AAUW
Big Rapids (MI) Branch

On behalf of AAUW-Big Rapids, I am delighted to nominate Dr. Sarah Lucas for the AAUWMI Young Leader Award. Sarah joined our branch in September 2021 shortly after moving back to her hometown of Big Rapids to teach philosophy at Ferris State University, finish her doctoral dissertation (she graduated with her Ph.D. from Purdue University this past summer), and raise her family. She and her husband have two young daughters. Sarah is a busy woman.

During her first year as a branch member, Sarah agreed to serve as co-vice president of membership. The branch had experienced attrition in recent years due to illness, members moving away, and a not very robust recruitment strategy. Sarah and her first co-VP developed a new outreach and recruitment program we call "Cocktails & Convos." The "Cocktails & Convos" concept, which we have used for four years now, is described in the AAUWMI Membership Team Playbook. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of Sarah and her first co-VP colleague, we had eleven new members join the branch in FY22-23. Sarah was a solo Membership VP in FY 23-24, and we added four new members that year. She recruited a new co-VP for FY24-25, and we've gained four new members since then, including our very first Ferris student member, a young woman taking one of Sarah's classes. Many of our new members are considerably younger than the average AAUW member.

In addition to being a highly effective membership recruiter and program organizer, Sarah has participated in our annual used book sale that raises money for our branch scholarships. She regularly recruits some of her students to help with sale set up and take down. This year, she agreed to chair our scholarship committee. In December, we awarded three $2000 scholarships to nontraditional Ferris students in their junior or senior year for the spring 2026 semester. Sarah did all the legwork to advertise the scholarship on both the main campus and Ferris' other locations across the state. Fifty students applied by the deadline. Sarah also created a rubric to assist scholarship committee members in scoring the applicants and selecting the most qualified students as award recipients. The next scholarship committee chair will have much more comprehensive documentation and clear procedures to follow thanks to Sarah.

Besides being very engaged in branch activities and being active in the Big Rapids community (e.g., she is a board member for W.I.S.E., the local women's shelter, and the chair of the Big Rapids Community Library Board of Trustees), Sarah is serving her third year on the AAUWMI Membership Committee led by Eva Habib. Sarah debuted an early version of a new member orientation PowerPoint presentation produced by the state Membership Committee to our branch's newer members this past spring.

I believe Sarah meets all the criteria for this award outlined on the nomination form, and her AAUW sisters of the Big Rapids branch enthusiastically back her candidacy for the award.

Leah M. Monger
AAUW-Big Rapids President