

March 1, 2005

Dear Dr. Bovis:

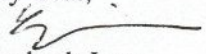
A letter of support customarily opens with a perfunctory statement about the distinct pleasure the author takes in its writing. My experience, however, in this case has been quite the opposite: I suffered only a crushing sense of inadequacy to the task. Not, of course, because I could not find a battery of compliments to offer (on that score I have too much to say, as will soon become evident). But rather, because I am simply in no position to speak highly of someone with whom I am barely able to keep up, someone whose sheer intellectual prowess and prolific scholarly work promises to dwarf whatever accolades I might drum up for this special audience.

It did not take much convincing to apply and eventually accept graduate admissions to the UBC Department of Geography. Several days on Elvin's website, several weeks (or months rather) reading through his vast array of scholarly research, and a brief chat with Elvin and I was sold. His commitment to issues of critical race theory in housing and policy debates as well as his profound interest in bridging the quantitative and qualitative world of analyses (okay, and a second George Bush term!) is truly what drove me to leave the United States for a graduate degree and more importantly, the opportunity to work with Elvin at UBC.

As an advisor, mentor, and colleague, it goes without saying that Elvin's dedication is first and foremost to his students. His tireless commitment of working on our behalf has only encouraged us to become better scholars and academics. What is, perhaps even more astonishing than Elvin's scholarly achievements is his exceedingly developed sense of pedagogy. The intellectual environment and dialogue in which he fosters amongst both faculty and students inside the classroom is truly an anomaly—Elvin creates a safe space for learning, making students feel welcome and comfortable to speak about thought-provoking issues ranging from the unfamiliar to the very familiar. Having TA'ed for Elvin last term, I do not exaggerate when I say that undergraduate students have commented on multiple occasions to how his lessons are always meticulously organized, fiercely principled, and passionately executed. The reactions to his graduate level seminars are no different. To his unknowing, Elvin has taught me about the kind of intellectual, mentor, and scholar that I would like to be in the coming years—that, in my opinion, is the sign of a true teacher.

Here, finally, is the hubris of my own sentiment: I refer to Elvin as a colleague of the highest order. It goes without saying at this point that he is clearly among the top faculty members not only in the Department, but at UBC. I need only add that he is a friend to me, for which I am deeply indebted. The Department of Geography must do everything possible to encourage his stay. Elvin is unique and irreplaceable in every way.

Very best,


Elizabeth Lee
MA Student

cc: Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts

Dr. Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, UBC

Lachlan Barber
MA Candidate
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia

February 26, 2005

Dear Dr. Mike Bovis:

I was recently alerted to the fact that there is a danger that Elvin Wyly may leave his post as associate professor in the Geography Department at UBC. As a graduate student who knows Elvin and is familiar with his work, I feel obliged to express what a loss it would be if he were to leave. With fellow graduate students and others in the department, I share the sentiment that we must do everything possible to ensure that this innovative and energetic researcher and instructor remains here at UBC.

Though I do not know Elvin well on a personal level, I can relate several stories that testify to his dedication to his work and to his students. In the graduate seminar "Urban Systems in Developed Countries" Elvin engages students in an approach to urban geography that is innovative and challenging. Rather than subscribe to one side of the age old binary of qualitative and quantitative thought that prevails in the tradition of human geography, he encourages an approach that incorporates both modes of analysis. It is clear that Elvin has put a lot of time and effort into the design of the course. I have never before taken a class with such carefully selected readings and well thought out weekly themes. Thanks to Elvin's dedication and thoughtfulness, this course is truly a pleasure.

Outside of the classroom, Elvin's work goes well beyond required professorial duties. Quite simply, he works very hard and is very good at what he does. Here is an illustration: one afternoon a few weeks ago I arranged to meet with Elvin in his office to discuss a topic for my term paper. I arrived a few minutes early to find that a meeting with another student was just wrapping up. I was welcomed and invited to join in on the discussion. The student is in the process of starting up an undergraduate journal and had asked Elvin for guidance. Elvin responded with help and encouragement. The fact that the student had chosen to turn to Elvin for assistance speaks to his reputation among students in the department. Equally indicative of Elvin's importance to the University as his work with students is his research. His record shows a formidable list of publications and grants and his work continues to gain recognition and importance in academic circles.

It is undeniable that Elvin's academic work prior to and since his arrival at UBC is indicative of the high standards that the University as a whole and the Geography Department strive for. Dr. Wyly is irreplaceable and because of this everything possible must be done to encourage him to stay here at UBC.

Sincerely,

Lachlan Barber

cc: Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts; Dr. Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, UBC
Geography

MAR. 1, 2005

Dr Michael Bovis
Head,
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

Dear Mike:

It is with a great deal of sadness and concern that I have learned of Dr Elvin Wyly's possible departure from the UBC Department of Geography. From the time we first met, Elvin has always been tremendously supportive of me, continuously demonstrating with words and actions a commitment to helping make my experience as a graduate student here as fruitful and enjoyable as it can be. This is something for which I am deeply grateful to him.

I am also aware that, in his short time at UBC, Elvin has already devoted a considerable amount of time and energy helping other students who have experienced unjustifiable (and ultimately insurmountable) difficulties with the rigid bureaucracy of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. All this at a critical time in his professional career, when reason dictated he should devote his attention to his own work. It is not difficult to understand how these frustrating experiences may have contributed to his decision to consider alternative employment options.

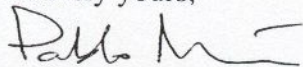
While I have only known Elvin for about 18 months, I have repeatedly witnessed his ability to deal with this kind of setbacks through great insight, professionalism, humor, and tact. For this reason, and because of the relationships he has built with students, faculty and staff in the Department, the general feeling around here is, not surprisingly, that Elvin would be sorely missed should he decide to leave us.

At the institutional level, Elvin's departure would constitute a great loss for the Department and the University. He is a prolific scholar, producing an academically important, socially relevant, and largely unique body of work. Indeed, Elvin is currently one of the few academics in Anglophone geography who capably bridges the disciplinary gap between the field of cultural theory on identity/place and the scientific domain of sophisticated social and economic modeling and quantitative analysis.

Due to the high profile that this Department currently enjoys in our discipline, the departure of a young scholar with such professional trajectory and credentials would send a strong negative signal to the academic community regarding the (in)ability of the University to retain the new talent it attracts. As a student here, it causes me a great deal of concern --and embarrassment-- to see the institution's failure to act in a way that is commensurate with the deep implications of Elvin's current deliberations.

I continue to hope there is a possibility that Elvin will decide to stay in the Department. It has been such an honor and pleasure to work with him and to get to know him as a scholar, mentor, and friend. I urge you to do whatever is appropriate to make UBC Geography his preferred choice.

Sincerely yours,



Pablo Mendez
M.A. student
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia

cc Dr Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts
Dr Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, UBC Geography

March 1, 2005

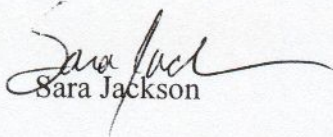
Dear Professor Bovis,

I understand that Elvin Wyly is thinking about leaving the Department. Although I know that this must be a difficult decision for him, I sincerely hope that the Department is doing whatever it takes for Elvin to know that we want him to stay.

Elvin has stunned me in Geog 531 by developing supportive critiques and comments of everyone's work despite our incredibly diverse backgrounds and interests. I have rarely encountered someone who engages so intensely with his students' ideas while simultaneously expressing his concern for our wellbeing. He has managed to create an atmosphere where I feel comfortable to say whatever I want to say without reservation. I have often found it frustrating in classes when stating explicitly what I don't understand is not well received. However, Elvin from the first moments of the first class has not only encouraged, but has also demonstrated that his classroom is the place to ask the questions we need to ask. Elvin makes everything that we talk about in some way relevant to our interests. I'm not a quantitative or an economic geographer, but the process of thinking about issues in these areas has pushed me to reconsider how I look at theory and my own research. At the same time, I know that if I want to write about Diasporas, poetry and music for my term paper he will support me in any way that he can. The topics in class are depressing and messy as any, but we're figuring out ways together as a class to hope, to negotiate theory, data and us. Every week after class I find myself talking to the other students about how much we love Elvin's class.

If Elvin leaves, it will be a huge loss for the department—especially for the students. He has had a huge impact on the psyche of this graduate student in a short time because I know that at least for those three hours a week in his class I never have to worry about whether or not what I say is intelligent enough. Elvin wears down the competitive edge that I imagine is pervasive in most graduate programs. Moving on may be the best decision for Elvin, but I hope that he knows that he will be greatly missed.

Warmest Regards,


Sara Jackson

cc: Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts; Dr. Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, UBC
Geography

March 3, 2005

Mike Bovis, Head of Department
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall Bldg.
Vancouver, BC V

Dear Dr. Bovis,

I write this letter on behalf of Dr. Elvin Wyly, Assoc. Prof. in support of his remaining in the Department of Geography at UBC.

Elvin and I have worked together in two capacities. First, I served as his Teaching Assistant for Urban Studies 200 during the autumn term of 2004. In this position, I was overwhelmed by Elvin's ability as an instructor, particularly his dedication for both teaching students and being open and receptive to learning from them. Students frequently came to my discussion session following the lecture commenting on their enjoyment for the class material and Elvin's sustained enthusiasm during the lecture hour. Further, Elvin's guidance as an instructor to the course TA's was unparalleled. He provided us with a wealth of information about the teaching dimensions of academia, supported the marks we handed back to students and consistently demonstrated a great concern for our work load.

Second, for the past year, Elvin has been serving as a member of my thesis committee. His generous support for my work is a great motivating factor, and he frequently provides me with new points of interest in the form of news clips, songs, comprehensive exam questions, etc. Elvin's position on my committee is integral in that he is devoted to the issue of corporate responsibility, a central component of my own research in economic geography. Further, Elvin's own scholarship and familiarity with researching a number of American finance institutions is invaluable. Finally, I appreciate Elvin's genuine concern for my well-being as both a Ph.D. student and a person. His recent commitment towards balancing work and life offers an important model to follow for myself, students and other members of the department.

It has been a great pleasure and honor to work with Elvin in these capacities and his absence at UBC geography would be a great loss. Please continue to support Elvin in his position here at UBC.

Sincerely,

Jayne Walenta, Ph.D. Student

Cc: Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts
Dr. Elvin Wyly

From: Heather Frost <frost_heather@hotmail.com>
To: <ewyly@geog.ubc.ca>
Date: Monday, March 14, 2005 2:31 PM
Subject: rumours of your departure

hi elvin,
it's been a long time since i've talked to you but i've heard recently from liz and mona that you're thinking of leaving us for greener pastures. i haven't been in to the department much because i had to move for march 1st so i've been settling in and all that crap.
anyway, i just wanted to let you know that, although i have no idea of the full details, i can understand why you would want to leave ubc. i was a huge proponent of mona's decision to leave and i imagine that many of your reasons coincide with hers. i just want to let you know that i support any decision that you make and can understand why a move might be best for your professional and personal well being. that said, i want you also to know what a valuable and unique contribution you make to this department.

i have encountered few professors like you. i am impressed by you as an intellect and as a person. the obvious respect and interest you show for your colleagues and students is rare. your desire to learn reminds me of the purity and the basic reason for academic pursuit. your concern for your students' well being beyond the classroom is always well received and appreciated. i can't tell you the number of times i've heard students rave about their great chats with you, your willingness to spend time with them and your unconditional support. you make students feel important, like equals and in general, optimistic and good about themselves and their work. this is unusual!

i don't mean to kiss your ass but i do want you to know what you do for students here. few people care and you do and that is why we need you.

okay. i said my bit.
like i said, i support whatever decision that you make and hope that whatever happens you will think of your students fondly and keep in touch.

Best,

Heather Frost

2 March 2005

Dear Dr. Bovis,

I've recently heard about the possibility that Dr. Wyly may be leaving the Geography department, and I am writing in the hopes that this is not the case.

Elvin has been extremely supportive and helpful with issues I've approached him with in the past two years. Having struggled with obstacles at my previous university, I am thankful to have been in Elvin's classes (URST 400 and GEOG 531) while at UBC: his advice and encouragement have come at critical times during my time here. I feel that if Geography is to become progressive, it needs faculty like Elvin who actively welcome diversity.

Last year in URST 400, I know that the classmates I talked to were very appreciative of Elvin's respect both for students and for diverse opinions. This year, in GEOG 531, many of us in the class have talked repeatedly about how productive we feel the class discussions have been. We are listened to, acknowledged and encouraged and we have gained tremendously from this.

I do not know the reasons behind Elvin's possible departure from UBC Geography, but I hope the department will make every effort possible to keep him. While I support Elvin in whatever decision he makes, he should know that his contribution to the graduate program here has been significant and positive.

Sincerely,

Kristin Olson

cc: Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts; Dr. Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, UBC
Geography

28 February 2005

To: Dr. Mike Bovis

CC: Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts; Dr. Elvin Wyly

Re: Letter of Support for Elvin Wyly

Dear Dr. Bovis,

I am a PhD student and currently enrolled in Elvin Wyly's Urban Systems in Developed Countries course. I would like to express my strong and unreserved support for Elvin to remain in the Department of Geography. Elvin is an outstanding example of a professor who is able to combine theoretical and research expertise with strong pedagogical skills that can engage students with diverse backgrounds and interests. During the class as well as on an individual level, Elvin constantly makes himself available to students. As a skilled professor and facilitator, Elvin is very apt at creating spaces that allow students to experiment, articulate, and deepen our research topics and interests. Elvin is warm, humorous, supportive, intelligent, and above all - genuinely interested in his students' ideas and perspectives. The Geography Department is very fortunate to have Elvin as a member of the community.

Sincerely,

Gina Wang

Bjoern Surborg
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

To:
Michael Bovis
Head of Department
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia

Vancouver, February 28th, 2005

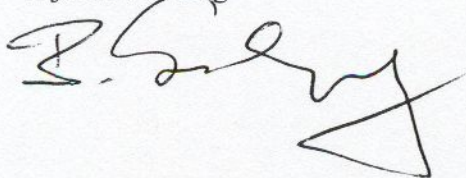
Re.: Dr. Elvin Wyly

Dear Michael,

It has been brought to my attention by other graduate students that Dr. Elvin Wyly may be leaving the department. I think, this would be very unfortunate for the department. Elvin is a superb teacher and I feel that his contribution to the teaching in the department is of the highest quality. I have a lot of respect for Elvin and his work. If there is anything the department can do to keep Elvin here, I would be thankful if this is done.

Thank you,

Bjoern Surborg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Surborg', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Cc:
Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts

Cc:
Dr. Elvin Wyly

March 3, 2005

Dear Dr. Bovis:

It has recently been brought to my attention that Dr. Elvin Wyly may be leaving our department. I believe that this would be a loss to our department not only in terms of an impressive urban geographer, but also an important academic mentor as well. Elvin has put a lot of work into helping his students express their interests and finding their own place within the discipline as a whole. This effort that is simply not common with many other professors in the field. I have a lot of respect for Elvin and his work, and hope that he will be able to stay.

Sincerely,

Jamie Doucette

cc: Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts; Elvin Wyly, Associate Professor, UBC Geography