



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

*College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Economics*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Laura Connolly, Dean
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

FROM: Mark Eiswerth
Department of Economics

DATE: April 9, 2021

RE: Request for Unpaid Leave of Absence, 2021-2022

I have been invited by the Department of Economics and Business at Colorado College (CC) to serve as Visiting Professor for the 2021-22 academic year. I am a proud alumnus of CC, having graduated from there with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics in the 1980s. The Acting Chair of that department, a Professor Emeritus of History who taught at CC when I was a student there, has invited me to teach a full course load next year as the department is currently facing a temporary deficit of at least three full-time faculty members. The position would be partially funded by accumulated private endowment funds, largely unspent during the Global Pandemic, that are available on a temporary basis.

I am very interested, for two primary reasons described below, in visiting my alma mater CC and teaching there next year:

- I. I plan to utilize next year as a “teaching leave” (as opposed to a leave from teaching) to learn and develop new pedagogy for transfer back to UNC classes, programs and initiatives. As background, CC has been operating for the past fifty years under the Block Plan, in which students take one course at a time for 3½ weeks. Some, though not all, of the elements of instructional professional development and pedagogy transfer that I seek are related to benefits that the Block Plan creates for teaching and learning. I envision professional development and pedagogy transfer in several different dimensions, only four of which I describe explicitly as follows:
 - (a) Under the Block Plan, class sessions take place every day of the week for approximately three hours each day (with a brief mid-class break). Given the limits of typical student attention spans as well as the ways in which most people learn, instructors in the Block Plan find it highly desirable to divide each class session into a number of modules that feature varying approaches, materials, and activities. With longer class sessions, flipped learning also becomes even more productive and essential than it is in shorter class sessions. Therefore, I expect to gain a great deal of experience in developing and implementing intra-session class modules that include more flipped learning approaches. In addition to attempting new methods I have in mind, I am looking forward to learning directly from veteran faculty at CC who have found it essential to adopt such approaches given the parameters of their system. I increasingly am seeking to incorporate a number of these methods in my courses at UNC.

- (b) I will be required at CC to include in each course explicit units and materials relevant to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Doing this in a formalized fashion for each course will greatly assist me in transferring and adopting integrated DEI components and approaches in my classes at UNC. All of the classes that CC has requested that I teach next year are ones that I have taught and plan to continue offering at UNC.
- (c) I have been told that CC highly values experiential learning, field trips, and connecting students with stakeholders and practitioners. Because students take one course at a time under the Block Plan, activities such as field trips are facilitated due to fewer complications in scheduling. For these reasons, I plan to further my development and implementation of field trip and guest lecture activities, with particular focus on environmental, energy and agricultural topics. Since I envision that most of these activities would take place within the state of Colorado, and likely along or close to the Front Range, I anticipate that I will gain experience and develop stakeholder contacts that can be imported directly back to UNC courses and students. From a broader and long run perspective, one of my objectives is to increase the extent to which I involve UNC students in off-campus experiential learning during various academic terms of the year. My colleague Dawit Senbet, Chair of our Department of Economics, piloted a class trip to Ethiopia recently that was enormously successful. I believe there are tremendous potential benefits for our students from involvement in such off-campus experiences, whether they be overseas or here in Colorado. Furthermore, that is something I am very interested in doing as an instructor.
- (d) I believe that there may be opportunities for discussion among UNC faculty regarding potential benefits for students of alternative class scheduling approaches. One potential benefit is driven by the fact that many of our students hold jobs in addition to attending classes. Students who study under a Block Plan (e.g., at CC and Cornell College (Iowa)) find that they have entire portions of every day of the week when they are not required to be on campus and thus can work off campus. In addition, some schools (including Beloit College (Wisconsin) and Lynn University (Florida)) have converted quite recently to a modified block schedule in which the semester is divided into two or more modules in which students take two courses at a time. In addition to other benefits, such a schedule results in fewer disruptions in the event of modality shifts and other changes during an event such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Another model, already advocated by some UNC faculty, involves going to a schedule that includes few or no scheduled classes on Fridays. While I realize that there are obstacles and issues involved in rethinking course schedules, I would be interested in participating in such discussions at UNC if they take place. I believe that the opportunity to teach under the Block Plan at CC next year will provide me with a range of new insights on student benefits from alternative patterns of course scheduling.

II. CC is a nationally ranked, small private liberal arts college and one of the few institutions of its kind in the West. I immensely enjoyed my time there as an undergraduate and have always felt tremendously grateful that I was able to attend there. The opportunity to serve for a year there is a rare prospect created by an unlikely combination of a temporary need for additional FTE plus their need for someone to teach the types of courses in which I specialize. I believe that my service there, and the lessons and techniques thereby learned and transferred as described above, would yield tangible benefits for UNC, CC, and my own professional development.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this request. I very much appreciate your review and consideration.



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

*College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Economics*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Laura Connolly, Dean
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

FROM: Dawit Senbet, Chair
Department of Economics

DATE: April 12, 2021

RE: Mark Eiswerth, Leave of Absence

A few weeks ago, Mark talked to me about the possibility of his unpaid leave of absence request during the 2021-2022 academic year. Even though I felt sad that he would leave us for a year, I recognized the opportunity both for Mark and the UNC Department of Economics. In his letter, Mark has clearly outlined the benefits of the experience from his Visiting Professor position at Colorado College. I wholeheartedly agree that the experience he would gain; especially, the flipped classroom learning environment, the integration of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into the course materials, the experiential learning aspects the courses would help us upon his return.

Regarding the course offering here at the UNC Department of Economics, we do not plan to request additional FTE. Due to the temporary decline in our majors, we can offer three less courses per semester for the next academic year, and still manage to meet our students' demand. This was also the case for this 2020-2021 academic year, where I was on sabbatical during the fall 2020 and Dave Aske is on sabbatical this spring 2021 semester. We did not request additional FTE, and all the courses were covered by existing faculty in the Department of Economics. I expect the same scenario for the next academic year.

Therefore, I fully support Mark's unpaid leave of absence request for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Sincerely,

Dawit Senbet



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

*College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Geography & GIS*

To: Laura Connolly, Dean HSS
From: Jim Doerner, Chair DoGGS
Subject: Mark Eiswerth, LOA
Date: April 11, 2021

I have discussed with Mark his request for an unpaid leave of absence. I fully support this request. I believe the opportunity for professional development is a unique opportunity for Professor Eiswerth, and it will benefit UNC in the long term.

If this leave request is granted, I will request additional FTE to hire an adjunct to teach two ENST courses for the spring of 2021. Dr. Eiswerth typically teaches two ECON/ENST courses per year. He is scheduled to teach ECON/ENST 356 and ECON/ENST 382 for the fall term. If we could add two extra ENST courses (taught by adjuncts) to the spring 2022 term, it would mitigate the lost seats needed to meet the demand for ENST credits.

The impact of Mark's leave on the Department of Geography, GIS, and Sustainability will be felt in two ways. First, his ENST advisees will need to be re-assigned to faculty in the department. This would add extra service to our faculty, but it should not be a significant burden given the number of ENST students he advises. The other impact would be the loss of the courses he teaches. This would mean fewer ENST courses for our students. I would also point out that our students appreciate his teaching style and content delivery. However, the opportunity to offer two additional ENST courses in the spring of 2022 would offset the loss of ENST credits, which should offset the course cancellations from the fall 2021 schedule.

If you need additional information, please contact me.



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Office of the Dean

To: Mark Anderson, Provost
From: Laura Connolly, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Re: Eiswerth unpaid leave of absence
Date: April 23, 2021

Mark Eiswerth, Professor of Economics, has requested an unpaid leave of absence for the 2021-22 academic year. Board Policy 2-3-1004(1) states

A leave without pay may be granted by the University upon request of a faculty or staff member. Leaves without pay will be approved by the department chair, the dean, the CAO, the President, and the BOT. A leave without pay may be granted an individual for the pursuit of a degree program, leaves for the betterment of society including election to a city, State, or national office, etc.

As described in his request, he has the opportunity to serve as a visiting professor at Colorado College. Although the policy does not explicitly provide for an unpaid leave for this purpose, neither does it rule it out. Dr. Eiswerth has provided a rationale that outlines the benefits he expects in terms of his own professional development as well as the value to UNC (see accompanying document).

Resource Considerations

Dr. Eiswerth's area of expertise is Environmental Economics and many of his courses support students majoring or minoring in both Economics and Environmental & Sustainability Studies. The application includes memos of support from the chairs of both Economics and Geography, GIS & Sustainability, Drs. Senbet and Doerner. Economics could absorb his one-year absence without a need for additional resources, but ENST would need adjuncts to cover a total of two courses (to be taught in Spring 2022). The cost of these two courses is easily covered with the one-year savings of Dr. Eiswerth's salary, with significant cost savings remaining.

Implications for Time-in-Service for Sabbatical Leave

Board Policy 2-3-1001(2) allows a faculty member to request that the time in leave without pay count as time-in-service if the purpose of the leave is to enhance teaching. Dr. Eiswerth and I have discussed this option and have decided that it isn't needed in his case because he would be eligible to apply for sabbatical in his next year of full-time employment without the leave. This means he will also be eligible to apply upon his return.

Recommendation

I believe this experience will enrich Dr. Eiswerth's teaching in several ways, including incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into his courses; and enhancing his ability to offer experiential learning

and field experiences. This will have a significant benefit to UNC students upon his return. I fully support this request.

Cc: Dr. Mark Eiswerth, Professor of Economics
Dr. Dawit Senbet, Professor and Chair of Economics
Dr. James Doerner, Professor and Chair of Geography, GIS & Sustainability
file



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

Office of the Provost

May 4, 2021

To: Andy Feinstein, President
From: Mark Anderson, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Re: Professor Mark Eiswerth Unpaid Leave

Mark Eiswerth, Professor of Economics, has requested an unpaid leave of absence for the 2021-22 academic year. Board Policy 2-3-1004(1) says, *“A leave without pay may be granted by the University upon request of a faculty or staff member. Leaves without pay will be approved by the department chair, the dean, the CAO, the President, and the BOT. A leave without pay may be granted an individual for the pursuit of a degree program, leaves for the betterment of society including election to a city, State, or national office, etc.”*

Dean Connolly states, *“Although the policy does not explicitly provide for an unpaid leave for this purpose, neither does it rule it out.”* I don’t disagree with this assessment. Approval of this unpaid leave also brings a financial benefit to UNC for FY22, as noted in the attached memos. For these reasons, I approve the request.

Cc: Laura Connolly, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Mark Eiswerth, Professor of Economics
Dawit Senbet, Professor of Economics
James Doerner, Professor and Chair of Geography, GIS & Sustainability