



College of Humanities and Social Sciences

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To: Peter Stearns, Provost
From: Jack Censer, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Re: Recommendation for promotion for Dr. Sean Takats to Associate Professor
Date: 15 February 2013

The following actions have been taken on the recommendation that Dr. Sean Takats in the Department of History and Art History be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor without term.

Table with 6 columns: Category, In favor, Opposed, Abstained, Not Voting, Absent. Rows include Dept. Committee, Other Tenured Faculty, Chair, CHSS P & T Committee, and Dean.

* The department letters show a number of faculty members as non-voting. These included the department's Robinson professors who typically do not participate in P&T decisions as well as other faculty who were otherwise unable to attend the meetings. In the Absent column, the department letter only listed faculty who did not attend the meetings because they were on leave. To avoid the impression that "not voting" might equal abstention (and thus signal possible opposition to the candidate), the CHSS P&T Committee decided to move the "not voting" faculty to the Absent column, which then reflects the Robinson professors as well as faculty on leave or otherwise unable to attend the meetings and vote.

I wholeheartedly concur with the confidence expressed by the majority of the CHSS P&T Committee, and the unanimous votes of the Department committee and Chair in recommending Dr. Sean Takats be granted promotion to Associate Professor without term.

Dr. Takats received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan in 2005. He accepted the position of Research Assistant Professor for the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (CHNM) in August 2006 continuing through May 2007. At that time, Sean began his current position as Director of Research Projects at CHNM. In the fall of 2007, he joined the George Mason University History and Art History Department as an Assistant Professor in a tenure-track position. Takats completed his three-year probationary term and was reappointed for an additional three years in Fall 2010.

Dr. Takats's research career falls into two separable areas, the conventional and the digital; and as such the chair requested input from six reviewers so that both aspects could receive the proper focus. In formal published scholarship, Sean's specialty is French history, and his major work concerns the professionalization of domestic cooks in the eighteenth century. Cornell University Press has published this work; three of the outside reviewers consider this scholarship and, though two of them raise questions, all agree that this is a worthy book. Additionally, since he came to Mason, he has authored two book chapters (currently in press), as well as three articles which have been published in notable journals. Also he has made numerous conference presentations and given several invited lectures.

Amplifying this scholarly effort is his work on digital humanities, especially the software *Zotero*. Although this project might appear as simply a technical advance, in fact the three outside reviewers consulted on this part of the case repeatedly note that it is a deep and important intervention into scholarly debate. *Zotero* depends on an understanding of the research techniques in the humanities and contributes mightily to their improvement. *Zotero* is thus a scholarly work because it makes significant methodological advances.

As a direct result of a two-year research leave and reduced class-load due to his duties as Director of CHNM, Sean has taught fewer courses than others coming up for tenure. However, his classroom teaching is solid, and indeed some of his scholarship enables teaching generally. Peer reviewers commend his integration of technology to draw participation and enhance his well-conceived discussions of important concepts. Whether in graduate or undergraduate courses, he is considered by his peers a talented teacher who clearly presents complicated historical subjects. This assessment is borne out in the student evaluations which, with a few exceptions, are at or above the department mean. He has earned high competence here.

In the area of service, Dr. Takats has served diligently on department committees, presented on several issues nationally, and served as manuscript reviewer for Cornell University Press and the *Journal of Social History*. His service is certainly satisfactory for tenure.

I have no reservations in strongly recommending that Dr. Sean Takats be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor without term on the basis of excellence in research and high competence in teaching and service.

cc: Brian Platt, Chair-Department of History and Art History
✓ Sean Takats, Department of History and Art History