

AAU MEMBERSHIP Q&A

1. Can I apply to be a member of AAU?

Membership in the association is by invitation and governed by AAU's Board of Directors. 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. The committee forwards recommendations to the board for consideration.

2. Why isn't my university a member?

Institutions must be a leading and comprehensive research university distinguished by the breadth and quality of their programs in academic research, scholarship, and graduate education. 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.

3. How are membership decisions made?

The Membership Committee is guided by a set of membership principles and 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 at U.S.-based institutions.

The AAU Board of Directors makes all decisions on AAU membership.

4. What are the membership indicators?

The indicator data is used to identify the leading comprehensive research universities. The indicators measure the research output of the faculty.

These indicators are divided into two phases:

- Phase I indicators are used as the primary indicators of institutional breadth and quality in research and education.

- Phase II indicators are used to provide additional important calibrations of institutional research and education programs.

The Membership Committee reviews data for each indicator on the total value (# of dollars, citations, honors, awards, & fellowships, etc.), but also normalized by the number of tenured or tenure-track faculty. *This normalization process measures the research output per faculty for each of the indicators.*

a. Phase I

- Competitively** funded federal research support
- Highly prestigious faculty awards, fellowships, and memberships (link to list)
- Citations
- Books published

b. Phase II

- USDA, state, and industrial research funding
- Doctoral education
- Number of postdoctoral appointees

c. Normalization

- Full-time 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
- For institutions with a medical school, the basic science medical school faculty counts are included.

5. USDA is a federal agency, so why does the federal research expenditures not include USDA funding?

As noted above, Phase I federal research support must be competitively funded. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is a competitive grants program for agricultural sciences and is included in the federal research support indicator. The remaining USDA funding is included in the Phase II USDA, state, local, and industry research funding indicator.

6. Is there a cap on the number of AAU members?

While the association does not have a specific limit on the number of its members, it values maintaining a size that enables productive meetings and collegial relationships among the member presidents and chancellors. We seek to balance these characteristics with the expectation that its membership will include the leading research-intensive universities.