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Joseph Spillane, Chair
Department of History
University of Florida
025 Keene-Flint Hall
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Warm Greetings Chair Spillane and Members of the Search Committee,

Please accept this letter as a sincere expression of interest in the tenure-track Assistant Professor position in Early American History at the University of Florida, beginning Fall 2025. I earned my Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri in June 2024 and hold graduate certifications in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Museum Studies. My research and teaching center on the intellectual, environmental and economic history of vast early America, with a particular emphasis on transatlantic exchanges and their societal impacts. By applying interdisciplinary methodologies, such as GIS and network analysis, I analyze the movement of people, goods, and ideas across early American spaces, contributing to our understanding of the Atlantic World and its ecological and economic transformations.

My book project, *Reciprocities Market: The Ecology and Economy of Knowledge Production*, examines how figures like John and William Bartram facilitated the commercialization of ecological knowledge through transatlantic botanical exchanges. These networks connected early North America, the Caribbean, Western Europe, and China, revealing the role of knowledge economies in shaping global and regional economic and intellectual systems. The Bartrams' explorations in the Gulf South further provide opportunities to connect my scholarship with UF's regional and interdisciplinary strengths. By integrating site visits along the Bartram Trail and Heritage Corridor into my teaching, I aim to bring these ecological and economic histories to life for students, fostering connections between UF's academic resources and the Gulf region's historical landscapes. In addition to my book project, my research portfolio reflects a robust engagement within the historical field with a strong early career publication record, having published a co-annotated book project, four online encyclopedia articles, a journal article "Nature Much Improved," and a forthcoming book review. I look forward to researching within the collaborative environment of a research institution like UF.

My near decade of collegiate teaching experience has prepared me to engage a diverse body of undergraduate and graduate students with advanced historical methodologies. At the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I designed courses that integrate experiential learning and

interdisciplinary methods, drawing on historical geography, environmental history, political economy, and social history. Creating inclusive learning environments is central to my teaching and learning philos. My courses emphasize the global and interconnected nature of historical narratives.

In *Nature's Nation*, students analyzed a specific decade and environmental issue to craft a historically grounded speech and poster, contextualizing primary sources within broader historical frameworks. Scaffolded assignments, including in-class analyses and peer feedback, culminated in final projects that connected environmental transformations to political, economic, and cultural developments, honing students' research and interpretative skills. In *Between the Borderlands*, an advanced methods course, students examined the spatial and social dynamics of vast early America by tracing the movement of people, goods, and ideas across borderlands. Combining archival research with tools like GIS mapping and network analysis, students explored the intersections of geography, culture, and political economy. These projects challenged students to critically engage with how fluid and contested boundaries shaped early American history as interconnected and expansive.

Beyond content delivery, I have guided students through capstone projects, research proposals, and long-form research papers, engaging in constant critical thinking and advanced writing skills through the instruction of sophomore to honors senior level methods and writing courses. I have also mentored students applying to graduate school, helping them refine their applications and navigate admissions. These experiences have honed my ability to support undergraduate and graduate students' academic, interpersonal, and professional growth. At UF, I am eager to teach both foundational surveys and advanced graduate seminars, offering courses that integrate experiential and interdisciplinary approaches while mentoring graduate students in developing strong research questions and projects.

My experience in public history further aligns with UF's emphasis on community engagement. As project lead for Madison Historical, a countywide digital archive, I trained and supervised students in archival techniques, resulting in the digitization of over 70 oral histories and image collections. This initiative connected local communities to their histories while providing students with hands-on experience in public-facing scholarship. At UF, I envision participating and aiding the department's public-facing initiatives including those that draw on Florida's unique historical and ecological heritage. These could include collaborative projects with local museums or public archives, groups and initiatives connecting students with the Gulf region's rich environmental and economic past and guiding student research on the Gulf's ecological, and economic history through the Gulf Scholars Program.

Thank you for considering my application. I am encouraged by the opportunity to join the University of Florida's Department of History, to actively contribute to its mission of fostering innovative research, engaged teaching, and impactful community collaborations. I look forward to further communicating on how my teaching, research, and experience align with the goals of the department and university.

Sincerely,

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.