

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan-Dearborn
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters
Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts

Deborah Smith Pollard, associate professor of English literature and humanities, with tenure, Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters, is recommended for promotion to professor of English literature and humanities, with tenure, Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.

Academic Degrees

| | | |
|--------|------|---|
| Ph.D. | 1994 | Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan |
| M.A.T. | 1975 | Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan |
| B.A. | 1973 | Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan |

Professional Record

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 2001 – present | Associate Professor of English and Humanities, Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts, University of Michigan-Dearborn |
| 1995 – 2001 | Assistant Professor of English and Humanities, University of Michigan-Dearborn |

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Smith Pollard is rated excellent in teaching. Her range of course offerings, her interdisciplinary work as a teacher across a number of disciplines and programs (from English and Humanities to African and African American Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Music History), her teaching materials, and her student evaluations all testify to her outstanding contributions to the teaching work of the English discipline, the department, and the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters. Since her last promotion she has introduced two new courses into the curriculum—"Voices of Black Women in Literature, Film, and Music" and "Introduction to Gospel Music"—and developed new preparations in four others—"Introduction to English Studies," "Introduction to Africana Studies," "Survey of Literature in English from 1900 to the Present," and "Advanced Exposition." Her average ratings on student evaluation questions are consistently between 4.5 and 5.0, thus indicating that a majority of students in every class give her the highest possible score on each question. She introduces students to new and often controversial materials on racial issues in a way that broadens their horizons and challenges their understandings while maintaining a respectful intellectual community in the classroom.

Research: Professor Smith Pollard is rated excellent in her research. She has blossomed as a scholar since her last promotion, producing a major book from Wayne State University Press that has broken new ground in the study of gospel music and African American culture. Named by the Library of Michigan as one of the Michigan Notable Books for 2009, Professor Smith Pollard's When the Church Becomes Your Party has received both scholarly praise and attention in the popular media. She has also published two essays in edited collections from major presses and an article in a refereed journal. Her work is unique, combining her scholarly expertise in American Studies, African-American studies, and folk culture with her role as a gospel radio announcer. Her external reviewers testify to the intellectual quality and scholarly importance of

her research, praising it as original and path-breaking. The unique quality of her work has led recently to participation in a major research project, “The Will to Adorn,” on adornment in black communities in a handful of American cities, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution for its Festival of American Folklife.

Recent and Significant Publications:

When the Church Becomes Your Party: Contemporary Gospel Music. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008. 225 pages.

“The Women Have on All of Their Clothes’: Reading the Texts of Holy Hip Hop.” Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World: Rituals and Remembrances. Ed. Ifeoma C.K. Nwankwo and Mamadou Diouf. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010. 55-78.

Motherlove, Initiation, Poverty, and Pride: Teaching ‘The Sky is Gray’ by Ernest Gaines and ‘Getting the Facts of Life’ by Paulette Childress White. *CEA Forum* 38.1 (2009). Online. <<http://www2.widener.edu/%7Ecea/381pollard.htm>>. 16 manuscript pages.

“That Timbre, That Text: Introducing Gospel Announcer Edna Tatum.” More than the Blues: Black Women and Music. Ed. Eileen Hayes and Linda F. Williams. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007. 93-118.

Service: Professor Smith Pollard is rated excellent in her service. She has made extraordinary contributions in service, as attested by her being a recipient of both the campus’s Distinguished Service Award and the Susan B. Anthony Award. Her work as a gospel radio announcer for WJLB Detroit, and the numerous roles she plays in the community—from the eight to ten gospel music/church events for which she serves as host to her membership on the Advisory Board of the Winans Academy for the Performing Arts in Detroit—make her an embodiment of the “metropolitan impact” UM-Dearborn strives to achieve. However, Professor Smith Pollard has also been a model campus citizen, willing to take on major service responsibilities. She has directed the African and African American Studies Program, has served as English discipline representative and on three major campus search committees (provost, assistant to the chancellor for inclusion, and CASL dean), and was recently elected to a three-year term as the LPA representative to the CASL Executive Committee.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “[Professor Smith Pollard’s book is ‘exemplary:’] one of the pioneering works in contemporary gospel music. [The inclusion of her essay in Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World] raises her work to international heights and demonstrates the enduring contributions of African American art forms within the global arena.”


Reviewer B: “[Professor Smith Pollard’s book and her essay in *More than the Blues: Black Women and Music*] are exceptionally strong because they enlighten about recent trends and developments in the [gospel music] industry.”

Reviewer C: “[Professor Smith Pollard’s book] stands alongside . . . some of the most compelling work on contemporary Gospel music. . . . There are few scholars in the academy, researching contemporary Gospel music, who are as adept as Professor Smith Pollard in bringing traditional notions of Black church culture in conversation with the dynamic aspects of black popular culture.”

Reviewer D: “[Professor Smith Pollard’s work is] an ingenious and yet straightforward intervention in African American expressive culture. ... It’s rare to experience scholarship that conveys the complexity of its subject matter with such poetic grace, humor, and spot-on analysis and critique. ... [She is] a dynamic scholar who has established an important voice in gospel music studies, ...[and her work is] cutting a pathway through which subsequent scholars may advance.”

Reviewer E: “[Professor Smith Pollard’s book] fills a major hole in the scholarship concerning African American sacred music. “” [Her work on gospel, hip hop, gospel theater, and the connections between religion and gender is unique in that] no one has come close to providing the ‘thick’ portrait of how these issues related to one another and how they are embedded in the broader pattern of African American culture.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Smith Pollard is an outstanding teacher-scholar and a colleague deeply committed to service both on the campus and in the community. We are very pleased to recommend, with strong support of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters Executive Committee, Deborah Smith Pollard for promotion to professor of English literature and humanities, with tenure, Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.



Jerold L. Hale, Dean
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters



Daniel Little, Chancellor
University of Michigan-Dearborn

May 2012