

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
School of Education

Approved by the  
Regents  
May 21, 2015

Allison M. Ryan, associate professor of education, with tenure, School of Education, is recommended for promotion to professor of education, with tenure, School of Education.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 1998	University of Michigan, Combined Program in Education and Psychology
M.A. 1996	University of Michigan, Developmental Psychology
B.A. 1992	Providence College, Psychology, Providence, RI

Professional Record:

2011 – present	Associate Professor (with tenure), Combined Program in Education and Psychology, School of Education, University of Michigan
2005 – 2011	Associate Professor (with tenure), Department of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
1998 – 2005	Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Ryan is a thoughtful and reflective teacher who is recognized by her students for her approachability, high quality feedback on assignments, and engaging and interactive class sessions. Her primary classroom teaching is of doctoral courses within the Combined Program in Education and Psychology (CPEP). She puts significant effort into preparing and teaching these courses and her evaluations—ranging from 4.38 to 4.92—demonstrate the strength of her instruction.

A major part of Professor Ryan's teaching responsibilities has been coordinating and supervising the work of the graduate student instructors (GSIs) who teach the different sections of the course, Educational Psychology and Human Development. This course, offered through CPEP, is for undergraduates seeking teacher certification. Professor Ryan has coordinated the work of this GSI group as they have planned and taught the course. She has led annual planning retreats for these GSIs and met weekly with them throughout the term. She has also instituted a class observation component in their GSI training, visiting each course section at least once during the term and offering feedback. Professor Ryan's work has strengthened instruction in this undergraduate course.

In addition to her classroom instruction, Professor Ryan has provided strong mentorship through her work with her doctoral students. Since joining the faculty at the University of Michigan in 2011, she has been on seven dissertation committees, serving as chair for three. She is currently the advisor for two doctoral students. The strength of her mentorship is evident in her extensive commitment to developing doctoral students through co-authorship and professional presentations. Since 2011, she has co-authored 17 journal articles with current or former doctoral students. These have included eleven articles on which the student was first author and six on which Professor Ryan was first author.

Research: Professor Ryan is an eminent educational psychologist who has a rich program of research that seeks to understand and enhance the experiences of adolescents in school contexts. Her program of work includes several distinct strands that examine adolescents' peer relations (their social networks, status, and goals), their help-seeking behaviors, and how peer contexts contribute to students' achievement motivation and social adjustment. Professor Ryan has used multiple lenses and tools to study adolescent development in the context of schooling. She has examined how adolescents' personal and developmental characteristics, as well as the nature of classroom and peer contexts, influence their academic and social adjustment. One focus of her research is help-seeking, which, she argues, is both a cognitive learning strategy and a social interaction. She has examined how individual differences in

motivation (e.g., students' academic self-concept and their academic and social goals) interact with contextual features of schools and classrooms to account for differences in students' help-seeking activity. This work is noteworthy for both its theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, she has added to the range of variables that can be used to explain help-seeking; from a practical perspective, her research informs understanding of the characteristics of teachers and classroom contexts that help to shape adolescents' help-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, she has contributed to the suite of measures that researchers can use to investigate adolescents' help-seeking.

Professor Ryan's work also focuses on peer relations at school, with an emphasis on social networks and social status. Her research has demonstrated the influences of peer groups on school values and engagement during middle school transitions, as well as the ways that students' learning and performance goals relate to their friendship selections. In addition, Professor Ryan explores the dynamic nature of social status and shows how peer ecologies in middle school change over time such that high social status generally becomes less associated with high academic engagement and prosocial characteristics, and more associated with characteristics less supportive of students' school adjustment. A noted contribution of Professor Ryan's work in this area is her attention to the interplay of student and context characteristics. Her studies have shown how different school structures (K-8 compared to middle schools) relate to variation in students' social status ideals, suggesting unique social and academic risks during the traditional 6<sup>th</sup> grade middle school transition. A noteworthy, newer direction in her work considers teachers' practices and the structure of classroom contexts, with findings indicating that students' perceptions of their teachers' organization and emotional support related to students' subsequent views of high-status peers as either academically engaged or disruptive.

A related, but distinct line of Professor Ryan's program of research considers adolescents' social goals. Professor Ryan builds on and extends classic frameworks for understanding students' achievement goals around learning and performance by applying them to the peer context. She articulates a new framework for describing adolescents' social goals for learning social skills and enhancing personal development, their goals for enhancing their social standing among peers, and their goals for avoiding negative peer judgments. Professor Ryan's studies have shown that adolescents' social goals at school have important influences on their motivational beliefs and behaviors at school, including responses to challenge and help-seeking, which in turn influence student achievement.

Together, Professor Ryan's lines of work enhance theoretical understanding of the influences of peer contexts on adolescents' development and inform ways that schools and educators might use understandings of peer contexts to construct educational settings that promote students' achievement motivation and social adjustment. Also, across her lines of work, an important aspect of Professor Ryan's scholarly contributions is the application of research methods such as social network analysis, multi-level analysis, and longitudinal research. These methods are providing important insights into such issues as: the ways that student help-seeking behaviors are influenced by changes in school contexts during school transitions, and ways that characteristics early adolescents associate with high or low social status at school are nested within and influenced by school and classroom structures.

Professor Ryan has an extensive record of scholarly activity. Since 1998, she has published 38 articles in refereed journals (15 of which she is sole or first author), nine book chapters, one edited book, and one authored book (in press). Of this record, five chapters and 24 articles have been published since her promotion to associate professor in 2005 at the University of Illinois. She has published articles in all four main journals in her field, including ten articles in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* and five in *Developmental Psychology*. She has also contributed invited and refereed papers to major conferences of the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association and has extensively supported doctoral students to do the same.

Professor Ryan has been recognized for her scholarly work throughout her career, with three notable awards from the American Psychological Association's Division 15 (Educational Psychology): the

Richard E. Snow Award for Early Contributions in Research Award (2008), Outstanding Dissertation Award (2000), and the Edwin P. Newman Award (1999).

Recent and Significant Publications:

Ryan, A.M. (2001). The peer group as a context for the development of young adolescents' motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 72, 1135-1150.

Ryan, A. M., Shim, S. S., Uthando, S. L., Kiefer, S. M. & Thompsen, G. (2009). Do gender differences in help avoidance vary by ethnicity?: An examination of African American and European American students during early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 45, 1152-1163.

Ryan, A. M. & Ladd, G. W. (2012). Peer Relationships and Adjustment at School. Charlotte: Information Age Press.

Ryan, A.M. & Shim, S. S. (2012). Changes in help seeking from peers during early adolescence: Associations with changes in achievement and perceptions of teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104, 1122- 1134.

Shin, H. & Ryan, A. M. (in press). Friendship networks and achievement goals: An examination of selection and influence processes and variations by gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

Service: Professor Ryan has a full record of service both to her professional community and within the School of Education. She has been deeply involved in Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, where she has served as a member of the Outstanding Dissertation Award Committee. From 2009 to 2012, she served as associate editor of this APA Division's *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and her work and leadership in this capacity led her to be recruited in the journal's recent search for an editor (an opportunity that she declined).

In 2009–10 Professor Ryan served as guest editor of a special issue on peer relationships and academic adjustment for the *Journal of Adolescent Psychology*. She is also on the editorial board of the *American Educational Research Journal*. The level and depth of her editorial work in particular speaks both to the regard in which she is held and to her service to the profession.

At the school level, Professor Ryan has served on the CPEP Executive Committee since joining the faculty, and served as interim chair of CPEP for one term. She has co-chaired the CPEP curriculum committee, in which she led work with colleagues to redesign the preliminary examination process. In addition to CPEP service, Professor Ryan served as an *ex officio* member of the School's Executive Committee as CPEP interim chair, served on the Educational Studies Executive Committee, and contributed to the teacher education program as a member of the lead faculty group for secondary education and of the curriculum design group for elementary education. Finally, she served as the school's representative to the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA).

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "Her work in these areas [educational psychology, social development, and social psychology] is likely to have an enduring impact on how developmental psychologists study the changing dynamics and outcomes of peer experiences with learning environments. ... One cannot teach a course on social processes related to achievement without attending to these studies."

Reviewer B: "She is an accomplished researcher who has significantly contributed to the literature on the connection between adolescent development and secondary education."

Reviewer C: "[She is] one of the best researchers in the world on the topic of achievement and social motivation. ... an outstanding researcher who deserves to be promoted to full professor by any metric."

Reviewer D: "Many of her publications are in the most highly regarded journals in their respective fields. *Developmental Psychology* and *Child Development* are the two most strongly respected outlets in

developmental research. She has multiple publications in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, which is a major outlet in that field.”

Reviewer E: “I have been particularly impressed with her series of studies on how teachers can influence the social dynamics of the classroom ... and her work on the factors that promote or discourage student help seeking ... . Given current emphasis on knowledge translation and mobilization, these two areas of research are noteworthy in that they have important implications for educational practice.”

Reviewer F: “Among her cohort, Dr. Ryan is one of the most successful scholars. This is evident not only based on comparisons of citation counts, but also by the very programmatic nature of her research.”

Reviewer G: “Her productivity is an outcome of intellectual clarity, methodological rigor, and a well thought-through and focused research program.”

Reviewer H: “[S]he has attained national prominence as a scientist using theory-predicated ... sophisticated ... rigorous developmental methodology to elucidate the nuanced links between youth school adjustment and achievement and their peer and teacher/school contexts. ... The creativity and combined scientific and societal impact of her work, and its scope and depth, are singularly distinctive.”

Reviewer I: “[Her work] has greatly improved our understanding of achievement benefits and behavior during early adolescence.... The scholarly impact of her work has been remarkable.”

Reviewer J: “In my view Dr. Ryan is the leading scholar of her generation in this burgeoning area [of social aspects of motivation (including social goals) and how they impact students’ adjustment to school [and] their achievement], and possibly the leading scholar in the field of social motivation as a whole.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Ryan is a well established, internationally recognized scholar and researcher in her field of educational psychology. Her work in adolescent academic and social development has been widely acclaimed by peers as influential both substantively and methodologically, as documented in her strong record of scholarly presentations and publications. She is an accomplished educator, committed to both undergraduate and graduate teaching, and an invaluable mentor to doctoral students, helping them to establish themselves through publications and presentations early in their careers. Her service to the field of educational psychology is widely acknowledged. In the School of Education, her colleagues view her service to both her program and the school as meaningful and important. It is with the support of the School of Education’s Executive Committee and Promotion and Tenure Committee that I recommend Allison M. Ryan for promotion to professor of education, with tenure, School of Education.



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Deborah Loewenberg Ball  
William H. Payne Collegiate Professor of Education,  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, and Dean  
School of Education

May 2015