

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

Steven E. Samford, assistant professor of organizational studies, 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.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2012	University of New Mexico
M.A.	2006	University of New Mexico
B.A.	1997	Reed College

Professional Record:

2017-present	Assistant Professor, Organizational Studies, University of Michigan
2014-17	Research Fellow, Innovation Policy Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto
2013-14	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, Scripps College
2012-13	Post-doctoral Fellow, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Samford is an excellent teacher who is highly regarded by both students and faculty peers. He regularly teaches “Formal Organizations and Environments,” a core class for majors; upper-level seminars on “Technological Innovation and Organizations in the Developing World,” and an Advanced Research Team practicum. Across all these classes, his individual instructor scores are remarkably high, typically between 4.5 and 5.0. He is particularly well-known for converting “Formal Organizations,” a required, theory-heavy class that was dreaded by many students, to an engaging and much better received team-based class. Organizational Studies recognized his pedagogical contributions by nominating him for an LSA Individual Teaching Award. Professor Samford is also known for his strong undergraduate mentorship, including helping multiple students through the Fulbright application process, with two honorable mentions and a winner.

Research: Professor Samford is a political scientist whose research seeks to understand the conditions that help or hinder technological innovation in developing countries. He uses an unusually wide range of methods to do this, from fieldwork to original surveys and network analysis to work with large secondary datasets. Professor Samford’s work is meticulous and tightly argued; his papers have little overlap with one another, and collectively form a coherent whole. His work is also distinctive for its attention to low- and medium-tech sectors, which are relatively understudied, and for its primary focus on Mexico. Most research in this space, particularly from political scientists, centers the role of the state and how its policies and relationships with firms affect technological innovation. Professor Samford’s biggest contribution is to shift the lens by focusing on how the organization of the business sector—in

particular, networks among firms—shape innovation processes and thus the success and failure of policy efforts. He demonstrates across papers how much relationships among firms—who their trusted suppliers are, who is central in their networks—matter for determining whether innovations are adopted and technology is transferred. This has important implications for thinking about what kinds of government policies are most likely to be effective at promoting economic development.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Samford, Steven. “Decentralization and Local Industrial Policy in Mexico.” *World Development* 158 (2022):1-12.

Samford, Steven. “Strength in Numbers or Collective Failure? The Organizational Capacity of Microenterprises.” *Sociology of Development* 8, no. 1 (2022): 85-110.

Samford, Steven and Dan Breznitz. “Mending the Net: Public Strategies for the Remediation of Network Failures.” *Social Forces* 100, no. 3 (2021): 1333-1356.

Samford, Steven. “Networks, Brokerage, and State-Led Technology Diffusion in Small Industry.” *American Journal of Sociology* 122, no. 5 (2017): 1339-70.

Service: Professor Samford is widely regarded as an excellent departmental citizen. He has had a heavy load of departmental service for a junior faculty member due to a lack of senior faculty in the program and has carried it willingly and effectively. This includes five stints on the admissions committee, two as the chair; two lecturer review committees; a faculty search committee; and other roles. Professor Samford has also served on committees for the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Association, and the Latin American Studies Association, and reviews frequently for major journals in the field. Outside the academy, he has worked with Latin American NGOs and governments to provide input into innovation policy.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “My view of Samford’s scholarship is very positive...Samford’s papers are consistently creative and original...in both the quantity and the quality of the articles he has published, Steven Samford has exceeded what is expected for promotion at most major research universities.... Even more importantly, Samford’s body of original and creative work and the network of collaborators he has established indicate that he will continue to be a productive and influential scholar.”

Reviewer (B): “This is an easy call. Tenure [Professor Samford] immediately.... He has met the quantity requirements of a top university. His journal placements are excellent. His work is outstanding. When the work under review gets published, he will become one of the leading figures in the United States in any discipline in the relationship between government regulation and economic growth.”

Reviewer (C): “I find [Professor Samford’s] work thought-provoking, rigorous, and extremely relevant for on-going discussions in both scholarly and policy-making arenas. Aside from the very fine quality of his research, a number of his publications are in top venues.... I have no reason to doubt that Professor Samford will continue his strong trajectory of conducting research that generates findings that multiple audiences (including myself) will find worthwhile.”

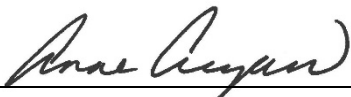
Reviewer (D): “My overall impression of the file is that it shows a publication strategy that prioritizes quality over quantity, although the quantity is also highly respectable especially given the extensive fieldwork that informs much of it. This is evident in the stellar publication venues which include both top disciplinary (*American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*) and interdisciplinary (*World Development*, *Review of International Political Economy*, *Regulation and Governance*) journals, to highlight just a few.”

Reviewer (E): “Overall, what we have is a deeply empirical, high-quality set of research products. There are some important and also practical ideas about networks, private sector structure and organization, and the structure of the state agencies that interact with them, and they are linked around a common theme: how can public actors effectively engage business to improve developmental outcomes...Prof. Samford seems like a very good bet for tenure and promotion.”

Reviewer (F): “I consider the body of work presented here to be of very high quality, even if not particularly large.... The analysis, particularly in the single authored articles, combines rigour with sensitivity to context and process and is a model of this kind of analysis.... There are numerous places in these articles where I was forced to think about work of my own and locate it in relation to the questions raised by the analyses....the body of work would be recognised as of very high quality and as a substantial contribution to knowledge at my institution, certainly justifying promotion to associate professor.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Samford is conducting high-quality, important research on the process of technological innovation in developing countries. He is a first-rate teacher and mentor and has been a particularly valuable colleague during a time of departmental understaffing at the senior level. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Steven E. Samford be promoted to the rank of associate professor of organizational studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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