

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

Approved by the Regents

May 17, 2007

Kerry C. Larson, associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1983	Johns Hopkins University
M.A.	1980	Johns Hopkins University
B.A.	1977	University of Iowa

Professional Record:

1998 – 2006	Senior Associate Dean, Horace H. Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan
1988 – present	Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1982 – 1988	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1980 – 1982	Instructor, Department of English, Johns Hopkins University

Teaching – Professor Larson’s teaching has been exemplary and student evaluations at all levels are uniformly strong. Although he has been on a reduced teaching schedule since 1998 while serving as senior associate dean at the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, he has continued his mentorship of dissertation students. Some of these students have gone on to appointments in tenure-track or tenured positions, and one is showing all the signs of becoming a leader in the field of nineteenth-century studies.

Research – Having devoted himself to important work at the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, Professor Larson has returned to his scholarship with impressive results. He has published a number of fine articles and reviews, and his manuscript, *Imagining Equality: Democratic Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, is under contract in the prestigious American literature series at Cambridge University Press. The articles form an impressive addition to the criticism of Emerson; *Imagining Equality* promises to make a serious difference in nineteenth century American literary studies.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Imagining Equality: Democratic Ideology in Nineteenth Century American Literature, Cambridge University Press, under advance contract.

“Song of my self,” in *A Companion to Whitman*, D. Kummings (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, pp. 471-483.

“Emerson’s strange equality,” *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 59, 2004, pp. 315-340.

“Sentimental legacies,” *Review*, 25, 2003, pp. 231-241.

Service – Professor Larson’s service record is superior, and has made a consequential contribution to the department, Rackham, and the University at large. During his service as graduate chair (1996-1998), he provided guidelines for the new third-term review of graduate students, which has now been widely adopted by other departments in the humanities. His efforts at improving graduate education were heightened during his tenure at Rackham where he provided key support to Deans Earl Lewis and Janet Weiss, and where he reconfigured and initiated a number of programs with other institutions and foundations. He garnered a \$1.5 million grant that provides an innovative support system for humanities doctoral students at the point of completing their degrees. He was instrumental in creating professional development opportunities for graduate students and in sustaining—indeed, reviving—the University of Michigan Press.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“*Imagining Equality*, along with his first book on Whitman, *Whitman’s Drama of Consensus*, demonstrates his expertise in American literature, specifically the nineteenth century. ... One of the many aspects of Larson’s work that I find so impressive is his ability to move back and forth between poetry and prose, literary analysis and cultural history, aesthetic considerations and more conventionally understood political ones.”

Reviewer (B)

“Kerry is a masterful close reader of all kinds of texts (fiction, poetry, essays)... His mind seems most engaged by these important texts and the equally important philosophical ideas driving them, not by broad polemics about the future of American literary studies. ...Larson’s four Emerson articles taken together are more substantive and coherent than many monographs... ...these superb essays deserve to be considered as a single, unified body of work.”

Reviewer (C)

“The essays in themselves make a strong case for Larson’s productiveness as a scholar since his promotion to associate. Where his first book established him as an important figure in Whitman studies, the essays he has since written have focused overwhelmingly on Emerson and have made him a significant figure there too. ...*Imagining Equality* will be a major book, one that will make a serious difference to the study of 19th century American literature and even to the study of American literature more generally.”

Reviewer (D)

“The essays and the ‘equality’ project demonstrate that Professor Larson is working with and against the leading scholars in American Studies, tackling the crucial issues with patience and rigor. ... The essays that have appeared since 2001, along with the manuscript, indicate that Larson is building momentum towards joining the best senior scholars in the field.”

Reviewer (E)

“Professor Larson’s work has been a pleasure to read, conceptually engaging and well crafted. ...it advances a fresh argument about antebellum culture, one that resonates with Americans’ aspirations today.”

Reviewer (F)

"...Larson's hand full of essays should be recognized as a significant challenge to current versions of Emerson that would over simplify his complexities... There is a tremendous generosity and a rigorous fairness in Larson's essays that makes them both bracing and refreshing. ...these essays taken together represent a very significant contribution to their field and I hope the new essay on justice...becomes as influential as it clearly deserves to be."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Larson has made an enormous contribution to his field of study, to graduate education, and to Michigan as a whole. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Kerry C. Larson be promoted to the rank of professor of English language and literature, with tenure, in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,
Professor of History, and Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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