

AAUW STATE COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN, 2023-2026

NEW GOALS FOR A NEW TIME

Branch members identified four interrelated themes to focus and guide our impact from 2023-2026:

- Organizational Stability and Sustainability
- Used Book Sale and Fund-Raising
- Communications
- Contributions to Society and Community Engagement

NOTE: The strategies marked with * have Branch budget implications.

THEME: ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

“Without engaged members, our branch will dwindle and fall apart.”

Goal 1: Strengthen our organizational model to make it more effective and efficient.

Strategies:

- Appoint a task force in 2023-24 to study the organization and management of the Branch (optimal size of board, appropriateness of committees, management of workload distribution, timing and format of meetings, etc.) and to make recommendations for improvements.
- Establish Branch priorities every year based on the *Strategic Plan* and the current circumstances; this is a Board responsibility.
- Revisit committee and chair job descriptions, possibly adding participation in recruitment of members to chairs' responsibilities.
- Collaborate and engage with AAUW PA and AAUW national to benefit the Branch.
- Prepare a brief annual summary covering activities, budget usage summary, community outreach, membership recruitment, etc., and whether goals in the *Strategic Plan* were achieved; publicize items of interest in the Bulletin and elsewhere.

Goal 2: Provide leadership development opportunities and more support for Board members.

Strategies:

- Continue to pursue succession planning through staggered officer terms.
- Institute an annual orientation for Board members and establish a formal mentoring program.
- Accentuate ways to engage Board members, such as contributions to the *Branch Bulletin*, social occasions, and recognizing and taking advantage of board members' individual expertise.
- Define the new position of Co-Vice-President/President-Elect by having them fully participate as officers on the Board and by delegating to them responsibilities that can prepare them for the presidency.
- Investigate hiring part-time assistance to keep us organized and allow Branch leaders to concentrate on mission-based activities.

Goal 3: Ensure optimum financial stability for the Branch.

Strategies:

- Exercise prudent stewardship and establish a financial policy moving forward.
- Inform members of what we expend on Community Action Grants, STEM, and scholarships over the past “x years, and how much is available that could be redistributed or used differently while still keeping some money safe for the future.
- Formulate a clear plan for the monies in the Morgan Stanley account and the interest it generates.
- Investigate alternative sources of funding, such as grant proposals for supporting Branch-initiated projects.
- Integrate new payment methods into our operations, e.g., Google Wallet, Venmo, etc.

Goal 4: Continue to build a diverse, relevant, community-reflective organization that is welcoming and inclusive.

“Diversity in our membership should be an active goal, not just a sentiment.”

Strategies:

- Emphasize that we are an organization that fosters equity for all, regardless of gender, race, religion, age, education, sexual orientation, or ethnic background, and integrate inclusion into all of our activities.
- Investigate opportunities for diversity/inclusion education from AAUW.
- Directly engage diverse types of members to generate ideas.
- Continue collaboration with other local organizations to try new approaches, e.g., National Day of Racial Healing.
- Consider participating in an equity-oriented service project with the local community that involves branch-wide participation.
- Continue to focus on membership and recruitment, particularly ways to attract and retain members in different age groups.
- Support AAUW’s efforts to eliminate the educational requirement for membership so that AAUW can fully embrace equity for all women and welcome all into the organization.

Goal 5: Implement new ideas and enhancements that attract, engage, and support members.

Strategies:

- Implement regular turnover of committee chairs and members to enable more members to engage in the Branch and to ensure an influx of fresh ideas.
- Improve communications about volunteer and program activities to engage new and current members, including adding pop-up information on the website membership page.
- Consider a Social Chair/committee, possibly in collaboration with Program and Membership, with a budget to encourage membership involvement and to build inter-relationships within the Branch; investigate less expensive options such as home-hosted events, a “suggested registration fee or pay what you can” option. *

Goal 6: Develop robust programming that fosters our mission, promotes community engagement, and attracts new members.

Strategies:

- Focus on mission-based programming.
- Explore and expand programming partnerships with community groups that support our mission.
- Explore the best ways to publicize the programs to both our internal and external constituencies.
- Capitalize on the expertise that exists among our membership.

THEME: USED BOOK SALE AND FUND-RAISING

The Used Book Sale is key to our sustainability. Its leadership believes that the Used Book Sale has viability as our primary economic engine for at least several more years and that *“there are no challenges that we cannot overcome.”*

Although the Used Book Sale is an integral part of the Branch, it is treated in the *Strategic Plan* as a separate theme because it has its own leadership structure and a business orientation.

GOAL 1: Increase the income from the Used Book Sale.

Strategies:

- Consider charging an entrance fee, e.g., \$20, for early morning customers during the first hour of the sale on Saturday.
- Secure sponsorships for the Used Book Sale to offset expenses, starting with sponsorships of at least \$1000 for the 2024 sale.
- Apply to Happy Valley Adventure Bureau for financial sponsorship of the Book Sale since it brings nonresidents to Centre County
- Increase prices for Bag Day and Blind Date with a Book starting with the 2024 sale.
- Discuss pricing guidelines with Used Book Sale volunteers to ensure consistency and to increase income.
- Identify ways to solicit and collect information from Used Book Sale attendees that can be used in planning efforts.
- Publicize the database of higher-priced, desirable books so customers besides dealers know about it.
- Investigate income models used by other Used Book Sales.

GOAL 2: Recruit and expand leadership for the Used Book Sale.

Strategies:

- Encourage leadership participation from Used Book Sale volunteers by contacting them after the Used Book Sale to determine their interest.
- Break apart the responsibilities currently handled by the Used Book Sale leadership to enable more volunteers to participate, to share in responsibilities, and to expand the number of those who have a deeper understanding of the Used Book Sale processes.
- Explore the viability of partnerships with other community organizations, e.g., Centre Region Library, Altrusa, etc., to expand opportunities for Used Book Sale sponsorship and new leadership.
- Consider hiring a part-time employee to provide leadership and/or administrative support. *

THEME: COMMUNICATIONS

The assessment of the *2018-2022 Strategic Plan* documented many advances in how the Branch communicates with both its internal and external audiences. The health and visibility of the Branch is dependent on effective Branch marketing and communication efforts. The Branch increasingly should employ emerging technologies and communications vehicles such as social media to be a successful communicator to its constituencies.

GOAL 1: Improve intra-Branch communications among the Board, the Used Book Sale leadership, the membership, and volunteers.

Strategies:

- Create a “members only” page on the Branch website to include an accessible web-based *Handbook/Directory*, Board minutes, etc., by engaging professional assistance.*
- Incorporate into the *Handbook/Directory* our members’ employment and professional backgrounds to learn what skills members possess so that they can be tapped.*
- Maintain all important Branch documents on a Google Drive and make them easily accessible to all members.
- Create a Google form to facilitate the submission of items to the *Branch Bulletin*, our website calendar, and other informational outlets.
- Appoint a liaison from each Branch committee to the VP for Marketing & Communications.
- Ensure that all Board members are aware of and have access to marketing guidelines, e.g., *Branch Style Manual*, templates, logos, and other materials.
- Survey Branch members to determine their preferred communication methods, and experiment with online members-only forums, e.g., Facebook, to provide them with new options for engaging with the Branch while recognizing that not all members use social media, texting, etc.

Goal 2: Improve Branch communications and marketing to the broad, external community.

Strategies:

- Update the Media Contacts List annually.
- Create a schedule with assignments for updating and maintaining the website.
- Boost postings on social media to expand our audience for programs, the Used Book Sale, etc. and encourage “likes” to drive more traffic to our pages. *
- Update current promotional material and create promotional materials where there is an identified need, e.g., membership brochure. Consider outsourcing the creation of some materials to an intern or a company that specializes in publications, both digital and print. *
- Generate and maintain a community events schedule for AAUW State College representatives to attend to improve Branch visibility.
- Watch for emerging technologies and programs that can assist our marketing and communications efforts, e.g., Bitly account, Google for Non-Profits, etc. *
- Maintain consistency in our branding.

THEME: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Goal 1: Expand outreach and awareness of our community contributions.

“Outreach involves looking both outward and inward, since the branch itself is a community.”

Strategies:

- Appoint a task force in 2023-24 to explore whether a change in the Branch name, e.g., AAUW Centre, AAUW North Central PA, etc., would make a statement about our Branch being a welcoming organization, serving a broader geographic region than State College, and seeking a more inclusive membership.
- Determine the impact of expanding our geographic outreach on our programming and community outreach initiatives.
- Identify complementary community organizations and investigate collaborative relationships and communications where appropriate.

Goal 2: Evaluate our community outreach initiatives to develop and improve them, guided by a holistic view of women’s development.

Strategies:

- Request that the relevant committees study our Community Action Grants and Scholarships programs—criteria, publicity, process, calendar, funding, etc.—and make recommendations for improvements.
- Educate our internal and external constituencies about what has been committed to and accomplished through our Community Action Grants, Scholarships, and STEM programs and how they connect to our mission.

Goal 3: Clarify and promote the Branch’s stance on advocacy.

Strategies:

- Identify two or three areas, recommended by Public Policy and subject to approval of the Board, on which we can focus to actively advocate for positive change. *
- Consider adopting these areas as themes that can be integrated into our programming, community activities, and educational efforts.
- Expand the Public Policy Committee in membership, providing the ability to focus enhanced attention on issues important to AAUW and specifically to our community.
- Ensure that our Public Policy focus fits under the umbrellas of AAUW’s identified issues.
- Partner with organizations that share our mission on the themes that the Branch has adopted for our advocacy efforts.