

Approved by the
Regents
May 21, 2015

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

Ezra R. Keshet, assistant professor of linguistics, and assistant professor of philosophy, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of linguistics, with tenure, and associate professor of philosophy, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2008	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
A.B., A.M.	1999	Harvard University

Professional Record:

2013	Visiting faculty, Linguistic Institute, University of Michigan
2012 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan
2009 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan
2008 – 2009	Research Investigator and LEO Lecturer I, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Keshet’s teaching contributions are essential to the undergraduate and graduate curricula in semantics and to the departmental mission to highlight multiple approaches to the scientific study of language. In addition to his repertoire of courses in semantics, he is a successful teacher of the large-enrollment introduction to language course. His courses address the needs of a wide range of undergraduates in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, preparing them to engage in a complex society in which language and linguistic meaning play a central role. His more advanced courses provide theoretical, empirical, and research-design experiences for undergraduate majors and graduate students. As an innovative, thoughtful, enthusiastic teacher, he fosters deep and engaged learning in the students with whom he works. He is a valued mentor to graduate students, honors students, and students in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). Students also note his skill at cultivating an environment of learning and his unique ability to nurture students while pushing them toward intellectual independence.

Research – Professor Keshet’s wide-reaching, innovative research has earned him a reputation as a semanticist of the highest caliber. He has made foundational contributions to the study of intensional semantics, which explore the unique human ability to communicate about ideas that are displaced in time and space, and which extend to include the ability to communicate about ideas in artificial worlds. This work contributes to Professor Keshet’s broader research program of formally modeling complex sentential and discourse meaning. His varied research contributions are based on innovative methods drawn from linguistics, philosophy, experimental psychology, and computer science. His findings have been published in the most prestigious journals in semantics and presented in some of the most elite venues for semantics and the philosophy of language.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Focus on conditional conjunction,” *Journal of Semantics*, 30, 2013, pp. 211-256.

“Split intensionality: A new scope Theory of *De re* and *De dicto*,” *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 33, 2011, pp. 251-283.

“Possible worlds and wide-scope indefinites: A reply to Bäuerle,” *Linguistic Inquiry*, 41, 2010, pp. 692-701.

“Situation Economy,” *Natural Language Semantics*, 18, 2010, pp. 385-434.

Service – Professor Keshet provides impressive service to the Department of Linguistics, where he has served on the department’s executive, undergraduate, and graduate committees. He is currently serving as the director of undergraduate studies. He brings highly respected and much-appreciated thoughtfulness and intellectual rigor to all of these roles, and has especially contributed to departmental innovations aimed at fostering stronger ties to philosophy and the new Cognitive Science major. In service to the profession, he is regularly invited to serve as a journal, book, grant, and conference reviewer.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“Indeed, the fact that he is so well-versed and insightful in all three of these areas [syntax, semantics, and pragmatics] makes his work especially valuable – that, and the fact that his papers are invariably extremely well researched, very clearly written with abundant appropriate examples, and very thorough.”

Reviewer (B)

“Professor Keshet is best known for his work on intensionality and *de re* interpretation, a topic that requires a high degree of technical sophistication, even relative to the high technical standards for semanticists generally.”

Reviewer (C)

“I should say right away that within formal semantics, Dr. Keshet has become an important and well-known figure, is steadily producing a raft of significant journal publications, has a very active and broad research agenda, and is as smart and innovative as anyone on the formal semantics circuit.”

Reviewer (D)

“With respect to semantics as a whole, Prof. Keshet is, in my opinion, one of the most promising researchers [of his cohort] in the field. With respect to the subfield in which he has done his best known work, he is one of the top two or three people who have been working on...[intensionality] in the last decade. In fact, I would say he is the most prominent contemporary researcher in this field.”

Reviewer (E)

“There’s plenty of other work on his CV for the last few years, presented at major conferences and/or under submission at the best journals in the field. ...This includes...a couple of astonishingly thought-provoking papers co-authored with Steve Abney (which both have a computational bent but raise foundational questions for semantics as well).”

Reviewer (F)

“Not only do [Professor Keshet’s papers] contain excellent and thorough scholarship and insightful, well-formalized and thought-provoking analyses, they are also extremely fine examples of linguistic prose. These are the kind of papers that, after we have worked through the analysis and the data, I would hold up to students and say ‘you should aspire to write papers like these.’”

Reviewer (G)

“The genius of those two articles [‘Situation Economy’ and ‘Split Intensionality’] alone makes Dr. Keshet worthy of tenure. This is a clear case.”

Reviewer (H)

“Therefore he has shown steady productivity without leaning towards less-selective venues. ...the trajectory which Dr. Keshet’s work has taken through various topics in semantics provides strong evidence that he is a true scholar and scientist, who has not put the pressure to publish ahead of the interests of good scholarship.”

Reviewer (I)

“This [work on *de re/de dicto*] is very nice work, displaying exceptional control over both contemporary syntactic theory and logical semantics, and a creative approach to the investigation of the relevant readings, and reflecting a taste for simple, elegant solutions. It currently stands as the best account we have of this complex problem, generally considered to be one of the hallmarks of an adequate intensional semantics.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Keshet is regarded as one of the world’s authorities in the study of intensional semantics and is known for his technical and theoretical sophistication and the elegance and clarity of his analyses. His teaching is as thoughtful as his research and reflects a scholar who both engages his students and is engaged in their learning. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Ezra R. Keshet be promoted to the rank of associate professor of linguistics, with tenure, and associate professor of philosophy, without 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