



AAU Membership Policy

The Association of American Universities is an association of leading comprehensive¹ research universities distinguished by the breadth and quality of their programs of research and graduate education. Membership in the association is by invitation. The association maintains a standing Membership Committee, which periodically evaluates both non-member universities for possible membership and current members for continued membership, with the goal of ensuring that the association in fact comprises comparable leading research-intensive universities. Non-member universities whose research and education profile exceeds that of a number of current members may be invited to join the association; current members whose research and education profile falls significantly below that of other current members or below the criteria for admission of new members will be subject to further review and possible discontinuation of membership.

While the association does not have a specific limit on the number of its members, it values remaining a relatively small organization whose composition enables productive meetings and collegial relationships among the member presidents and chancellors. It endeavors to balance these characteristics of the association with the expectation that its membership will include the leading research-intensive universities.

Adopted January 12, 1999
Revised April 20, 2010

¹ The term “comprehensive” is intended to specify institutions with a broad range of degree-granting undergraduate programs as well as programs of research and graduate education.

AAU Membership Principles

In its evaluation of institutions, the Membership Committee is guided by a set of Membership Principles and Membership Indicators, presented below. The Membership Principles specify the primary purpose of the association and the corresponding characteristics of its member institutions. The Membership Indicators are a two-phase set of quantitative measures used to assess the breadth and quality of university programs of research and graduate education.

In assessing potential new member universities, the evaluation of university profiles based on the Membership Indicators is the first stage of a two-stage process used to identify institutions that may be invited into membership. The second stage involves a more qualitative set of judgments about an institution's mission, characteristics, and trajectory.

- 1) The primary purpose of AAU should be to provide a forum for the development and implementation of institutional and national policies promoting strong programs of academic research and scholarship and undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.
- 2) The members of AAU should be comprehensive universities distinguished by the disciplinary breadth and quality of their programs of graduate education and research.
- 3) The members of AAU shall approve appropriate criteria for assessing the breadth and quality of these programs, and shall apply these criteria in making judgments about potential new members of the Association and in the assessment of current members.
- 4) All current members are subject to periodic review by the Membership Committee. In those instances in which there appears to be a significant and sustained disparity between the mission or accomplishments of a member institution and that of other members of the association, or that of non-members deemed deserving of membership, an in-depth review of that institution will be initiated by the Membership Committee. Discontinuation of membership will be one possible outcome of this in-depth review.

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AAU Membership Indicators

The AAU presidents and chancellors have adopted the following set of membership indicators to use in assessments of current and potential new members. All indicators will be tabulated as both total values and normalized, per-faculty measures where feasible. In assessing non-U.S. institutions, comparable indicators appropriate to those institutions will be used.

These indicators are divided into Phase I indicators, which will be used as the primary indicators of institutional breadth and quality in research and education, and Phase II indicators, which will be used to provide additional important calibrations of institutional research and education programs.

Both the Phase I and Phase II indicators constitute the first stage of membership assessment. The second stage involves a more qualitative set of judgements about institutions and their trajectories.

Phase I Indicators

- 1) *Competitively funded federal research support*: The Membership Committee uses National Science Foundation (NSF) research expenditure data, excluding USDA expenditures. Most USDA funding is not allocated competitively, and USDA support accordingly is included as a Phase II indicator. (Prior to expenditure data being allocated by agency, the Membership Committee used a correction factor to subtract the estimated proportion of university expenditures drawn from USDA according to the following formula: federal expenditures – [federal expenditures x (USDA obligations/total federal obligations)].)
- 2) *Membership in the National Academies (NAS, NAE, IOM)*: The National Academies' membership database maintains the current institutional affiliation of its members.
- 3) *National Research Council faculty quality ratings*: These ratings are drawn from the national assessments of research-doctorate programs conducted by the NRC. Though the data become dated between surveys, the committee believes that they continue to provide a valuable peer-assessment of faculty quality. The last NRC report was published in 1995 based on 1993 data.

Ratings from this report have not been used in recent years due to the age of the available data; the Committee will evaluate the utility of data from the NRC research doctorate assessment currently underway once it is released.

- 4) *Faculty arts and humanities awards, fellowships, and memberships*: The Membership Committee gathers data on faculty awards, fellowships and memberships as an additional assessment of the distinction of an institution's faculty, focusing on the arts and humanities faculty ([Attachment 1](#)). Additional appropriate awards, fellowships, and memberships will be added to this list as they are identified.
- 5) *Citations*: The *U.S. University Science Indicators* citations database provides an annually updated measure of both research volume and quality and will provide a valuable complement to the first four indicators listed above.

Phase II Indicators

- 1) *USDA, state, and industrial research funding:* Though these three sources of academic research support fund important, high-quality research, they are treated as phase II indicators since they are generally not allocated through competitive, merit-review processes. Competitively funded USDA research programs that can be separately identified in reported data are included in phase I data.
- 2) *Doctoral education:* The Committee uses number of Ph.D.s granted annually as well as tabulate the distribution of Ph.D.s across broad disciplinary categories (e.g., engineering but not aerospace engineering), using Department of Education IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) data. These data are treated as phase II indicators to de-emphasize the quantitative dimensions of Ph.D. programs and avoid sending an unintended signal to institutions to increase Ph.D. output.
- 3) *Number of postdoctoral appointees:* The Committee uses NSF-compiled data from institutions on postdoctoral appointees, most of whom are in the health sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. Postdoctoral education is an increasingly important component of university research and education activities that the committee believes should be tracked in AAU membership indicators. However, because postdoctoral activity is highly correlated with university research and because self-reported postdoctoral data are less uniform than data on federally funded research, postdoctoral appointees are treated as a phase II indicator.
- 4) *Undergraduate education:* The Committee assesses the institution's undergraduate programs to determine that the institution is meeting its commitment to undergraduate education. Recognizing that differing institutional missions among research universities dictate different ways of providing undergraduate education, the committee will be flexible in this assessment. A number of measures have been suggested, including some that focus on input and others that look primarily at output variables. These are at this time imperfect, but may provide some guidance to the committee in making its judgments on this topic.

[Attachment 2](#) shows the source of the indicator data.

Adopted July 18, 2000

List of Awards, Fellowships and Memberships

Collected by AAU

American Academy in Rome
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
American Antiquarian Society Fellowships
American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellows
American School of Classical Studies in Athens Fellowships
Fields Medal
National Academy of Education
Nobel Prize
Residency at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts
Residency at the Institute for Advanced Study

Collected by The Center for Measuring University Performance

American Council of Learned Societies
Beckman Foundation Young Investigator Awards
Burroughs-Wellcome Career Awards in the Biomedical Sciences
Cottrell Scholars
Fulbright (American)
Getty
Guggenheim
Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators
Lasker Medical Research Awards
MacArthur Foundation Fellowships
Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Awards
National Endowment for the Humanities
National Humanities Center
National Medal of Science
National Medal of Technology
Newberry Library
NIH MERIT (R37) and Outstanding Investigator (R35) awards
NSF CAREER Awards
Pew Scholars in Biomedicine
Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE)
Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowships
Searle Scholars
Sloan Fellowships
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Honor Award
Woodrow Wilson Center

AAU MEMBERSHIP INDICATORS: Data Sources

Phase I Indicators

Competitively funded federal research support: federal R&D expenditures

National Science Foundation (NSF) Survey of Research and Development (R&D) Expenditures at Universities and Colleges conducted by the NSF Division of Science Resources Statistics (SRS), data for the most recently available three-year average. The USDA proportion of university expenditures are subtracted from the Phase I research expenditures as non-competitive funding; that amount is added into the Phase II State, Local and Industry funding. In those cases where expenditures are reported to NSF for university systems, the figure used is corrected to reflect expenditures for the respective campus only.

Memberships in the National Academies (NAS, NAE, IOM)

Compiled from the membership lists of each academy; lists can be found at:

- <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/nas/nashome.nsf/WebLink/members?OpenDocument>
- <http://www.nae.edu/nae/naepub.nsf/Members+By+Parent+Institution?openview>
- <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/iom/iompub.nsf/>

Membership data also can be found at The Center for Measuring University Performance, Arizona State University. http://mup.asu.edu/research_data.html

National Research Council faculty quality ratings

Goldberger, Marvin L., Brendan A. Maher and Pamela Ebert Flattau, Eds. *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1995. The NRC report presents faculty quality ratings by academic department; AAU indicator data are institutional averages of departmental ratings compiled by NSF (via WebCASPAR).

Note: The NRC faculty quality indicators have not been used in recent years due to the age of the available data; the Committee will evaluate the utility of data from the NRC research doctorate assessment currently underway once it is released.

Faculty arts and humanities awards, fellowships, and memberships

AAU data are number of faculty members by institution receiving awards, fellowships, and memberships primarily in the arts and humanities. The AAU list (Attachment 1 above) includes awards and fellowships tabulated by The Center for Measuring University Performance at Arizona State University plus those additional awards from AAU's list not included in The Center. http://mup.asu.edu/research_data.html

Citations: The U.S. University Science Indicators

AAU indicators uses the average of the institution's citation data for the most recently available three-year average in five year increments. Citation data compiled by the Institute for Scientific Information; the data were drawn from an ISI CD-ROM, *University Science Indicators, 1981-2006, Deluxe Version*.

Phase II Indicators

USDA, state, and industrial research funding

National Science Foundation (NSF) Survey of Research and Development (R&D) Expenditures at Universities and Colleges conducted by the NSF Division of Science Resources Statistics (SRS), data for the most recently available three-year average. (All data gathered via WebCASPAR.)

Note: Prior to expenditure data being allocated by agency, the Membership Committee used a correction factor to subtract the estimated proportion of university expenditures drawn from USDA according to the following formula: federal expenditures – [federal expenditures x (USDA obligations/total federal obligations)].

Doctoral Education

Number of doctorates compiled from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) completions survey data for the most recently available three-year average. (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/Default.aspx>)

Number of Postdoctoral Appointees

NSF-NIH Survey of Graduate Students & Postdoctorates in S&E, conducted by the NSF Division of Science Resources Statistics (SRS), data for the most recently available three-year average. (via WebCASPAR).

Faculty Counts for Normalization

The faculty counts for normalization are drawn from two sources:

- 1) IPEDS Salary Survey, data for the most recently available three-year average. Data available at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>.

IPEDS Employee Assigned by Position (EAP) Descriptors:

- Full-time – tenure track faculty (full-time non-medical)
 - Primarily Instruction
 - Primarily Research
 - Instruction combined with research/public service
- 2) For institutions with medical schools, the average data for the most recently available three-year average basic science medical school faculty numbers, as compiled by the Association of American Medical Colleges, are added to the IPEDS total. (<http://www.aamc.org/data/facultyroster/reports.htm>)

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