December 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Mathew Platz, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UHH

VIA: Dr. Randy Hirokawa, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, UHH

FROM: Dr. Michael Bitter, Department of History, UHH

RE: Sabbatical Report - Spring, 2013

In accordance with the instructions on the sabbatical application form, I am writing to submit this report regarding my sabbatical activities during the spring semester, 2013.

As planned, I spent my spring semester, 2013, sabbatical period working on a book manuscript. The focus of this ongoing research is the original correspondence between the eighteenth-century precursor to the British Foreign Office and King George II’s representatives in St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1730s. I read through this entire ten-year correspondence, letter by letter, over the course of several weeks. The events related by these letters within the political, social, and economic context of the time, make up the body of my current book project.

As currently envisioned, this book will provide a microhistorical treatment of the mission of George, Lord Forbes, to the Russian court at St. Petersburg in 1733. It will use this unique and extremely well-documented event to illustrate a variety of aspects of Anglo-Russian diplomacy, culture, society, and economics. Investigation of each aspect of this diplomatic mission provides an opportunity to better understand the inner workings of both the British and Russian societies, economies, and courts.

As a result of my sabbatical work, I have had a paper accepted to the Ninth International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia to be held in Leuven, Belgium in July of 2014. This conference is held only once every five years, and is the premier international gathering of researchers on Eighteenth-Century Russia. Academics from around the world will attend this conference and present their research. I am the only participant from Hawai‘i. Selected and refereed papers from this conference will be published in a volume planned for release in 2015.

In addition, as a result of my current work on Russia in the 1730s, and as a result of the recognition of my work by the conference organizers, I have been asked to contribute a chapter on the Russian court to a volume on the topic of European prince consorts to be published by Palgrave Press in the United Kingdom.
In general, the sabbatical was an extremely productive time for my research and writing, and it gave me an opportunity to move further with my current book project than would have otherwise been possible during several years of teaching and University service. It also gave me an opportunity to leave my position as department chair of History, in which I had served for seven years.

Needless to say, I appreciate the research opportunities this sabbatical provided. My only regret is that financial constraints kept me from taking a year-long sabbatical, a luxury affordable only to those UHH faculty being paid much larger salaries than mine.

Dr. Michael Bitter
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