

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

Selena Y. Smith, assistant professor of Earth and environmental sciences, 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 Earth and environmental sciences, 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.	2007	University of Alberta
B.Sc. Honors	2002	University of Alberta

Professional Record:

2018 – present	Assistant Research Scientist, Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan
2014 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences and Program in the Environment, University of Michigan
2013 – present	Lecturer, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Michigan
2013 – 2014	Assistant Research Scientist, Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Michigan
2010 – 2013	Michigan Society of Fellows Junior Fellow, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Michigan
2010 – 2013	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Michigan
2009 – 2014	Program in the Environment Faculty Associate, University of Michigan
2009 – 2010	Assistant Research Scientist, Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan
2009 – 2010	Lecturer, Program in the Environment, University of Michigan
2007 – 2008	Royal Society Post-doctoral Researcher, Department of Earth Sciences, Royal Holloway University of London

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Smith has contributed significantly to the instructional mission in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences through the teaching of seven different courses, two of which are cross-listed with the Program in the Environment. Of these courses, four are lecture-based, two are field-based, one includes a laboratory component, and one fulfills the ULWR requirement. Professor Smith has been extremely successful in improving her courses, leading to high praise and strong teaching scores in all of her more recent evaluations. She has been exceptionally effective as a research mentor to nearly 30 undergraduate students and five Ph.D. graduate students.

Research: Since her tenure-track appointment as assistant professor, Professor Smith has developed a productive and well-respected research program in paleobotany. Her work is highly collaborative, and there has been a notable transition over the last several years in the most common placement of her authorship, from initially in the middle to more recently as first (or second behind her graduate students) or last author, indicating her leadership role. Professor Smith was the recipient of the 2015 Emerging Leader Award from the Botanical Society of America, and several external letter writers

note the high quality of her research. This year, Professor Smith successfully obtained two large external grants to support her research activities.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Benedict, J.C., Smith, S.Y., Specht, C.D., Collinson, M.E., Leong-Škorničková, J., Parkinson, D.Y. and Marone, F. 2016. Species diversity driven by morphological and ecological disparity: a case study of comparative seed morphology and anatomy across a large monocot order. *AoB Plants* 8: p.plw063.

Smith, S. Y., Iles, W. J., Benedict, J. C. and Specht, C. D. 2018. Building the monocot tree of death: Progress and challenges emerging from the macrofossil-rich Zingiberales. *American Journal of Botany* 105: 1389-1400.

Matsunaga, K.K., Smith, S.Y., Manchester, S.R., Kapgate, D., Ramteke, D., Garbout, A. and Villarraga-Gómez, H., 2018. Reinvestigating an enigmatic Late Cretaceous monocot: morphology, taxonomy, and biogeography of *Viracarpon*. *PeerJ* 6: p.e4580.

Matsunaga, K.K., Manchester, S.R., Srivastava, R., Kapgate, D.K. and Smith, S.Y. 2019. Fossil palm fruits from India indicate a Cretaceous origin of Arecaceae tribe Borasseae. *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 190: 260-280.

Service: Professor Smith has made valuable service contributions to the department and university, especially in the area of supporting diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition, she has served her professional community in a variety of ways, including serving as an associate editor of a well-respected journal within the botanical community for several years. Her combined departmental, university, and professional service has been substantial.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “Selena has been strong both in her publishing and the raising of funds. She has emerged as the leader in her specialty, as I have no doubt that your other letter writers will attest. She has been highly competent in external leadership roles, so I have no doubt that she also has been so with internal roles. I would similarly expect that her teaching has been solid based upon her communication skills at meetings. Yes, Selena Smith merits tenure.”

Reviewer (B): “Dr. Smith has a very good record of publications, a solid funding record, and has been very successful combining studies of modern and fossil taxa in the Zingiberales in particular through her work with Professor Chelsea Specht, now at Cornell.”

Reviewer (C): “Dr. Smith is a creative and innovative, widely respected scientist and one of the top [junior] paleobotanists. Already at an early stage in her career, she became as a true leader in her field (as evidenced by the Emerging Leader Award that was bestowed on her by the Botanical Society of America in 2015), and as such—in my view—she has clearly exceeded the requirements for tenure.”

Reviewer (D): “I am particularly impressed with Dr. Smith’s NSF grants productivity, which signal excellence in this highly competitive arena. As an Assistant Professor she has been involved in several NSF grants with a value of about \$1.75 M accrued back to your institution. She also has a very large NSF grant (\$2.2 M) pending in which she is the lead PI.”

Reviewer (E): “Selena’s professional service record is strong. Notably, she was Chair of the Paleobotany Section of the Botanical Society of America, and co-organizer of the 2017 Midcontinent Paleobotanical Colloquium; the latter is a small but vital meeting for the North American paleobotany community, whose location rotates every year. She is also a long-time associate editor at the *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*, a solid, well-respected, mid-level journal.”

Reviewer (F): “One of the most impressive aspects of Dr. Smith’s scholarship is her fearlessness in pursuing questions that are of fundamental importance to understanding the patterns and processes driving plant evolution and ecological diversification of modern and ancient floras yet are technically challenging to resolve. Selena’s research program actively drives the use of novel technology toward the study of paleobotany, ecological diversity through time, and historic and recent climate change in relation to the evolution of plant form and function.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Smith has made significant contributions to the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences and the Program in the Environment in the form of scholarship, teaching, and service. Her status as an international authority on fossil and modern plants is recognized by her peers, and contributes to breadth within the department, and this expertise allows Professor Smith to provide unique courses to the college. She has a strong record mentoring graduate and undergraduate students. Professor Smith’s service to her home unit, the university, and the broader community is considerable, and places a particular emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Executive Committees of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and the School for Environment and Sustainability and we recommend that Assistant Professor Selena Y. Smith be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Earth and environmental sciences, 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.



Anne Curzan, Dean
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