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

Rachel K. Best, assistant professor of sociology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of sociology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:
Ph.D. 2012   University of California, Berkeley
M.A.   2007   University of California, Berkeley
B.A.   2004   Boston College

Professional Record:
2014-   Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan
2012-2014   Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholar in Health Policy Research,
                   University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:
Teaching: Professor Best is a phenomenal instructor and a linchpin in the sociology curriculum. She has taught the most difficult courses to teach—required statistics and research methods courses in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums—and has done so with tremendous success, rigor, and compassion across the board. These are courses students are sometimes reluctant to take, and students in these courses often arrive with vastly different skillsets. Yet, time and again Professor Best shines in her teaching reviews. She has been an outstanding teacher in her other courses as well, including excellent work with honors students. She is already a sought-after mentor of graduate students.

Research: Professor Best's award-winning book, Common Enemies, identifies the disease campaigns (e.g. March of Dimes, Race for the Cure) of the 20th century as a major social phenomenon that transformed philanthropy and made significant social change in the U.S. Her findings correct a longstanding set of assumptions and single-case studies that held that these "narrow" disease campaigns and consensus politics displaced broader social campaigns and change. She uses a massive trove of quantitative and archival data to demonstrate that disease campaigns institutionalized mass philanthropy, created space for more radical movements that followed, and mobilized more, not fewer, people. Her multiple articles and a new project on disease stigma point to an outstanding trajectory.

Recent and Significant Publications:
Common Enemies: Disease Campaigns in America. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Levitsky, Sandra R., Rachel Kahn Best, and Jessica Garrick. "'Legality with a Vengeance:' Reclaiming Distribution for Sociolegal Studies." *Law and Society Review* 52(3) (2018):709-739.

"Disease Campaigns and the Decline of Treatment Advocacy." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 42(3) (2017):425-457.

"Disease Politics and Medical Research Funding: Three Ways Advocacy Shapes Policy." *American Sociological Review* 77(5) (2012):780-803.

Service: Professor Best has been an excellent department contributor serving on major committees (personnel, executive committee) throughout the department. She has also been an important contributor to the hiring and recruitment of new faculty and a generous, informal peer mentor with junior faculty. At the national level, she has been an active participant in American Sociological Association sections and serves on the editorial board of the premier journal *Sociological Theory*.

External Reviewers:
Reviewer (A): "Professor Best has consistently produced research that is both profoundly innovative and of extremely high quality. Her articles and book have appeared in top venues for sociology, health policy, and law, where her contributions are already influencing social scientific debates about health and disease, law and inequality … I would rank her without hesitation at the top of the field."

Reviewer (B): "[Her] work has followed an impressive trajectory … One hallmark of [Professor Best's] scholarship is her ability to scale up the empirical investigation of social problems along multiple dimensions. …[the] work both reinvigorates existing theory and paves new pathways for understanding social problems."

Reviewer (C): "Taken together, [her] three analytic commitments—to the importance of distributive politics, to the role of organizations in shaping policy as well as law, and to the possibility of a positive-sum politics of distribution—represent a sophisticated and distinctive approach to understanding the consequences of social policy and law for inequality."
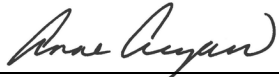
Reviewer (D): "The data set she has assembled is massive. It combines diverse qualitative and quantitative sources spanning more than a century…It covers not one disease or movement or organization, but the organizational field of disease advocacy writ large…This is groundbreaking….. It also provides a model for organizational field studies more generally."

Reviewer (E): "These publications are beautifully written and clear in their exposition, but their most particular genius lies in their research design….I can think of very few other books in the field of collective behavior and social movements that are as skillfully executed; indeed, this might be one of the four or five very best books in that field."

Reviewer (F): "The intellectual labor consists of triangulating historical data sources that are not set up for sociological analysis, the tedious and time-consuming process of coding this data, and conducting the requisite quantitative or interpretive analysis. It consists of the pursuit of a series of hypotheses situated in the social movements and medical sociology literature. And the book does this exquisitely well. Professor Best is careful and rigorous."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Best has made significant contributions to sociological understandings of health politics in the 20th century while also being an outstanding contributor to the sociology curriculum. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Rachel K. Best be promoted to the rank of associate professor of sociology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

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Anne Curzan, Dean
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
English Language and Literature, Linguistics,
and Education
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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