

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

Laura K. Kasischke, assistant professor of English, and assistant professor in the Residential College, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of English, with tenure, and associate professor in the Residential College, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A. 1987 University of Michigan  
B.A. 1984 University of Michigan

Professional Record:

2005 – present Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature and the Residential College, University of Michigan  
2004 – 2005 Lecturer III, Department of English Language and Literature and the Residential College, University of Michigan  
2000 – 2004 Member, Poetry and Fiction Faculty, Low-Residency MFA Program Warren Wilson College  
1999 Writer in Residence, Western Michigan University  
1992 – 2002 Instructor, Department of English, Washtenaw Community College

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Kasischke is an excellent teacher and students praise her for the insightful and constructive advice she provides, coupled with the straightforward discipline that she demands. In English she has taught MFA workshops in poetry and fiction writing as well as the thesis workshop in fiction. In the Residential College she has taught creative writing tutorials and advanced narration, along with a First Year Seminar focusing on the personal memoir. She is frequently invited to lecture at writing programs in other universities.

Research – Professor Kasischke has published seven full-length books of poetry since 1992. Two of these volumes are prize-winning collections and two have appeared in print since her appointment to tenure track in 2005. This is remarkable productivity and the consensus among external reviewers and other critics is that the level of artistry is consistently high. Her work is seen as “intuitive” and “visionary,” and she is praised as a neo-Romantic poet whose work evokes the practice of Blake, Rimbaud, Dickinson, and Dylan Thomas. Although the MFA Program considers her appointment primarily to be in poetry, she has also published four literary novels for adults (one since appointment to tenure track) and two young-adult novels (both since appointment to tenure track) and could equally well be eligible for promotion on the basis of her fiction. Very few writers are adept, let alone well regarded and nationally known, in both genres.

Recent and Significant Publications:

*Lilies Without*, poetry collection, Ausable Press, 2007.  
*Gardening in the Dark*, poetry collection, Ausable Press, 2004.

*Be Mine*, novel, Harcourt, 2007.

*Boy Heaven*, young-adult novel, Harper Collins, 2006.

Service – Even though Professor Kasischke has a half-time appointment in English, her service has been as strong as that of many of her full-time counterparts. She plays a crucial role in the MFA admissions process each year, has served on three search committees (one as chair), regularly judges contests for the University of Michigan Press and the Hopwood Award series, hosts visits by distinguished writers, and helps to entertain members of the English Advisory Board. She is currently chairing the committee charged with compiling a reading list and exam for first-year poets. Professor Kasischke is crucial to the vitality of the MFA Program. This sentiment is widely seconded at the Residential College, where her devotion to the student-centered culture of the College is obvious and valued.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“One of Ms. Kasischke’s books I love most, and frankly consider one of the finest contemporary first novels I have read, is *Suspicious River*. ...I read it for the stunning language, which is richly metaphorical, for the cadence of its sentences, for its brilliant weaving-together of past trauma with present difficulty. ... I use her novel often as an example for my own students.”

Reviewer (B)

“The novels are remarkable in their structural inventiveness, poetic language, and mysterious, defining violence. ... Both poetry and prose, though utterly contemporary, reach back several centuries to the ballads and early fragments written in English. In this way her fiction belongs on a list of writers whose work is strongly influenced by early English forms, writers such as Robertson Davies, Angela Carter, and A.S. Byatt.”

Reviewer (C)

“She has published widely in fine literary journals, and she has distinguished herself as an active citizen of letters with book reviews and essays, but most impressively she has, in the midst of all this activity, maintained a consistent vision and consistently high standards in her fiction and poetry. Her four novels and six volumes of poetry demonstrate narrative versatility, a sure grasp of character, and a deep knowledge of contemporary culture.”

Reviewer (D)

“That she is on your faculty is in my view a great credit and boon for Michigan--her productivity and the excellence of her work make her a model for students in the MFA program and for undergraduate writers...she brings to students a rare expertise in thinking and working across genre boundaries. ...I have no doubt whatsoever that Laura Kasischke would be promoted and tenured if she were a candidate in the Department of English [at my university].”

Reviewer (E)

“...one of the best American poets of my generation, an opinion that would be supported, I am sure, by many of our peers. ... Her work is, of course, noir, intensely imagistic, belonging to the tradition of Sylvia Plath of slightly macabre, highly intense, psychological monologue – though Kasischke has substantially revised that lineage with her dark humor.”

Reviewer (F)

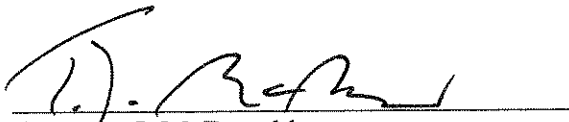
“Laura Kasischke is one of the most talented and prolific writers of her generation and clearly merits promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure. ... How many contemporaries of Kasischke are working successfully in poetry and fiction? Very few. These few include Sherman Alexie, Julia Alvarez, Denis Johnson, and Charlie Smith. Kasischke more than holds her own with this talented group, especially as a poet.”

Reviewer (G)

“I am one of many senior university faculty in the Creative Writing field who would place Laura Kasischke in the top one percent of author-teachers with significant national stature. The body of her work is considerable. There is simply no writer I can name who has produced three books of poetry (including the forthcoming *Lilies Without*), two novels, and two young adult novels (including the forthcoming *Feathered*) in only the past six years. The past six years! ... She is a sought-after guest lecturer and reader... It is my honest judgment that Laura Kasischke would receive an enthusiastic commitment of tenure and promotion at any leading academic institution in the U.S.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Kasischke has produced an innovative and highly acclaimed body of work while building a career as an exceptional educator. Her collegiality and extensive service commitments make her a valuable contributor to the University. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Laura K. Kasischke be promoted to the rank of associate professor of English, with tenure, and associate professor in the Residential College, without 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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