

AAUW Iowa History

In 1890, three Iowans joined the Association of Collegiate Alumni. This was the predecessor of the American Association of University Women. At this time, no Iowa college or university was on the accredited list of the Association of Collegiate Alumni making it difficult to secure members in Iowa in the 1890's.

However, ten or more members within a state could form a State Branch. Thus, in 1903, the Iowa Branch was recognized. By 1911, the Iowa Branch was declared non-existent, because Iowa no longer had 10 paying members. In 1909, a branch was formed by women living in Davenport, Iowa and Rock Island and Moline, Illinois, across state lines. [That branch, now QC Iowa-Davenport/Bettendorf celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2009.]

By 1921, the name American Association of University Women was used, and AAUW branches were being formed in communities across Iowa. State Divisions [organizations] came into being when branches wanted to be able to function as a unit within their own state in order to have more contacts with other branches throughout the state.

A few states already had state organizations when representatives of the Iowa branches got together in Des Moines on April 14, 1923 and voted to form a State Division. At this time there were eleven branches in the state. Nine of those branches came together in Des Moines for the purpose of making decisions concerning a state organization. The nine branches represented were: Des Moines, Ames, Burlington, Manchester, Dubuque, Marshalltown, Red Oak, Sioux City and Waterloo. The Mt. Vernon and Keokuk branches were not present but sent reports.

The first State Convention was held in March of the following year. A constitution and bylaws were accepted at this first State Division convention in Des Moines; thus, the Iowa State Division of the American Association of University Women was officially 'born' on March 8, 1924. Annual dues were set at ten cents per branch member. Increases in membership and dues have allowed the Division to expand its activities and effectiveness.

State Conventions became important and met annually at first, but by the end of the 1920's the Conventions were biennial. In the year opposite from the Convention, an Annual Meeting was held. Presently AAUW Iowa holds Annual Meetings each year that incorporate the programs of the Convention structure while allowing for business meeting action also.

During the biennium between Conventions, Iowa State Division held a variety of other state meetings – "board meetings, November luncheons, workshops of varying sort and name brought together members from every branch for good fellowship and for serious consideration of educational needs and techniques." [Jackson, p. 13] The State Division Board held an annual summer Board Meeting as well as a fall Board meeting to plan for the year's activities and the Convention or Annual Meeting scheduled for that year. This meeting cycle continues to today.

States may work with other state AAUW organizations in efforts to effect changes in policies and activities of the Association. Iowa AAUW has always worked closely with the other states in the region on matters of special concern to the region.

Presently, AAUW has divided the country into Regions with a Regional Director who serves on the Association Board of Directors and is a liaison between the Association and members in the Region. Regional conferences are 2-day meetings generally held in June of even numbered years. Iowa belongs to the Upper Midwest Region consisting of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Early information from "The History of the Iowa Division of the American Association of University Women from its beginnings in Iowa to the Autumn of 1963 – by Ruth M. Jackson