

Part 1: SABBATICAL PLAN

Board of Regents and CU System policies require the following information be provided by each faculty member applying for a sabbatical assignment. Thank you for completing this public document in a clear and substantive way. Each response should be a minimum of 300 words.

Applicant Name: _____

Title of Sabbatical Project: Cherokee Navigations: The Politics of Sustaining Indigenous Life and Building Indigenous Future

(1) Describe your sabbatical's academic objectives including its contribution to your professional growth and expertise.

I am seeking a sabbatical to conduct necessary follow up fieldwork and to develop a second book proposal and manuscript for submission the University of Minnesota Press. Sabbatical support will also better situate me for department and university leadership.

My project centers the Cherokee Nation in present-day northeastern Oklahoma and asks: How are Cherokee people responding to ongoing social, political, and environmental obstacles to life-sustaining and future-building practices, such as the ever-increasing access restrictions to lands on which to gather plants for cultural purposes, and the resulting challenges for perpetuating the knowledge associated with plant gathering? How does climate change pose an added threat to these practices and the plants themselves within such limited gathering areas? Lastly, what can Cherokee responses to these interlocking issues say about broader Indigenous efforts to uphold their responsibilities to their lands and waters, such as the recent proliferation of Indigenous-led conservation projects and Indigenous land education programs?

These questions pinpoint the political-ecological (and deeply colonial) contexts under which Cherokees must live. The Cherokee Nation has been drastically impacted by colonial policies that have diminished over ninety-eight percent of our tribal lands within the reservation and have subsumed much of our sovereignty under the federal government and the state of Oklahoma. Further, our reservation sits at the westernmost edge of an ecoregion that supports plants essential to Cherokee medicine, craft, and food ways and is particularly susceptible to climate shift. Among other forces of climate change, incrementally higher annual temperatures more characteristic of prairie ecoregions to the west threaten the wellbeing of eastern deciduous forests that are home to many of our culturally significant plants. Yet, despite challenges presented by fragmented ecosystems within a "checkerboarded" reservation of tribal and non-tribal lands, my work also asks how Cherokee people are navigating their current conditions to build a different future.

and over the past twenty years I have worked with my people to understand how we have developed material, spiritual, and political ties with the lands we have inhabited since removal from our homelands in the southeastern United States. Building on this foundational and relational work with Elder Medicine Keepers and tribal environmental managers, a College Scholar Award will enable me to devote attention to a second book that centers my more recent research collaborations. A CAREER award from the National Science Foundation entailed six years of work (2017-2023), during which I collaboratively developed a pilot land education program for five Cherokee students with the Medicine Keepers and Cherokee Nation environmental staff. My students and I partnered with three rural Cherokee communities, using surveys, extended interviews, and participatory mapping to understand the challenges that Cherokee people encounter when attempting to access lands for Cherokee life-sustaining and future-building practices. Through this integrated education and community-based research project, I continued to learn from Cherokee Elders about their land-based knowledge, witnessed the tact of tribal natural resource managers as they worked to protect tribal lands, liaised with elected tribal officials about the significance of this work, and discussed the lived realities and goals of rural Cherokee communities. My second book aims to tell the story of our cumulative work toward strengthening the processes by which Cherokee people sustain life and build our futures together.

(2) Describe your work plan including all anticipated professional activities (i.e., where will you spend your sabbatical, what you will do, your work timeline, etc.).

I will take four week-long trips to the Cherokee Nation (Oklahoma) to conduct follow up interviews and selected archival research. I plan to spend the rest of my time writing at my residence in [REDACTED]. I also plan to submit a related article manuscript on Indigenous theories of access to the Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) journal. I have been sitting on the latter project for too long without time to address workshop revisions and the submission process.

Anticipated timeline

Summer 2025: Finalize and submit article manuscript to NAIS; review interview data; conduct follow up interviews and community work.

Fall 2025: Develop book proposal and sample chapters; submit proposal by November 1.

Winter 2025/6: Continue work on manuscript; conduct selected archival research.

Spring 2026: Secure book contract; workshop manuscript chapters toward completion.

Summer 2026: Deliver final manuscript for review.

Chapter overview

Chapter 1: This chapter will provide important historical context for the widespread restrictions on Cherokee access to land, drawing from primary and secondary sources. I will center the understudied period of 1907-1971 to show both the diminishment of Cherokee lands through the U.S. allotment policy, as well as the processes by which Cherokee leaders reacquired the lands that make up our tribal trust landbase today.

Chapter 2: This chapter will center my interviews and community work with three rural Cherokee communities to show how Cherokee people navigate the contemporary legacy of allotment and land theft, as well as continued threats to Cherokee ecologies from the prevalence of land purchases and illicit activities by outsiders that have been enabled by lax Oklahoma state commerce laws and relatively cheap property values.

Chapter 3: This chapter will discuss Cherokee land conservation projects and how they developed through relational networks and strategic engagement with Western forms and institutions, such as establishing a gathering agreement with the National Park Service and the creation of the Medicine Keepers' Preserve. I will show how Cherokee actors worked to build a future by ensuring access to land and thus creating space for life-sustaining practices.

Chapter 4: This chapter will center the development of a pilot land education program with the Medicine Keepers and how its curriculum and structure were designed to both work within and change the conditions under which it operated. In tandem with the conservation projects in Chapter 3, I will show how the Medicine Keepers used their cultural influence to realize their goal of perpetuating their knowledge and protecting Cherokee lands for future generations.

[REDACTED]

(3) Describe how meeting your sabbatical objectives will benefit the academic, clinical, and/or pedagogical goals of your primary unit.

My project directly speaks to the mission of my department, which is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The right of Indigenous peoples to “maintain, control, protect, and develop” our distinctive knowledges and lifeways is codified in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Yet, despite such overarching declarations, continued threats to Indigenous knowledge systems—ironically embedded in the very global processes and politics of which the United Nations is a part—inhibit Indigenous peoples’ ability to express fully our internationally recognized right. More than merely a right, Indigenous knowledge keepers by and large emphasize their responsibility to maintain place-based relationships and ethical frameworks that are expressed through life-sustaining and future-building practices. My project views these life-sustaining and future-building practices (what some call “cultural revitalization” or “land-based resurgence”) in the context of historical and ongoing structural challenges, and how Indigenous people are navigating them despite seemingly stacked odds.

I also situate my work within the growing field of Indigenous political ecologies (IPE), toward which I have been working since my early publications. Stemming from the urgency of climate change, land degradation, extractivism, and the many displacements these processes create—an era [REDACTED] have termed “the colonialcene” to locate its roots in colonial acts and structures—IPE foregrounds Indigenous futurities in apprehending the ecological, cultural, and political crises of our time. IPE also seeks to model alternative ways of thinking and writing about Indigenous futurities through scholarly-community praxis and in drawing from forms, methods, and approaches common to the environmental humanities. My book aims to sit among such interventions, centering Indigenous epistemic and methodological approaches that not only can help us better understand the present but imagine a different future.

[REDACTED]

(4) Describe how your sabbatical project will enhance the university's reputation.

My project promises a significant contribution to critical Indigenous studies in drawing from my cumulative two decades of work with my Cherokee community on pressing issues of cultural revitalization, land conservation, and resource access in the Cherokee Nation—especially regarding how these vital processes are impacted by climate change and ongoing encroachment and development on Indigenous lands. The project is informed by my recent research and community work that was supported by a National Science Foundation CAREER Award, and I seek support to develop a book manuscript for publication with a reputable scholarly press. I have a record of grant and fellowship awards, most notably the NSF CAREER award (which recently concluded), as well as a Sequoyah Fellowship (Northeastern State University), a RIO Faculty Fellowship (CU Boulder), a Cherokee National Community Leadership Award, and an award from the School for Advanced Research. Additionally, I have been a successful awardee with others on grants and awards from the NSF, Mellon Foundation, the New Frontiers in Research Fund (Canada), and RIO. Since earning tenure [REDACTED], I have done over a dozen interviews and public facing work, and over a dozen keynote and invited presentations at such institutions as Harvard University, Columbia University, the Ohio State University, and University of Chicago. A sabbatical will provide me with valuable time away from the labor intensive service work I have been carrying since earning tenure as [REDACTED]. This time will allow intellectual space to develop for publication the work I've been undertaking in partnership with my community, and thus to share with a broader audience of scholars and community practitioners.

[REDACTED]

(5) Describe how your sabbatical will contribute to the educational experience of students.

My courses explore new and emerging areas in Indigenous environmental studies at the undergraduate and graduate level. In the [REDACTED] I teach large introductory courses, upper-level specialized courses, and graduate seminars. My graduate seminars investigate Indigenous political ecologies, Native American and Indigenous environmental issues, and Ethnic Studies research methods. These courses satisfy the needs of [REDACTED] and two certificate programs [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

My research and scholarly expertise is fundamental for my mentorship of twenty graduate students across ten departments within the Social Sciences and Humanities. I served as the main advisor for a 2023 PhD recipient in Ethnic Studies who accepted a tenure track faculty position at the Ohio State University. I co-advised one recent PhD recipient [REDACTED] and one recent MA recipient [REDACTED] at CU and mentored an external PhD candidate at Northwestern University through a national American Indian mentoring program. I was the Program Director [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]--a land-based educational program developed in partnership with the Cherokee Nation Medicine Keepers, which trained five Cherokee students in Indigenous and Western science over the course of three years. In all, I strive to provide students, within and without CU Boulder, innovative course offerings and dedicated mentorship that are based on my ethically-attuned and relational research and community work.

Part 2:

REMUNERATION AND FUNDING PLAN

Regarding external funding, faculty members applying for sabbatical assignments are expected to apply for external funding (such as fellowships, grants, or clinical work) when appropriate. The total university salary to the faculty member, from sabbatical pay and any contract or grant administered through the university, shall not exceed university limits. There is no restriction on additional non-university income, subject to the faculty member satisfying the duties of the sabbatical plan and any contract/grant requirements. If a faculty member on sabbatical anticipates funding, sponsorship, employment, gifts, non-financial support, or other benefits from foreign institutions or sources, these should be detailed in the sabbatical remuneration plan, and all appropriate Export Control procedures should be followed. In addition, faculty members on sabbatical leave are not permitted to be paid for any administrative appointments or extra teaching during the sabbatical period.

- (6) Per CU System APS 1024, it is expected that faculty members applying for sabbatical will also apply for **external** funding to the extent it is available. Describe any anticipated external funding sources, amount of funding from sources external to CU, and attempts to obtain such funding.

I have looked for external funding to help support my sabbatical. In my field, there are little to no opportunities for such funding.

- (7) Describe the source and amount of any additional funding to support your sabbatical, including departmental or gift funding.

I have applied to the Center for Humanities and the Arts Faculty Fellows Program.

- [REDACTED]
- (8) Describe any anticipated support from foreign or international entities, including research collaborators, host universities, or other institutions, (e.g., equipment use, office/lab space, lodging or travel).

n/a

- (9) Under the University's [APS 1024](#), faculty must identify business expenses to be reimbursed in connection with a Sabbatical Plan. Please describe anticipated business expenses and the funding source for those expenses.

n/a

- (10) Will this plan require international travel? If so, please describe the travel including anticipated destination(s).

No

Part 3:
DEPARTMENT CHAIR/UNIT HEAD
PLAN FOR COVERAGE AND REMUNERATION

Based on the corresponding CU System [APS 1024](#), the dean of the school/college shall ensure that the costs associated with the sabbatical are covered, including teaching replacement expenses. The dean may suspend a sabbatical if funding is not available in the school/college. Remuneration (from university resources such as state funding, university administered grants or contracts, or any other university managed sources) for the sabbatical assignment shall be as follows: for full-time faculty on nine-month appointments, either full salary for one semester or half salary for two semesters; for full-time faculty on 12-month appointments, six months full salary or 12 months half salary. Please note that remuneration from university-managed funds or university-administered grants or contracts should not exceed 100% of the faculty member's base salary in the case of full-pay sabbaticals, or 50% in the case of half-pay sabbaticals. For two-semester sabbaticals, remuneration sourced from General Funds (Fund 10) should not be used to supplement a half-salary. Stipends for administrative duties, such as chair or center director stipends, are not included in "base salary" and shall not be taken into account in calculating the individual's salary while on sabbatical.

- (11) Describe the plan for coverage of the faculty member's teaching responsibilities and replacement of teaching expenses. If it is known at the time this application is being made, include specific course names or numbers to be replaced each semester.

In common with other Social Sciences units [REDACTED] is on a 2:1 teaching load. As per college policy, the sabbatical semester for [REDACTED] will be the "1-course" semester. To account for this, we will request temporary funding from the college for the replacement of [REDACTED] teaching.

- (12) If the applicant is in an additional administrative position (e.g., chair or director), indicate how the administrative responsibilities will be covered.

[REDACTED] is currently serving as [REDACTED] with the planned term to end in spring 2025. The department will be seeking another faculty member to assume this position beginning in fall 2025.