploration of a means in which to track students and upon graduation convert their membership would also be beneficial as students were unaware what to do when they graduate.

The vast majority of students, 53% overall, had first hear of AAUW through their schools. Those students over age 30 had, in many cases, heard about AAUW from a friend. Twenty-two states were represented among those that replied to the survey. Unfortunately, there was minimal if any response from the majority of mid-western and most western states. This was be do to a less dense population and fewer branches overall in many of these states.

- ? Recommendation: AAUW continue to pursue the growth of College and University (C/U) members to help increase the visibility of AAUW at the college level. If AAUW were to pursue a student online branch, increased marketing could be targeted to those in the mid-west and west. If local branches or student affiliate branches are not available, an online branch may be the best resource for those students to learn and grow with AAUW.

The overall survey results continue to emphasize that students are technology savvy and would prefer communication and even publications be distributed electronically (91%). A majority of students (67%) also found the idea of an online branch very appealing. An online branch may be appealing to those students who are extremely technology savvy and also many non-traditional or returning women students who often take night classes and are unable to participate in local branches whose primary meetings and activities occur at night.

When asked about cost for student memberships, the results were overwhelmingly clear. Student membership should cost \$20 or less. Students were split (45% versus 43%) on their preference for dues to be \$20 versus \$10. Students over age 30 ranked \$20 (47%) as the appropriate cost. These results are not surprising given the modest means of college students. If it would result in a lower cost membership, 88% indicated they would receive all mailings and publications electronically,

- ? Recommendation: AAUW should continue pursuing means of electronic distribution for communication, mailings and publications. AAUW should consider establishment of an online branch for students only.

Association with a branch was preferable to 58% of students and so Association, states and branches should pay particular attention to the characteristics of a branch that are of highest importance to these potential members. All students, regardless of age, ranked professional networking possibilities as a very important branch characteristic. Leadership development opportunities and connecting with other

women/peers was important to all students as well. However, those students under age 30 ranked members of similar age in a branch as important while those over age 30 seemed to express that closeness in age was not as important to them. Small interest groups were important to those over age 30 but least important to those under age 30. In terms of programming, students find conferences and workshops, as well as programming offering personal development to be most appealing. This was followed closely by the appeal of programming offering personal development and short-term local community projects.

- ? Recommendation: This study, or at least its conclusions, should be made available to states, branches and Association list-serv's, most notable the Membership Vice-President list-serv. Information about what students are seeking in a branch may help states and branches tailor their programming or marketing efforts seeking to increase their memberships.

The survey gives important information about the characteristics of students today, both traditional and non-traditional. Use of these results could provide pivotal change for Association, states and branches. Targeted change is what will keep AAUW an organization that best meets and serves the needs of all women while working to broaden its base of younger membership.

## APPENDIX A

### AAUW Membership Workgroup Student Survey

The American Association of University Women is conducting this survey to better serve its student affiliate members. Results of this survey will be forwarded to the Board of Directors and used to tailor future student activities in the organization.

The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. Please place an X next to each answer and then SAVE the document. Please e-mail the survey to [aauw.survey@verizon.net](mailto:aauw.survey@verizon.net) by April 10<sup>th</sup>. Thank you very much for your help.

- 1) Are you a \_\_\_\_\_ undergraduate student? Or a \_\_\_\_\_ graduate student?
- 2) Please check your age group:  
 under age 18  
 18-21  
 22-25  
 25-30  
 over age 30
- 3) In what state do you attend school? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Are you currently a member of AAUW?  
 yes  
 no (if no please proceed to question 6)
- 5) Which type of member are you?  
 Student affiliate associated with a branch  
 Student Affiliate At Large  
 Full Member at Large  
 Full Member associated with a branch?
- 6) What do you feel is an appropriate and affordable cost of student membership?  
 \$40  
 \$30  
 \$20  
 \$10
- 7) What is the most effective method of communicating with you during the year?  
 E-mail, can include attachments  
 E-mail text without attachments  
 Website  
 Snail Mail
- 8) Would you be interested in a student membership that, at a lower cost, would provide all mailings and publications electronically, either via e-mail or website?  
 yes  
 no
- 8) Would you prefer the option of an online branch rather than physically attending a local branch?  
 yes  
 no

9) Would you prefer to be associated with a branch (branch student affiliate) or only associated with the association (student member at large)?

- branch association
- student at large

10) Are you aware that you can branch shop, looking for a branch that best meets your needs rather than necessarily belonging to the branch in closest proximity to you?

- yes
- no

11) If you were looking for a branch to join, what characteristics of the branch would be most important to you? Please rank your answers in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

- small interest groups (book groups, study groups, social groups)
- professional networking possibilities
- community projects being done by the branch
- other members of similar age
- leadership development opportunities
- connecting with other women/peers

12) Where did you first hear about AAUW?

- Media
- Family
- Friend
- School
- Online
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

13) What platforms of AAUW do you support? Please rank your answers in order with 1 being the platform you support most strongly and 4 being the platform that you support least.

- Education Equity
- Legal Advocacy
- International Policy
- Voter Education
- Public Policy Efforts of Importance to Women
- Research on Women

14) How can a woman's organization best serve you?

- connection to other women leaders
- ideas on how to be involved in local community
- a place to meet and share ideas
- opportunities for learning and growth
- other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

15) Are you looking for professional development?

- yes
- no

16) Are you interested in being involved in current AAUW projects?

- yes
- no (if no, proceed to question 18)

17) What type of projects are you interested in being part of (please check all that apply)

- membership
- conference planning
- awareness
- education
- public policy efforts
- program planning

18) Why did you join AAUW?

- friend or family member bought membership for me
- friend or family member suggested membership to me
- to network and meet other women/peers
- to support the mission of AAUW

19) What kind of programming appeals to you?

- conferences and workshops
- short-term local community projects
- public policy or legislative
- ongoing, long term projects
- monthly seminars or programs
- professional development
- personal development
- entertainment

20) Comments or suggestions: