

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS

Jenna Bednar, associate professor of political science, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of political science, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts [also being promoted to research professor, Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research].

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1998	Stanford University
M.A.	1992	Stanford University
B.A.	1990	University of Michigan

Professional Record:

2013 – 2014	Visiting Research Professor, INSEAD
2011 – 2017	External Faculty, Santa Fe Institute
2007 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan
2007 – present	Research Associate Professor, Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
2002	Visiting Professor, Law School, University of Michigan
2000 – 2007	Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan
2000 – 2007	Faculty Associate, Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
1998 – 1999	Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Iowa

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Bednar’s teaching focuses on federalism, institutional analysis, and governance and policy-making. In her courses she introduces analytical tools from political science, law, and public economics. Students consistently give her good rankings. Professor Bednar is known as a thoughtful advisor, who is generous with her time, and who invests in her students’ successes. Since tenure, she has served on twelve dissertation committees, has chaired three, and has supervised one senior thesis.

Research – Professor Bednar is a scholar of American politics who develops abstract tools for evaluating and understanding federalism. Her research has become important to scholars in law, political science, and complex systems world-wide. She is most known for her work on the opportunities for innovation created by the imperfect safeguards federal systems employ. Since tenure, Professor Bednar has elaborated these lines of work and added another line on the geography of campaign contributions that is more empirical. Her major contributions come in terms of conceptualization that is quite original. Professor Bednar has published two articles that elaborate on the model of federalism she developed in her book, The Robust Federation (Cambridge University Press, 2009). These articles also develop a model of culture as games and develop an approach to thinking about path dependence.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Subsidiarity and robustness: Building the adaptive efficiency of federal systems,” NOMOS LV: Federalism and Subsidiarity, J. E. Fleming and J. Levy (eds.), New York University Press, forthcoming.

“Behavioral spillovers and cognitive load in multiple games: An experimental study,” with Y. Chen, et al., *Games and Economic Behavior*, 74(1), 2012, pp. 12-31.

“The political science of federalism,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 7(1), 2011, pp. 269-288.

The Robust Federation: Principles of Design, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions series, Cambridge University, 2009.

Service – Professor Bednar is a valuable citizen who has served on two search committees and as the director of graduate studies. In that latter capacity, she overhauled important procedures and streamlined the process of advising and record-keeping for which she received high marks from graduate students for her thoughtful work. At the university level, Professor Bednar served on the UM Press Editorial Board and two Rackham Fellowship review committees. She also organized a workshop and a conference at the university. Professor Bednar has served the discipline in many capacities and has been an active external faculty member at the Santa Fe Institute.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“She does terrific work, at the intersection of game theory, complexity, and the analysis of institutional development. In the book she defended a big and important idea, that all federations face issues of rivalry between center and subunits, but successful ones take advantage of complementarities to develop capacities not characteristic of, but better than, either center or periphery.”

Reviewer (B)

“Professor Bednar has produced important and lasting work on federalism. ... When examined as a whole, her theoretically rigorous work makes a major contribution to the literature. ... [she] is an outstanding scholar. ... The quality of Professor Bednar’s scholarship is high. In my assessment, with her work on federalism, she has achieved and sustained a national reputation.”

Reviewer (C)

“Quite frankly, I presume this is an easy case. She seems to be a remarkably productive scholar – I assume a second book will come forth in due time-who can engage with scholars in a number of different disciplines. I would be utterly delighted to have her as a colleague at [my institution]...”

Reviewer (D)

“She has established a strong reputation as a leading thinker on federalism. Her importance in this area is very widely recognized. She also is well known for her simulation models for analyzing the evolution of institutions and culture. Many people would view these as separate research areas, but Jenna brings them together in a broad and coherent research agenda on the fundamentals of political institutions in Europe and America.”

Reviewer (E)

“Jenna is a world-class scholar in the study of institutions. She is particularly distinguished by her creativity and curiosity—she tackles classic and important questions from novel (and fertile) angles. By combining the clarity of positive theoretic analysis with the richness of systems theory, Jenna’s work offers deep and robust insights into the effects of institutional design.”

Reviewer (F)

“This marriage of positive political theory with an appreciation for systems dynamics is attractive and powerful in many ways. Bednar’s book [The Robust Federation], deservedly, has been well-received and is widely-cited. ...[it] clearly established her as an important scholar of federalism...”

Reviewer (G)

“Jenna’s papers—especially the recent joint papers on culture and pathdependence—can be as ambitious and abstract as they are brilliant. ...Jenna’s work has been influential not only among students of comparative and American federalism in political science, but also among legal scholars and political theorists working on topics like subsidiarity and judicial interpretation. Jenna also has a very high profile in Europe and Latin America, where she is viewed as one of the most innovative and broad-minded theorists working on political institutions.”

Reviewer (H)

“...one cannot underestimate the importance and creativity of Jenna’s work. I find the complex systems model of legal regulation enormously important, particularly when set against individualist models that focus more on equilibrium and the lack of change. More specifically, the question of innovation and experimentation is potentially one of the most important for theorists and policymakers to explore in the service of more dynamic models of legal and social change.”

Summary of Recommendation

Professor Bednar has built an international reputation as a synergistic scholar, who works between fields to create conversations about federalism, culture, and path dependence and who builds the department’s strength in institutional analysis. Her teaching has drawn students into the study of institutional design, and her work with students is effective and a credit to the institution. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Jenna Bednar be promoted to the rank of professor of political science, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Andrew D. Martin
Dean, and Professor of Political Science
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2015