PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Robin A. Beck, assistant professor of anthropology, and assistant curator, Museum of Anthropology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, and associate curator, Museum of Anthropology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:
Ph.D. 2004 Northwestern University
M.A. 1997 University of Alabama
B.A. 1991 University of North Carolina

Professional Record:
2010 – present  Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, and Assistant Curator, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan
2006 – 2009  Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Oklahoma

Summary of Evaluation:
Teaching – Professor Beck’s courses range from undergraduate lectures to graduate seminars and cover comparative civilizations, North American archaeology, the analysis of art and iconography, prehistoric ethnicity, and political economy. Student evaluations of his courses are very high and compare favorably with that of the best senior professors. He is an outstanding mentor, and in the few years he has been at Michigan has chaired six doctoral committees and served as a member of two others. Students comment on his conscientiousness in helping them develop new and independent research projects, in publishing results under their own name, and in their notable success in gaining external National Science Foundation funding for their dissertation fieldwork.

Research – Professor Beck’s research area is American archaeology in the southeast with a particular focus on North Carolina. Prior to coming to Michigan, he had published one book, eight articles, four book chapters, and five short articles. To those he has added some of his most significant publications to date, including two books (one published; one under contract) and two articles. His 2013 book, Chiefdoms, Collapse, and Coalescence in the Early American South, brings together excavation data and new theoretical frameworks developed by archaeologists, historians, ethnohistorians, social theorists, and geographers. It is the definitive book on the Catawba because Professor Beck comprehensively explains which short-term and long-term processes led this ethnic group to emerge and reorganize itself in the face of the Europeans’ arrival in America. His forthcoming book (co-edited with C. Rodning and D. Moore) is a major site report that will provide excavation data and theoretical insights found nowhere else. Professor Beck’s research has been consistently funded by the National Science Foundation along with a research and exploration grant from the National Geographic Society.
Recent and Significant Publications:


Service – Professor Beck has contributed important service to his units, the university, and the nation. He served on two successful archaeology search committees and is now mentoring these new hires. He has also served on the departmental Executive, Curriculum Archaeology Admissions, and Four-field Speaker Colloquium Series committees. Professor Beck has also served on the executive committees of the Museum of Anthropology and the Inter-Departmental Program on Classical Art and Archaeology. At the national level, he is serving on a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) panel and is reviewing NEH, National Science Foundation, and National Geographic proposals.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“Dr. Beck is rapidly becoming one of the major figures on the archaeology of the Native peoples of the prehistoric and early contact Southeast. At a recent special session hosted in honor of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference...Rob was one of six scholars selected to discuss the state of current research and theory in southeastern archaeology. He did a fine job, and the selection gives some idea of the way he is perceived by his colleagues in the region... as someone with good ideas and an excellent track record, well worth listening to.”

Reviewer (B)

“...[Chieftoms, Collapse, and Coalescence in the Early American South] is a likely candidate for the Society for American Archaeology Book Award, among other potential forms of recognition. ... As for professional service, he is clearly committed to his academic responsibilities for peer-review of grants and publications, most recently as a panelist for NEH proposal review. He appears to be engaged at an appropriate level of departmental and university service for his rank.”

Reviewer (C)

“Beck's books form a complementary pair that will undoubtedly cement his reputation as a major scholar. ... Rob has clearly staked out a theoretically supported agenda that will attract attention from a broad constituency and one that has the potential for reaching beyond the borders of traditional archaeology and even anthropology.”
Reviewer (D)
"...Beck has compiled a body of published research that exceeds the average (in quality and quantity) that I typically see in the five or six external reviews that I do every year. In my opinion, he has a very strong case for tenure and promotion. ...[Chiefdoms, Collapse, and Coalescence in the Early American South] is one of his more (if not the most) significant publications. It is an ambitious and bold undertaking, and will make its mark..."

Reviewer (E)
"Rob illustrates how we need a true historical anthropology that links the ethnographies with the long histories of societal change. I view his book as a model for a new anthropology, recognizing the importance of dynamic changing societies as the real unit for comparative analysis. ...these publications have the potential to change the discourse of our discipline."

Reviewer (F)
"...[Chiefdoms, Collapse, and Coalescence] is also explicitly interdisciplinary. The archaeology takes center stage, as it should, but Rob also uses the documentary evidence well. Trekking into the historian[']s terrain can be tricky, but Rob uses the documents with care... He also pairs the documentary record with the archaeological record, something that most historians have not been able to do, but which is vital to reconstructing this time period."

Reviewer (G)
"There should be no question that he contributes to multiple, overlapping scholarly communities at Michigan while remaining a leading figure within his field. It is a testament to his contributions to the university intellectual community that he has been a committee member or chair for so many students in his time as faculty at Michigan."

Summary of Recommendation:
Professor Beck is a very successful and energetic researcher who is doing path-breaking work. He plays a crucial role in teaching and mentoring at all levels. He has done important service in his units and to the broader community. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Robin S. Beck be promoted to the rank of associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, and associate curator, Museum of Anthropology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Susan A. Gelman
Heinz Werner Distinguished University Professor,
Professor of Psychology and Interim Dean,
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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