

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

Approved by the Regents  
May 20, 2010

Jeffrey A. Wilson, assistant professor of geological sciences, and assistant curator, Museum of Paleontology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of geological sciences, with tenure, and associate curator, Museum of Paleontology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1999	University of Chicago
M.S.	1995	University of Chicago
B.A.	1991	Kalamazoo College

Professional Record:

2004 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Geological Sciences, and Assistant Curator, Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan
1999 – 2004	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Geological Sciences, and Visiting Assistant Curator, Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluations:

Teaching – Professor Wilson is an engaging, committed, and gifted instructor who plays an important role in the educational mission of his department. His courses at the undergraduate level are well structured, accessible, have a strong following, and generate a large number of credit hours. At higher levels, his graduate course continues to attract both graduate students and advanced undergraduates. He also participates in teaching a seminar for seasoned graduate students in paleontology where they are introduced to the impact of Professor Wilson's field campaigns and resulting publications.

Research – Professor Wilson's research focuses on vertebrate paleontology. His studies of giant sauropod dinosaurs have provided considerable insight into body design and life at extreme conditions in terms of size and environmental factors. He has published 30 papers since arriving at Michigan, and these have appeared in world-renown journals such as *Science*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences*, *Paleobiology*, and numerous others. Professor Wilson has raised a total of \$426,700 in outside research funding, a commendable feat in a field that has been poorly funded for some time. By all measures his work continues to have high impact in his field.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Dynamic locomotor adjustments in two early dinosaur trackmakers from southern Africa,” with C. A. Marsicano and R. M. H. Smith, *PLoS ONE*, 4(10), 2009, pp. 1–8.  
“Redescription and reassessment of the phylogenetic affinities of *Euhelopus zdanskyi* (Dinosauria: Sauropoda) from the Early Cretaceous of China,” with P. Upchurch, *Journal of Systematic Palaeontology*, 7, 2009, pp. 199–239.

“Integrating ichnofossil and body fossil records to estimate locomotor posture and spatiotemporal distribution of early sauropod dinosaurs: a stratocladistic approach,” *Paleobiology*, 31, 2005, pp. 400–423.

“Sauropod dinosaur phylogeny: Critique and cladistic analysis,” *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 136, 2002, pp. 217–276.

Service – Although Professor Wilson holds only a half-time appointment in the Department of Geological Sciences, he has played a vital role in overhauling the Turner endowment-supported grants program for graduate students. He was quite influential on the committee that was charged with drawing up new and more rigorous guidelines for the submission and revision of research proposals aimed at toughening our students for the academic world. He continues to serve as associate editor for the *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*, he has convened or co-convened national and international meetings, and he has been a tireless reviewer of grant applications and research papers.

#### External Reviews:

##### Reviewer (A)

“...he comes up with exciting ideas and hypotheses, and...he is capable of carrying them to publication or into the field. ...here is an authoritative voice based on thorough study of specimens around the world. ... He is a scholar whose careful work in collections over the years has garnered him the utmost respect. ... Jeff is at the top of my list.”

##### Reviewer (B)

“Although he specializes in sauropod dinosaurs, Jeff’s list of publications is really quite diverse and covers a range of topics. ... Jeff is the number one paleontologist engaged in fieldwork to obtain new samples needed for phylogenetic analysis, which can then be draped on paleogeography to sort out large-scale patterns relative to South America and Africa. It is simply a fact that he is one of the new leaders in vertebrate paleontology.”

##### Reviewer (C)

“... Wilson has established himself as the leading worker of sauropod biology, evolution, and relationships, and so I think that his preeminence here is worthy of recognition... It is unquestionably true that Jeff would readily receive support for promotion to the rank of associate professor at [my institution], and the strength of the case that could be made for him would be such that the likelihood of his promotion to tenure and full professorship would be high.”

##### Reviewer (D)

“Dr. Wilson has quickly become an internationally recognized expert on dinosaur paleobiology with particular expertise on the clade of giant members of that group, the sauropods. This is indicated by his publication record, but also by the invitation to serve on the review panel for sauropod projects that were proposed by German paleontologists to the German National Science Foundation, and the invitation to write an article for Scientific American [sic] on sauropod paleobiology. ... As a paleontologist, he has developed an excellent career path, one that very few members of his generation have been able to achieve. ... He is at the forefront of research into the evolutionary history and paleobiology of sauropod dinosaurs, an area of great general interest to the scientific community and the general public.”

Reviewer (E)

"Wilson is a prominent researcher in his generation of vertebrate paleontologists, and one of the very best working on lower vertebrates. ... I am very impressed. His phylogenetic papers are based on extensive, detailed and careful assessments of the fossils combined with modern analytical methods. The work on footprints seems particularly interesting and original to me."

Reviewer (F)

"Dr. Wilson has established a solid international reputation for research on Cretaceous vertebrates, particularly sauropod dinosaurs, but also theropod dinosaurs, snakes, and turtles. ... I consider Dr. Wilson to be one of the world's leading experts on the evolutionary and biogeographic history of sauropod dinosaurs."

Reviewer (G)

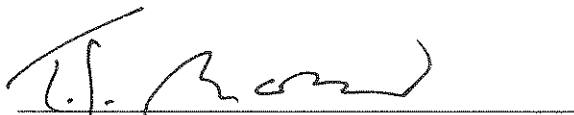
"The candidate is somewhat unusual in his research interests and scope... I think the candidate would be regarded as one of the competent workers [of his generation] in dinosaur systematics, with an international reputation in the anatomy and systematics of sauropod dinosaurs."

Reviewer (H)

"During the last ten years, I have observed that Dr. Wilson's stature has grown internationally as he is considered to be an expert of the evolution of the sauropods, one of the main groups of dinosaurs. ... It is clear that he stands out amongst a group of other highly competitive researchers who are trying to make their mark in the respective fields."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Wilson's teaching, research, and service has satisfied every requirement for tenure at a high level and we expect that he will have a distinguished career. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that assistant professor Jeffrey A. Wilson be promoted to the rank of associate professor of geological sciences, with tenure, and associate curator, Museum of Paleontology, 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

May 2010