

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan – Flint  
School of Education and Human Services  
Department of Education

Sapna Thwaite, associate professor of education, with tenure, Department of Education, School of Education and Human Services, is recommended for promotion to professor of education, with tenure, Department of Education, School of Education and Human Services.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2001	Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
B.A.	1996	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Professional Record:

2007 - Present	Associate Professor of Education (with tenure), University of Michigan-Flint, Michigan
2001 - 2007	Assistant Professor of Education, University of Michigan-Flint, Michigan
2000 - 2001	Lecturer, University of Michigan-Flint, Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Since her promotion, Professor Thwaite taught seven courses, developing two of those courses spanning professional teacher preparation courses (e.g., Educational Psychology), general education courses (e.g., Women, Education and Globalization), and graduate courses (e.g., Contemporary Issues in Teaching and Learning). Professor Thwaite remains committed to her identity as a professor, including teaching and scholarship. Professor Thwaite is a committed, intentional teacher to the students in her class and the students in the school. She applies her research on identity to her teaching. Her whole student approach to teaching not only impacts their learning of course content, but also develops the students as reflective critical thinkers and decision makers.

Students' evaluation of Professor Thwaite supports the assertion that students both value Professor Thwaite and the courses she teaches. Eighty-seven percent agreed or strongly agreed the courses were overall excellent. Ninety-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that Professor Thwaite was an excellent instructor. In winter 2022, she developed and taught IES 210 Trauma Informed Practices for the first time in an asynchronous online environment. Professor Thwaite is dedicated to students, supporting student organizations, and her work is appreciated and impactful on the students.

Research: Professor Thwaite's research focuses on relationships amongst identity, gender and leadership. In particular, the interplay between Professor Thwaite's pre-tenure research on identity with her recent experience in leadership opened-up a research agenda in need or attention. In 2019, Professor Thwaite participated in the highly competitive Fulbright International Educators Administrators Program, studying the Germany higher education system, providing a space for cross-cultural comparative research in the intersection of leadership and identity. This experience resulted in increased partnerships with international universities. The

partnership with the University of Greifswald resulted in multiple virtual presentations and increased collaborations.

Recent and Significant Scholarly Activity:

Kenney, C.K, Dorfman, A., and Thwaite, S.V. (2022). Learning to Lead: Lessons Taken from The Wisest People We Know. *Journal of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership in Education*, 7(1), 12-25.

Thwaite, S.V. (2022). Living and leading authentically: Staying true to oneself as a mid-career female academic. In H. Schnackenberg (Ed.), *Women in Higher Education and the Journey to Mid-Career: Challenges and Opportunities*. IGI Global.

Thwaite, S. V. (2022). Creating identity development spaces for leaders in higher education. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 11(1), 55-70.  
<https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2022.60619>

Service: Since her promotion, the School of Education and Human Service recognized Professor Thwaite's gifted ability to work with wide and diverse groups of people and her critical lens that allowed her to lead the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) process. This work resulted in a successful accreditation visit. Professor Thwaite was an ambassador for UM-Flint with the State of Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the Michigan Public Deans' Counsel, and the Directors and Representatives of Teacher Education Programs. Her work extends from international service to department level.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "She has published five peer-reviewed articles since 2020, has a chapter in press, another chapter proposal accepted, and two more publications under review. To have regained momentum in publications in this environment is noteworthy..."

Reviewer B: "...[her research] has the potential to provide insight for those who are perhaps new to leadership roles, and who can situate themselves in a similar context as Dr. Thwaite's experiences."

Reviewer C: "Given that women are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education leadership, Dr. Thwaite's work is also useful in thinking through causes and solutions to those inequalities, thus contributing to ongoing efforts to create more diverse, inclusive and equitable campuses.....This article is one among many strong publications, and it stands out as an exemplar of the way she is employing scholarly methods to support changes in institutional culture around higher education leadership."

Reviewer D: "Given the many administrator roles Dr. Thwaite has undertaken lately, and given the scope of work required for her work as an associate dean, it is my assessment that the quality and quantity of scholarly work is above average.... By any measure, Dr. Thwaite is having a substantial impact on the methods of inquiry and thinking about leadership identities."

Reviewer E: “As a scholar and administrator, Dr. Thwaite seems to have done a very good job of integrating her scholarly work with her practice... Dr. Thwaite’s publications reflect important topics and critical issues facing leaders in higher education.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Thwaite is a committed, successful and respected leader in the School of Education and Human Services. Professor Thwaite’s service within the university expands to the community, region, state, and world, working in leadership roles, representing the university with external partners in a positive manner; her research has shifted in focus, has clear direction, and contributes to the field. Her teaching incorporates her own research on identity, directly impacting the student learning of content as well as developing into self-authored critical thinkers. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee and I enthusiastically recommend Sapna Thwaite for promotion to professor of education, with tenure, Department of Education, School of Education and Human Services.


Recommended by:



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Beth Kubitskey, Dean  
School of Education and Human Services

Recommendation endorsed by:



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Sonja Feist-Price, Provost and  
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



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Debasish Dutta, Chancellor  
University of Michigan – Flint

May 2023