



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **University of Indianapolis faculty member receives grant to help teenagers become politically engaged**



INDIANAPOLIS, IN – Laura Merrifield Wilson, associate professor of political science at the University of Indianapolis, was awarded a Faculty Fellowship grant worth \$5,000 from [Indiana Campus Compact](#), a partnership of higher education institutions that prepares college students to advance the public good. Merrifield Wilson will work on a collaborative research project with other Faculty Fellows across Indiana, as well as an individual project enabling 16- and 17-year-olds to serve as poll workers for academic recognition.

“In Indiana, 16- and 17-year-olds are eligible to serve as election poll workers, giving them a unique hands-on experience in civic engagement that can change their political perspective and behavior entirely, all before they are actually able to vote themselves,” she said. “This project serves as a catalyst for long-term change, connecting key stakeholders across the state with the collaborative focus on improving educational experiences and civic engagement in Indiana.”

In her project, Merrifield Wilson will work to improve the [Hoosier Hall Pass](#) program in tandem with the Association of Clerks of Circuit Courts of Indiana, the Indiana Secretary of State’s Office, and the Indiana Council for Social Studies. The program currently exists, but it is sparsely utilized because of minimal infrastructure and lack of awareness and incentivization. Merrifield Wilson and UIndy students will create a toolkit – an easy-to-promote, easy-to-use, participation-ready mechanism for communities to enable teenagers to become poll workers.

To create the toolkit, UIndy students will work on identifying the needs and interests of the key stakeholders through polling and public relations. They will be responsible for the construction and analysis of the polling process to assess the best ways to meet needs for clerks (who recruit and train poll workers) and high school social studies teachers (who may encourage their students to become poll workers).

In her letter of support, Marianna K. Foulkrod, director of the Center for Service-Learning & Community Engagement at UIndy said, “Laura has worked diligently and intentionally to not only cultivate relationships with community partners, but to further the mission of UIndy and the promise of her discipline. UIndy’s motto, ‘education for service,’ is a commitment to challenging our students not only to learn, but to act and apply what they learn for the betterment of their community. The Hoosier Hall Pass program offers an incredible opportunity to connect with new community partners to establish a project that can be truly statewide in reach, and to nurture students in the practice of critical service-learning scholarship.”

UIndy is adding \$1,500 in matching funds to the \$5,000 Faculty Fellows grant from Indiana Campus Compact. The university’s contribution highlights its commitment to leveraging its resources to benefit the community.

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### **About Indiana Campus Compact**

Indiana Campus Compact is a partnership of Indiana’s public, private, and community college higher education institutions focused on advocating, implementing, and improving service engagement, so that students graduate as well-informed, engaged and productive members of society, who are fully enabled to provide leadership and service that advances the public good in their communities. For more information, please visit [www.indianacampuscompact.org](http://www.indianacampuscompact.org).