

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

Sara B. Soderstrom, assistant professor of organizational studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and assistant professor of environment, School for Environment and Sustainability and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of organizational studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and associate professor of environment, without tenure, School for Environment and Sustainability and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2010	Northwestern University
M.S.	2001	University of Michigan
M.S.	2001	University of Michigan
B.S.	1999	University of Michigan

Professional Record:

2012 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Organizational Studies and Program in the Environment, University of Michigan
2017 – present	Core Faculty, Erb Institute, University of Michigan
2010 – 2012	Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Soderstrom has established herself as the most outstanding classroom teacher in organizational studies (OS) and among the leading classroom teachers in the Program in the Environment (PitE). She has taught an extremely demanding set of courses, including the required OS course in research methods and a 200-level lecture course titled *Business and the Environment*, which she now teaches to more than 200 students (four times larger than its original size). Her instructor ratings in these classes have ranged from a low of 4.6 to nearly 5.0, remarkable figures for such large and difficult courses. Professor Soderstrom has won an LSA-wide teaching award as well as an award as PitE’s instructor of the year. She has used innovative teaching techniques, including “flipped” classrooms, and has been active in promoting DEI, including running a diversity exercise in all of her classes. She has advised 28 undergraduate students, twelve as research assistants and sixteen with independent studies.

Research – Professor Soderstrom is an organizational theorist whose work focuses on two issues: the ways in which organizations have addressed sustainability, and advancement of a grounded, interactionist approach to organizational theory. She has shown that the development of organizational structures cannot be understood without attention to the nature of social interactions within firms, and she has shown the ways that pervasive worldviews among organizational actors have influenced their conceptions of solutions to global warming. She has studied efforts to encourage the production and distribution of “good food” in Detroit. Professor Soderstrom has used a wide range of methodological approaches, from observation and in-depth interviewing, to quantitative analyses and computer simulations. Her published

output has increased significantly over the past two years, which bodes well for continued productivity in the future.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Constructing the distant future: Imaginaries in geoengineering,” with G. Augustine, et al., *Academy of Management Journal*, forthcoming.

“Organizational structure from interaction: Evidence from corporate sustainability efforts,” with K. Weber, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2019, DOI: 10.1177/0001839219836670.

“Timing matters: Social influence effects on the adoption of innovations over their life cycle,” with B. Uzzi, et al., *Sociological Science*, 3, 2016, pp: 915-939.

“Translating institutional change to local communities,” with K. Heinze and J. Heinze, *Organization Studies*, 37(8), 2016, pp: 1141-1169.

Service – Professor Soderstrom has made outstanding contributions to multiple units on campus, including her two departments and the Erb Institute, the Center on Intergroup Relations, CRLT, and the Interdisciplinary Committee on Organizational Studies (ICOS). Because of its small size and current shortage of faculty, the Organizational Studies Program has an extremely demanding service load. Professor Soderstrom has played numerous important roles in the program, including chairing the Admissions Committee multiple times, serving on faculty search committees, and mentoring students in a variety of capacities. She has also been active in her primary professional organization, the Academy of Management, including co-organizing a panel on succeeding as a woman academic, a session that attracted a standing room only crowd of several hundred participants during the 2019 AOM meetings in Boston.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“Prof. Soderstrom has made several important contributions to the study of corporate sustainability, activism in markets and communities, and organizational theory more generally. ... Given this record of accomplishments, I think Prof. Soderstrom would be a strong candidate for tenure in Sociology here...”

Reviewer (B)

“...Professor Soderstrom’s research is innovative and focused on important issues for organizations and society writ large, and her productivity and impact are ramping up in a manner that bodes well for the coming years. ...it is worth noting that this kind of research is exceedingly time consuming and challenging. I can comment on this because I have tried to do some of it myself, although not as much or as successfully as Professor Soderstrom has done. ... In sum, Professor Soderstrom has made valuable contributions, and in coming years I expect the impact of those contributions to grow further.”

Reviewer (C)

“On the basis of my review, I positively evaluate Dr. Soderstrom’s record against your criteria for tenure. She is engaged in high quality research, which is also important, novel, and impactful. She is perhaps one of the most wide-ranging scholars [in her cohort that] I have evaluated, in terms of her methods and research interests... ...with some recently accepted

papers and others at advanced stage of review, and with an exciting and important research pipeline based on high quality data, she is on an excellent trajectory.”

Reviewer (D)

“Without reservation and with great enthusiasm, I write to recommend Sara Soderstrom for promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure at the University of Michigan. It is a pleasure to review Soderstrom’s fascinating research... [her] research is theoretically groundbreaking... methodologically creative... and elaborates fascinating and important phenomena... As such, her work is of central importance to organization theorists as well as to scholars in sociology and the environment.”

Reviewer (E)

“Dr. Soderstrom is a nationally recognized scholar of organizations and sustainability. ... I have seen Dr. Soderstrom’s work cited in articles I have read and among colleagues that I have talked to about issues of sustainability and organizations and the natural environment. Dr. Soderstrom’s name often comes up. This is a signal to me that she is respected as a scholar...”

Reviewer (F)

“These papers are all highly novel theoretically and marshal unique and compelling data. ... she is a qualitative researcher focusing on unique settings and topics; qualitative research takes longer to do and longer to get published... .. she has produced very high-quality, innovative research in a substantively important domain.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Soderstrom is conducting innovative and cutting-edge work on a topic of crucial importance—namely, the ways in which organizations are working toward a sustainable future. She has established herself as an outstanding classroom teacher and a dedicated mentor of students. Her service work in her units, the college, the university, and the profession is exemplary. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Sara B. Soderstrom be promoted to the rank of associate professor of organizational studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and associate professor of environment, without tenure, School for Environment and Sustainability and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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May 2020