

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

Joshua M. Ackerman, associate professor of psychology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and associate professor of marketing, without tenure, Stephen M. Ross School of Business, is recommended for promotion to professor of psychology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of marketing, without tenure, Stephen M. Ross School of Business.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2007	Arizona State University
M.A.	2003	Arizona State University
B.A.	1998	Duke University

Professional Record:

2022-present	Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Michigan (dry)
2018	Visiting Associate Professor, UCLA
2017-present	Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan
2017-present	Faculty Associate, Research Center for Group Dynamics, ISR, University of Michigan
2014-2017	Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan
2014	Associate Professor of Marketing, MIT Sloan School of Management
2011-2014	Class of 1957 Career Development Professor, MIT Sloan School of Management
2009-2014	Assistant Professor of Marketing, MIT Sloan School of Management
2007-2009	Post-doctoral Associate, Psychology, Yale University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Ackerman is an exceptional teacher. Across large lectures and small seminars (undergraduate and graduate), he has done remarkably well, ensuring that he links his lectures to one another to help students develop a more complete understanding of the field. In addition, he keeps students engaged in the content of the class through entertaining case studies and anecdotes as well as through videos, interactive experiments, and iClicker polls. Since tenure, he has taught the large lecture course Introduction to Social Psychology five times. This course has approximately 300 undergraduates along with 7-8 GSIs. His course ratings are uniformly outstanding. Professor Ackerman has also taught a large seminar titled Sex and Survival twice since receiving tenure and again received excellent ratings. He recently developed a new course titled Psychology of Infection (Pathogens, Parasites, and Pandemics), which he has had the opportunity to teach once so far with stellar reviews. At the graduate level, Professor Ackerman taught two well-received courses, Consumer Psychology and Evolutionary Social Psychology. He is also an excellent and active mentor; student letters describe him as supportive and accessible, and mention that he provides extensive and detailed feedback.

Research: Using a theory-driven, evolutionary framework, Professor Ackerman conducts interdisciplinary, replicable, and impactful research that examines how people perceive and respond to threat, particularly threats related to pathogens. He also conducts important secondary lines of research, including research on consumer psychology and embodied cognition. Much of Professor

Ackerman's research focuses on the behavioral immune system, which is defined as a constellation of psychological resources that protect against threat of harm and disease. He has done the research to characterize this concept, specifically identifying a set of cues that people become more attuned to during situations when pathogen threat is high and characterizing a set of behaviors people pursue to reduce common consequences of heightened pathogen sensitivity. In addition, Professor Ackerman provides important contributions to the field of consumer psychology and embodied cognition. He has published sixty-nine articles and chapters and achieved an h-index of 30. Of note, his yearly citation count is on a strong upward trajectory. In addition, he became a fellow in the Association for Psychological Science and received an impressive NSF award.

#### Recent and Significant Publications:

- Ackerman, J. M., Tybur, J. M., & Blackwell, A. D. (2021). What role does pathogen-avoidance psychology play in pandemics? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 25(3), 177-186.
- Michalak, N.M., Sng, O., Wang, M. I., & Ackerman, J. M. (2020). Sounds of sickness: Can people identify infectious disease using sounds of coughs and sneezes? *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 287, 20200944.
- Wang, I. M., & Ackerman, J. M. (2019). The infectiousness of crowds: Crowding experiences are amplified by pathogen threats. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 45, 120-132.
- Ackerman, J. M., Tybur, J. M., & Mortensen, C. R. (2018). Infectious disease and imperfections of self-image. *Psychological Science*, 29(2), 228-241.

Service: Professor Ackerman is an excellent leader and citizen for the department, university, and the broader research community. Within the department, he has served on the AEC. He has also served on a tenure review panel, the Student Academic Affairs Committee, and a range of committees within the Social Psychology area. At the university level, he co-directs the Evolution and Human Adaptation Program, he has served on an ADVANCE Launch Committee, he is a member of the Secretary of the University Advisory Committee, and he is on the Executive Committee for the Research Center for Group Dynamics within the Institute for Social Research. At the national level, he is an associate editor for the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, and he was a consulting editor for *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes* (the flagship journal in his field). In addition, he has served on the convention committee for the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (a very important meeting in the field). Finally, he has consistently engaged in public discussion through appearances on many news networks and news articles.

#### External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “[Professor Ackerman] is mostly known for his evolutionary psychology approach. He uses evolutionary principles to generate hypotheses about human behavior and uses evolutionary reasoning to explain his observations. This is a relatively unique approach in social psychology, which is important and consistent with our emphasis, as a field, of understanding how circumstances shape behavior.”

Reviewer (B): “The rank of Professor, at least at my institution, implies major national, even international, presence within a field of study, with a clearly documented record of scholarly impact. Dr. Ackerman, in my view, clearly has such a record of scholarly impact. His work has not only been influential; it's intelligence work.”

Reviewer (C): “It is wonderful that UM has a faculty member doing such extensive work in the difficult but important area of evolutionary psychology and health. [Professor Ackerman]

contributed early to development of the idea of behavioral defenses against infection, and his work has continued apace. The COVID epidemic offered a major opportunity, one that he has made use of.”

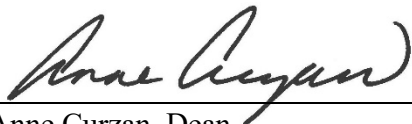
Reviewer (D): “As these remarks indicate, Dr. Ackerman’s scholarship is important and has been influential. This isn’t just my opinion; objective indicators support this impression too.”

Reviewer (E): “Pathogen avoidance also requires that one stays away from possible carriers of the pathogen and [Professor Ackerman] and his collaborators showed that pathogen threat contributes to xenophobia, prejudice, and the avoidance of intergroup contact. These socially undesirable responses can be attenuated through interventions that reduce pathogen threat, including vaccination and physical cleansing. I consider this line of work Josh’s most important and original contribution to date, with Mortensen et al., *Psychological Science* (2010) and Huang et al., *Psychological Science* (2011) as outstanding exemplars.”

Reviewer (F): “Dr. Ackerman is a first-rate scholar and researcher, and indeed has risen to become an internationally renowned leader in research at the interface of social psychology and evolutionary psychology.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Ackerman has made many important contributions in research, in teaching, and in service. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Joshua M. Ackerman be promoted to the rank of professor of psychology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of marketing, without tenure, Stephen M. Ross School of Business.



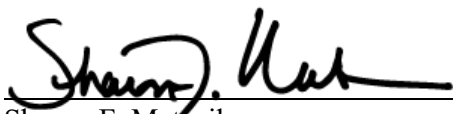
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Anne Curzan, Dean

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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Sharon F. Matusik

Edward J. Frey Dean of Business

Stephen M. Ross School of Business

May 2023