

Transitions: An AAUW Conference for Woman Considering a Return to School

Why a Transitions Conference?

According to the AAUW EF's 1999 report *Gaining a Foothold: Women's Transitions Through Work and College*, women have a dual agenda in returning to school: economic (career, income) and self-fulfillment (personal enrichment). They also face many obstacles such as:

- Money for tuition and other expenses
- Credit card debt
- Academic and test performance anxiety
- Lack of knowledge about the college application and selection process
- Lack of information about careers
- Age (feeling too old) and lack of spousal support

What can AAUW do?

Branches can sponsor a one-day Transitions conference to help women achieve their personal or career goals of returning to college or graduate school. Co-sponsored by a local college or university and held on campus, the conference should encourage women by addressing some of the obstacles they face in returning to school. The conference is also designed to raise awareness among institutions about the needs of returning students.

You can also adapt the conference to target at-risk high school girls because many of the issues covered in the conference are relevant to traditional-age students, especially those not on the "college track."

Components of a Transitions Conference

- **Welcome/Keynote** – Stress that returning to school can be done. Set the stage for support, networking and information sharing.
- **Workshops** – Focus on overcoming perceived barriers to returning to school such as
 - Resources for balancing work, school and family
 - Obtaining financial support for school
 - Resources for career planning & counseling
 - The college admissions process
 - Networking opportunities
 - Finding a Mentor
- **Location** – Hold on a college campus to give participants an opportunity to visit a campus
- **Lunch** – Have lunch in a campus dining facility. Invite returning women students to join you at lunch so conference participants can talk first hand with someone who has gone back to school. Or invite local professional women to join you at lunch so participants can begin networking.
- **Campus Tour** – Offer a tour of the campus to participants, including the library and computer labs. For some returning students, technology can a barrier, so let them know about opportunities to learn how to use campus systems.
- **Wrap-Up** – Give participants a chance to ask final questions and let them know about other resources to help them if they decide to return to school.

For more information about Transitions Conferences, contact AAAUW Program and State Support Office at 202/785-7712.