

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.

In its evaluation of institutions, the Membership Committee is guided by a set of Membership Principles and Membership Indicators. 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.

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

- 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.

Adopted January 12, 1999
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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 actual 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 formula-allocated USDA research expenditures and American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) expenditures. Funding for the Agriculture Food and Research Initiative (AFRI), a competitively funded USDA research support program, is included in the Phase I research support indicator.
- 2) *Membership in the National Academies (NAS, NAE, IOM):* The National Academies' membership database maintains the current institutional affiliation of its members.
- 3) *Faculty 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. Additional appropriate awards, fellowships, and memberships will be added to this list as they are identified.
- 4) *Citations:* Thomson Reuters *InCites*TM 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, such as AFRI, 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, 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 1 shows the source of the indicator data.

Adopted July 18, 2000
Updated October, 2012

AAU MEMBERSHIP INDICATORS: Data Sources

Phase I Indicators

Competitively funded federal research support: federal R&D expenditures

A three-year average of federal research expenditures (including S&E and non-S&E) adjusted to exclude ARRA and USDA formula-allocated research expenditures. This indicator does include annualized obligations for the AFRI program funded by USDA.

- National Science Foundation (NSF) Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges/Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD), data for the most recently available three-year average.
<https://webcaspar.nsf.gov/index.jsp?subHeader=WebCASPARHome>.
- AFRI Obligations, data for the most recently available three-year average.
USASpending.gov - <http://www.usaspending.gov/data>

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

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

- National Academies of Sciences:
<http://nas.nasonline.org/site/Dir?sid=1011&view=basic&pg=srch>;
- National Academy of Engineering: <http://www.nae.edu/default.aspx?id=20412>
- Institute of Medicine of the National Academies:
<http://www.iom.edu/Global/Directory.aspx?type={A75AB05B-9C36-4917-8FE3-ACA7E5CC580C}>

Faculty awards, fellowships, and memberships

Number of faculty members by institution receiving awards, fellowships, and memberships in the National Research Council (NRC) list of highly prestigious awards that included: research/scholarship awards, teaching awards, prestigious fellowships or memberships in honorary societies. Data for Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, Newberry Library Fellowship, Studies at Athens Award, and Research Corporation Cottrell Scholar Award are included as well.

- The Faculty Scholarly Productivity (FSP) Database, 2012. These data are reproduced under a contractual agreement with Academic Analytics. <http://academicanalytics.com/>.
- The list of the NRC highly prestigious awards can be found at:
http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/Resdoc/PGA_044718.

Citations

The average of the institution's citation data for the most recent three overlapping five-year increments (*e.g.*, 2006-2010, 2008-2011, 2009-2012).

- InCites™, Thomson Reuters (2014). Web of Science. ® These data are reproduced under a license from Thomson Reuters.
http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science/.

Phase II Indicators

USDA, state, and industrial research funding

National Science Foundation (NSF) Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges/Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD), data for the most recently available three-year average.

<https://webcaspar.nsf.gov/index.jsp?subHeader=WebCASPARHome>.

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. <https://webcaspar.nsf.gov/index.jsp?subHeader=WebCASPARHome>.

Faculty Counts for Normalization

The faculty counts for normalization are drawn from two sources:

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

Through 2011: *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

Beginning in 2012: *IPEDS Employee Assigned by Position (EAP) Descriptors (all categories are for full-time institutional employees—excluding medical schools—with faculty status who are on the tenure track or tenured):*

- Instructional staff, primarily instruction
- Instructional staff, instruction/research/public service
- Research
- Management

- 2) For institutions with medical schools, the average for the most recently available three-year average basic science medical school faculty counts, as compiled by the Association of American Medical Colleges, are added to the IPEDS total. <https://www.aamc.org/data/facultyroster/reports/>.

Adopted January 18, 2002
Updated October, 2012