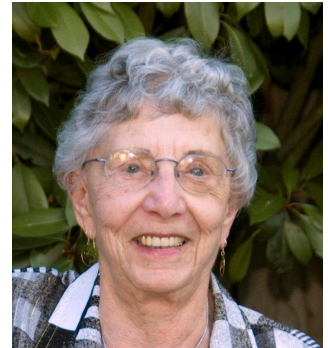


# History of AAUW

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***The year was 1881. The location was Boston. A young woman named Marion Talbot discovered that women like her with college degrees really had no outlets for their education and few ways to serve their communities. Her mother suggested that there must be other college educated women who were having the same problem. Just six weeks later 65 women met and formed the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (now AAUW). Their purpose was to unite alumnae of different colleges for practical educational work.***

**Practical educational work! Today we'd call it advancing equity for women and girls.** Our founding mothers began their practical educational work by disproving some of the false ideas which were popular at that time. In his book, *Sex in Education*, Dr. Edward Clark, a professor at Harvard Medical School, declared that higher education for women would impair their physical health. Further, an educated woman would surely produce a malformed offspring. The rationale was that studying drew the nourishing blood from the fetus to the brain!

That ridiculous notion was disproved by our very first research study in 1885. It was followed by a long line of studies which continue to this day: equal pay 1913; infant development 1936; financing of public education 1955; status of women in higher education 1970; *How Schools Shortchange Girls* 1992; and our latest research, *Why So Few: Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*. It looks at the problem of why so many boys than girls choose science majors in college.

A new report is being developed as I speak: *Crossing the Line* updates the previous groundbreaking report *Hostile Hallways*. Sexual assault and bullying in middle schools continue to be of much concern. Now social networking, texting and e-mail have added new dimensions to young girls' and boys vulnerability. The report will contain programming and activism recommendations tailored for administrators, teachers, parents and students. I'm pleased to be on a national advisory committee for this report. It will be published in November 2011.

In 1889 the fledgling organization welcomed the Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae and in 1921 the Southern Association of Collegiate Women. The combined organizations took the name The American Association of University Women. How we have grown over the years! Now we have nearly one hundred thousand members in more than 1000 branches and as national members, our new name for members-at-large.

After the First World War we began to award fellowships to women from other countries. We worked hard for the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote. Can you picture our foremothers wearing middies and marching in parades when carrying a sign took a lot more courage than it does now?

In 1920, AAUW members all over the United States raised one hundred fifty six thousand four

hundred and thirteen dollars to buy one gram of radium which was given to Marie Curie for her research. That was a lot of money in 1920. Our archives in Washington contain the original letter of thanks from Dr. Curie.

At the time of AAUW's fiftieth anniversary in 1931, our reputation had increased to the point that Mary Wooley, chair of the International Relations Committee, was appointed as one of the U.S. delegates to the disarmament conference in Geneva. Later we established a refugee fund to assist university women fleeing dictatorships. During the Second World War AAUW supported the formation of women's units of the Armed Services and called for equal pay and rank. Doesn't that sound familiar?

At the end of the Second World War AAUW member Virginia Gildersleeve was the only woman member of the United States delegation to the conference to establish the United Nations. As far as I know she was the only woman in any delegation.

Last year [2010] we gained special consultative status at the United Nations with the Economic and Social Council. Now AAUW is participating in international conferences, signing on to the non-governmental organization statements and sharing our expertise. Recently, Jill Birdwhistell, AAUW staff chief of Strategic Advancement, participated in such a conference in Paris.

We've been supporting or opposing legislation affecting women and girls since 1898 when we formed our first legislative committee. By 1900 we were advocating child labor laws. In 1930, that's 1930, 81 years ago, we urged the dispensing of contraceptive devices by physicians.

Most of you know about Title Nine. But you may not know that AAUW member Patsy Mink authored Title Nine of the Education Amendments of 1972, one of the great success stories in women's history. The law, which prohibits sex discrimination in educational programs and activities that receive federal funding, has been responsible for the great expansion of athletic opportunities for female students.

Although we think athletics when we think of Title IX, the law forbids all sex discrimination and that includes acts of sexual violence as well. The federal court in Sacramento delivered a mixed decision on June 9 in the case of *Mansourian et al.* versus the Regents of the University of California. That's the case of the women wrestlers which had been dragging on for ten years and which our Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) had supported from the beginning. The Court ruled that that the University failed to comply with Title IX but the claimants didn't prevail on their claims for the equal protection law. It was a partial victory at best.

In 1994 we were successful in getting our first AAUW legislation, gender equity provisions, into the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In 2000 we developed the Educating America's Girls Act. So now we're authoring legislation! Since 1975, dedicated members of the AAUW lobby corps, those residing in Washington and nearby Virginia and Maryland, meet every week with our decision makers and urge them to vote for or against legislation affecting women and girls. I lobbied our congressman's principal aide during the recent AAUW convention. The congressman was out of town.

This year is the one hundred and twenty-third anniversary of the first fellowship ever awarded. In 1888, Ida Street was awarded three hundred and fifty dollars to study English at the University of

Michigan. Since that first award, *more than ninety million dollars have been awarded to eleven thousand fellows and grantees*. Today, stipends run as high as thirty thousand dollars. I wish you could have been with me at NASA in Houston for the dedication of the Judith Resnik memorial fellowship. Maybe you knew that it was an AAUW fellowship that enabled Judy to get her doctorate in engineering and become an astronaut. But did you know that she was a member of the Clear Lake, Texas branch?

In 2011 – 2012 AAUW branches, national members, foundations, and corporations contributed over three point seven million dollars (\$3,700,000). That makes *AAUW the largest non-university source of graduate fellowships for women*. Three million plus dollars seems like a lot of money — but that amount funds fewer than sixteen percent of the total fellowships and grants. The percentage is much smaller for the fellowships alone: out of one thousand one hundred and seventy five eligible applications for American Fellowships, only 66 were funded, about six percent.

Still that's a lot of fundraisers and checks written. My favorite was a live auction held by my branch. You know the kind of auction in which branch members donate all sorts of goodies like vacation homes or home baked bread or dinners for six. Those present had maybe one glass of wine too many and then bid on each other's offerings. You should have heard the spirited bidding on breakfast in bed — for four!

Let's not forget that AAUW Funds, our new name for EF, works both ways. We give money — but we get it back for special projects and to start new careers. A member of my branch received a career development grant and became a substance abuse counselor. With two kids in college she couldn't have afforded the fees without the grant. So the next time you hear branch members complaining that they send money to Washington and don't get anything back, ask them why they haven't applied for a community action or a career development grant.

LAF, the Legal Advocacy Fund, is a major program of AAUW. It works to combat sexual discrimination in higher education and in the workplace. It provides support to sex discrimination cases that have the potential to make a difference. LAF has funded, or helped fund, more than 100 plaintiffs. I served for two years on the LAF board when it was a separate organization and I've come to realize that far from competing with the AAUW Funds which support education, the Legal Advocacy Fund complements them. Remember this sentence: AAUW Funds open doors for women; LAF keeps them open.

In 1987 we began to admit men to AAUW and stopped being a sexist organization. The male members I know genuinely believe in equity for women.

The Leadership Training Institute is the youngest of our major programs. Founded in 2002, it hosts the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders every year. This year is its 26th anniversary and, last month, more than 400 young college women learned about advocacy, leadership skill building, and financial management. I attended the conference last year and was amazed at the enthusiasm of all the attendees and the quality of the workshops. I'm excited about a project called Elect Her — I'll tell you more about that presently.

Five years ago we extended membership to those with associate degrees. More than two thousand associate degree holders have joined. In June of 2009 more than 900 of us met in convention in St. Louis. We combined our legal Advocacy Fund and the Educational Foundation into

one organization called the American Association of University Women and gave each one of us the right to vote. I hope you voted on line or by mail.

***Our new AAUW*** makes it easier for branches and individuals to designate exactly where they want their money to go. For example, instead of sending it to the old EF, now we can designate it to LAF, which includes case support and campus outreach projects; to the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund, which funds the wonderful research projects; to the Educational Opportunities Fund which includes fellowships and grants; to the Leadership Programs Fund, which includes the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders, Start Smart and Elect Her - Campus Women Win. All those programs are a part of AAUW Funds and are fully tax deductible.

I've talked a lot about our past and present accomplishments. In fact, I've talked too long. When I was in Argentina visiting branches of the Argentine Federation of University Women, I discovered the very best way to give a short speech: give it in another language! But if you'll bear with me another minute, I want to tell you of some of the exciting programs that are available to branches now: free e-student memberships for 4 years for those who attend a college or university which is a partner member of AAUW; Sisters in Action, the follow-up program to Sister to Sister; and programs in boxes. A program in a box is everything a branch needs to put on a mission-based program. There is a new Title 9 program in a box and a new Women and the Courts box. This one addresses the critical impact federal courts have on women and girls. The programs are available on the AAUW web site.

And here's my new favorite: Elect Her - Campus Women Win, a new initiative to expand the number of women running for campus elective office. It empowers women from high school onward through college to view themselves as political leaders. It could change the face of politics in this country. Women now hold just 17 percent of seats in congress and 24 percent of seats in state legislatures. I just received a blog about Sarah Hughes, new president of her Honors College Assembly at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. She was on the fence about running until she attended a campus session of Elect Her. "I learned so much," she said, "about how as women we convince ourselves not to run or to run for a lower position." She did run and was elected. I'll bet that one day she will be mayor of Huntsville and eventually senior senator from Alabama!

We members of AAUW are obviously doing something right. AAUW topped the 2011 list of top-rated Social Justice nonprofit organizations. These ratings are published by the well-known Great Nonprofits organization.

It's an exciting time to be an AAUW member. Whether you value AAUW because you believe in the mission, or because it offers opportunities to upgrade your skills, or because you want to be part of a national network of informed college graduates, or because you can make significant contributions to your community, one thing is surely true: AAUW is a provider of possibilities — a provider of possibilities — an organization through which, together, we are breaking through barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

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***\* Jo Harberson is currently a member of the AAUW Leadership Corps. She belongs to the AAUW CA bylaws committee and its nominations and elections task force. She is on the Virginia Gildersleeve International fund bylaws committee. She is a member of 5 California branches, and Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek is her primary branch.***