



The Labor Center @

70

Engaging Iowa Workers and the World:
Past, Present, and Future

IOWA

Since 1951



8—Iowa City Press-Citizen—Thurs., March 28, 1967

Assistant Secretary of Labor To Open Meeting Here on Testing

Stanley H. Ruttenberg, assistant secretary of labor for manpower in the U.S. Department of Labor, will give the opening address at a unique Institute on Testing which begins at the University of Iowa Center for Labor and Management on Wednesday.

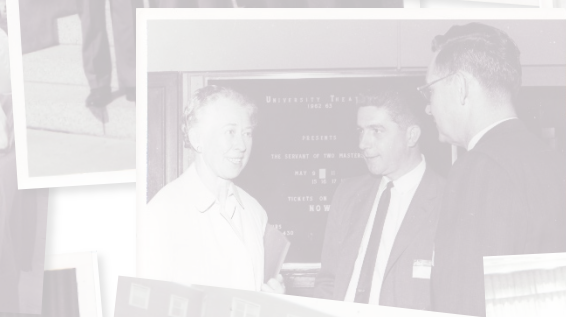
Ruttenberg will discuss "Manpower Implications of Testing Programs" in a dinner address by some 25 labor union staff members here for the weekend.

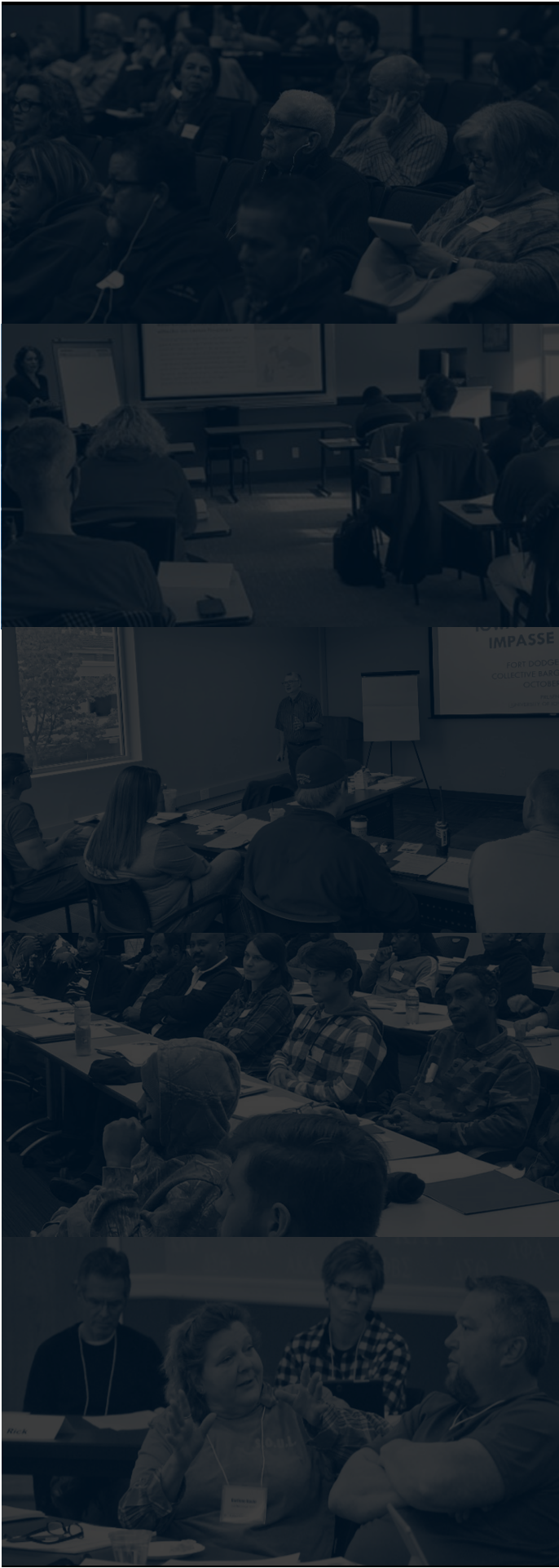


are established, and how job tests are identified. The main aim is to obtain test data and the application of test scores will also be discussed by the institute's seven-member staff.

Walter G. Davis, director of education for AFL-CIO, will arrive at the institute on Thursday and will speak at Friday's closing luncheon.

Ruttenberg is a native of Iowa, where his 50th birthday falls on the day of his arrival here. He received a B.S.





Contents

Introduction	1
Making a University for All People: Founding the UI Labor Center	2
The Roots of Worker Education in Iowa	3
An Enduring Commitment to Serve a Changing Iowa	7
Worker Education in a New Century	9
Serving Workers and the State through Research	11
“A Gift to All the People of Iowa”: The Iowa Labor History Oral Project	12
Renewing the Commitment	14
Current Labor Center Staff	15
Current Labor Advisory Committee	16
Ads	17
Labor Center Photos	30
70 th Anniversary Celebration Sponsors	32

IOWA

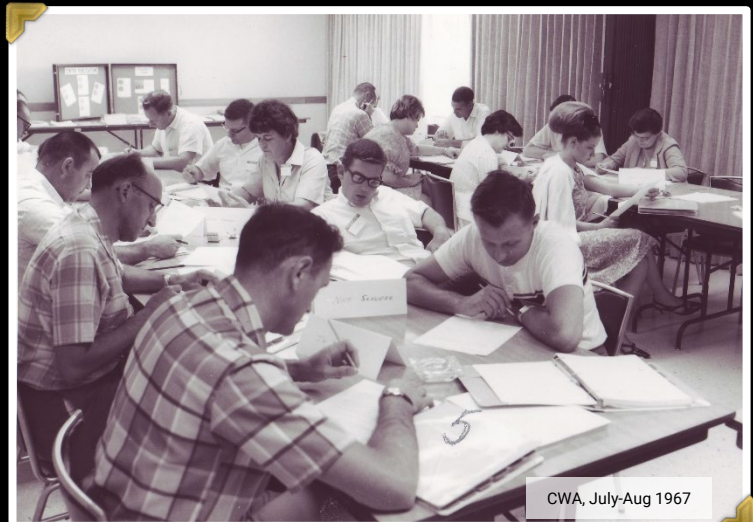
Introduction

For seventy years, the Labor Center has been connecting the University of Iowa to working people across the state and around the world. Through a deep engagement with Iowa workers and their organizations, the center has brought generations of workers and their families and communities into contact with the university's teaching and research. At the same time, it has enriched the campus community through the transformative impact of workers' experiences and the expertise they bring in their own lives.

Founded as the "Institute of Labor-Management Relations," one of the distinctive programs defining the University of Iowa on the national and international stage after World War II, the center has evolved into a critical point of convergence and conversation, where people from all walks of life come together to address some of the most pressing challenges affecting Iowa and the world—from economic inequality and workplace health and safety to immigrant rights, racial justice, gender equity, and, most recently, climate change.

For seven decades, the center has been an innovative leader in labor and adult education, from founding one of the country's first labor leadership schools to a new program to prepare Iowans to qualify for and to complete an apprenticeship in the skilled trades. Likewise, the center's research has addressed the shifting needs of Iowa workers and their communities, from analyzing the impact of labor and employment legislation to studying the history and contemporary reach of child labor to an award-winning collaboration to record the stories of Iowa workers.

Now, as Iowa and the university look toward the future, the center and its staff are already continuing to advance the university's mission and building the labor movement and supporting the public good through education, research, and service. With your help and with a renewed commitment, the center will be there today, tomorrow, and for decades to come—connecting the UI and Iowa workers as they rise to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

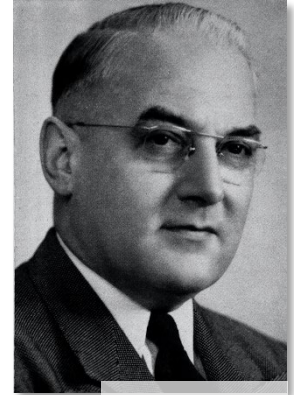


Making a University for All the People:

Founding the UI Labor Center

In January 1949, Iowa's newly elected Republican governor, William S. Beardsley, delivered his first inaugural address. Speaking at a time of profound change and uncertainty in the state and across the world, Beardsley called for action on an item that he regarded as critical to the future of Iowa—establishing a program to address labor-management relations.

We must take time to pause and reflect upon where we are in our growth and development as a people and a state. We must think . . . of the resources of our people with an intelligent firmness and a strong belief in the democratic process, and a desire for all segments of our social, economic, and political society to grow and prosper together. . . . We have great industries within our state and we look forward to further industrial development. If that is to be attained, it is absolutely necessary that we have a harmonious relationship between labor and management. The problems of labor and management quite properly are a field of human relationship in which we must make progress . . . [and] the State of Iowa should foster a program which makes for gain and advancement in the field of labor-management relationship. . . . We insist that both labor and management assume their responsibilities as well as assert their rights.



William S. Beardsley

Little more than a month had passed before a figure no less than University of Iowa president Virgil M. Hancher announced that he had authorized the creation of a new "Institute of Labor-Management Relations." Like Beardsley, Hancher recognized that the state needed to adapt to meet the rapidly changing needs of Iowans, and he saw the institute (which had already changed its name to bureau, as it would later, to center) as an important part of his overall plan to modernize the university and to remake it into a leader on the national and world stage.

Indeed, he was so committed to the center and its possibilities that he made a highly unusual appearance for an Iowa university president: speaking before the Iowa Industrial Union Council (CIO) in 1952 to celebrate the completion of the center's first year of work. As Hancher spoke to the assembled delegates made up of union members from packinghouses, tire factories, farm implement plants, and other industrial employers across the state, he assured them of the university's ongoing commitment to being an institution that would address their particular needs, just as it did those of all other groups:

Sometimes the people of our State forget that the State University is their university, that it is the university of all the people. However, we in Iowa City are careful never to forget that fact. We are the university of Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Gentile, Farmer and Merchant, Labor and Capital. . .

We are knit together in a web of society, and what is injurious to one great segment of that society may well be injurious to all, and what is good for one substantial segment of that society may well be good for all.



Virgil M. Hancher



The Roots of Worker Education in Iowa

"I think you've got a much better educated labor movement, not just in Cedar Rapids, but all over the state because of the Labor Center, yes I do."

--Robert Carson, Hawkeye Labor Council, Cedar Rapids

Teaching and outreach have always been at the heart of the center's work and mission. As early as 1949, the university officials who created the center had identified "on and off campus conferences" as one of its core functions. After its initial organization in 1951, the center identified the following three broad functions:

- On-campus conferences which would bring together union practitioners with university faculty and other experts
- Applied research relevant to the needs of union constituents
- Off-campus service and extension classes taken to community members around the state

As the center took shape and changed over time, this teaching and various forms of outreach—bridging the gap between the campus and the rest of the state, and between continuing, graduate, and undergraduate instruction—became its hallmark and specialty.

But none of this could have been possible without the direct engagement of the Iowa labor movement. In early 1952, the president of the Iowa Federation of Labor, Ray Mills, and the Fed's director of Education and Research, John E. Cosgrove, reached out to President Hancher and Karl E. Lieb, a former president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and UI professor of labor and industrial management, who was then serving as the acting director of the Bureau of Labor and Management. As Cosgrove later wrote, it was this meeting that led to the establishment of an office for labor education within the bureau as well as what would become the center's signature program: the Labor Short Course.

The Labor Short Course

One of the first such programs in the US, the center's Short Course—a multi-day, on-campus program for emerging labor leaders—came to reflect several key elements that would come to define all Labor Center education:

- 1) Programming developed in close collaboration with representatives of the Iowa labor movement to ensure that the material addressed current concerns.
- 2) An interdisciplinary faculty drawn from subject matter experts from across campus and beyond, including nationally recognized labor leaders, arbitrators, labor attorneys, communications professionals, social commentators, and other people working in relevant fields.
- 3) A participatory and experiential approach to teaching that encouraged worker-participants to interact, discuss, and bring to bear their own expertise in their workplaces, communities, and local organizations.

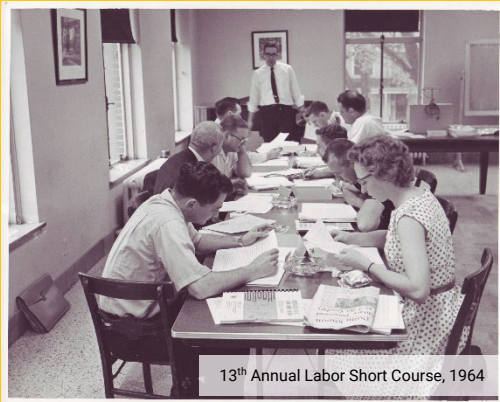


The very first Labor Short Course was held in June 1952 (they wouldn't shift to their current place in the calendar, April, until the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the program began to conflict with summer vacation plans). The agenda reflected the struggles of Iowa workers in the early 1950s, most of which would be as familiar to participants in the 2020s as they were seventy years ago—labor history, labor law, strategies for strengthening union membership, unemployment compensation, wage and price stabilization, creating effective safety programs, and the role of the public in union campaigns. Likewise, participants were drawn from all over the state and represented the labor movement of seventy years ago as well as some unions still with us today, including members from

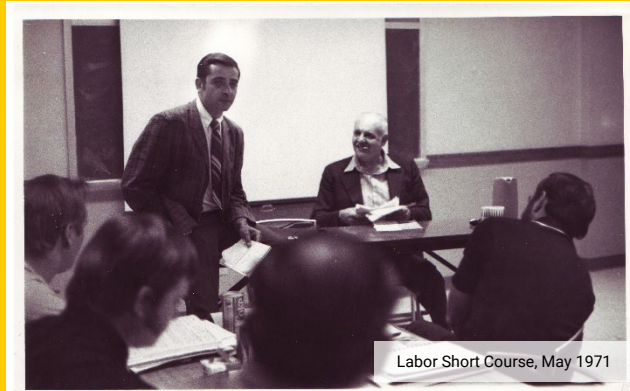
Hosiery Workers Local 50 (Des Moines), Carpenters Local 793 (Fort Dodge), the Sioux City Trades and Labor Assembly, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 405 (Cedar Rapids), and Teamsters Local 238 (Cedar Rapids).

"That spring [1964] they sent me to the labor school, the leadership school, at the University of Iowa. I spent a week down there. . . I, over the years, have thought back on that so many times, about how helpful that was to me to go to this Short Course, this labor school. . . There was about thirty people in our class that year. [Labor Center educator] Tony Sinicropi, I recall, was the main instructor at that time. But I left that school just feeling much more confident about my ability to do my job as a representative of the local . . . because I'd gotten some background and found out what other people were doing. It give me a lot more confidence to be willing to take things on."

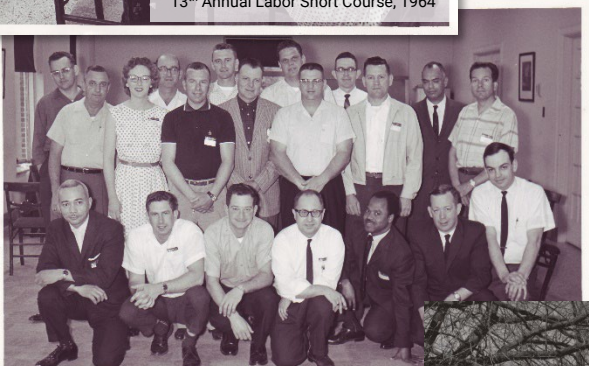
—Cedar Rapids Grain Miller, Lloyd Freilinger



13th Annual Labor Short Course, 1964



Labor Short Course, May 1971



WHO'S WHO

Earl J. Baum, Secretary-Treasurer Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO	Jack E. McCoy, Executive Vice- Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Clark C. Bloom, Economist Bureau of Business and Economic Research, S.U.I.	James McDonnell, Labor Represent- to the United Campaign; Member Community Services Committee, Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Henry E. Carter, Labor Commissioner Iowa Employment Security Commission	Ray Mills, President Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Dr. William D. Coder, Coordinator of Extension, S.U.I.	John Peters, Chief of Benefits Iowa Employment Security Comm
Joan Connolly, Jr., Attorney-at-law Des Moines, Iowa	Kenneth Reid, Manager Cedar Rapids Local Security C
John E. Cosgrove, Assistant Director Department of Education, AFL-CIO	Fred Slavick, Research Director Bureau of Labor and Management
Nelson H. Cruikshank, Director Department of Social Security, AFL-CIO	Berrell D. Smith, Director C.O.P.E. Area No. 4, AFL-CIO
Walter L. Daykin, Professor Department of Labor and Management, S.U.I.	Harry H. Smith, Attorney-at-law Sioux City, Iowa
George P. Delaney Department of International Affairs, AFL-CIO	Margaret Thornburgh, Western Area Director, Woman's Activities Division, Committee on Political Education, AFL-CIO
Jack Flagler, Program Director Bureau of Labor and Management, S.U.I.	Sam Turk, President Polk County Labor Council
Daniel J. Healy, Director Region No. 14, AFL-CIO	Clarence M. Updegraff, Professor of Law State University of Iowa
Earl E. Jones Iowa Industrial Commissioner	George D. Weiny, General Vice-President American Federation of Grain Millers; District Vice-President, Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Gerald G. Ketchum Community Services Committee Cedar Rapids, Iowa	

Labor Short Course Speakers, 1958



Labor Short Course, 1989

Our Tenth Anniversary

The Iowa Labor Short Course has received national recognition for pioneering new approaches in workers' education.

Similar programs will be held this summer on college campuses all over America.

We of the Iowa Labor Movement take pride in the fact that our Labor Short Course was one of the first of its kind in the country.

10th Anniversary

**LABOR
SHORT
COURSE**

May 22-26
1961

Union
Leadership
Training

Bureau
of
Labor and
Management

Iowa Center
for
Continuation
Study

Iowa
Federation
of
Labor AFL-CIO

Union Leadership Institutes

In addition to the Short Course, which was open to people regardless of specific union affiliation, the Labor Center also worked closely with unions and local labor councils to develop on-campus programs tailored to their needs. In the early days, these included annual institutes and leadership schools for members of the United Rubber Workers (today members of the Steelworkers union), the National Association of Letter Carriers, the International Association of Machinists, and the Communications Workers of America. According to Cosgrove, this program also attracted nationwide attention, with program details requested by unions and educational institutions in Michigan, Texas, Tennessee, Indiana, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and as far away as Hawaii.

"In 1967 was my first school that I went out of town. That was at the University of Iowa. The Machinists used to have a three-day school every year, every fall, up there. Very, very good schools. It was my first chance to be with Machinists other than with the plant, and now I've found it to be a real education besides the things they taught us. The first one I went to happened to be on arbitration, which was fascinating to me, because I had never been involved in arbitration. . . . I found that to be a fascinating subject. . . I feel like I've got to learn and I like to go to school. But then I feel I can come back and communicate it to my membership."

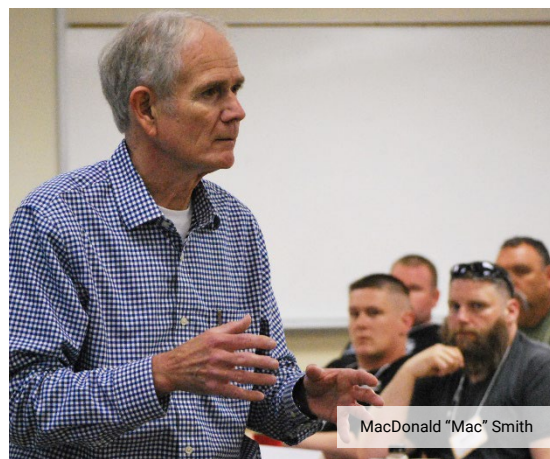
—Burlington Machinist Susan Rhum

Conferences on Law and Policy Issues

Labor Center educators also coordinated programs focused on issues of law and policy. These programs addressed broad areas of concern that crossed lines between labor unions, labor-related professionals, faculty, students, and the wider public. During the 1950s and 1960s, one such program was the center's annual arbitration and labor law school coordinated with faculty members from the College of Law. The program reflected the founding bond that existed between the center and the college and the ways in which the center's commitment to elevating worker voices could transform such educational experiences for all involved.

From the very first such program, held in May 1953, the center worked closely with Law faculty to develop the agenda in ways that brought people from different backgrounds together. For example, in 1953, the center found a strong partner in Professor Clarence Updegraff, a nationally recognized professor of labor law and arbitration, who had also been one of the faculty members who Hancher had tapped to organize the center in 1949. Also on the program was Leo Hoegh, Iowa's Republican attorney general who was soon to be elected governor. These men shared panels with labor leaders like Russell Bull, president of the United Packinghouse Workers of America District 3, who was tasked with leading a discussion entitled, "Federal Mediation and Conciliation as a Preliminary to Arbitration."

These connections also enriched the broader center as well. First, they helped to forge what became close relationships between the center staff and labor and employment attorneys across the state. The most enduring of these relationships was with the Smith family and what would become the Smith & McElwain Law Offices in Sioux City. The relationship began as early as 1957, when Harry Smith, then working as legal counsel for Teamsters Local 383, served as a guest instructor for a "Labor-Law Short Course" held in November 1957. Decades later, Harry's son MacDonald "Mac" Smith and grandson Jay would become core parts of the guest teaching staff at the center, anchoring the critical Financial Officers' School for generations of Iowa union members.



Lastly, these connections and relationships provided enormous opportunities for professional development for center staff. As former center director Anthony Sinicropi later recalled, ***"The closest two contacts I had with arbitration at that time were Harold Davey, who was teaching at Iowa State University . . . and Clarence Updegraff, also a well known academy arbitrator, was teaching at the University of Iowa Law School. . . . In retrospect I guess that was a pretty good opportunity because the field was pretty wide open in Iowa and I had opportunities that probably wouldn't have come to me otherwise."***

Engaging Generations of Iowans through Accessible Education

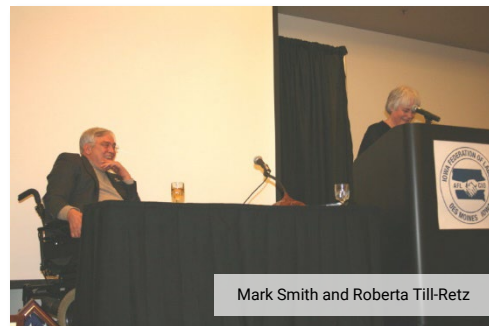
In addition to the longevity and richness of the on-campus programs, another distinctive feature of the Labor Center has been its commitment to bringing education to Iowa's working people at times and places that make it accessible to them. For decades, that has often meant traveling all across the state. As former labor educator and Iowa labor leader Mark Smith recalled, ***"[Here's how it worked:] A local union calls in and says, 'We're having problems Could you come out and put us a little program together?' So we go out."***

Here's how former Labor Center director Lynn Feekin described her work during the late 1970s and early 1980s:

"Starting winter semester of 1977, my route was on Mondays, I was in the office until, I don't know, maybe three, and then I drove to Des Moines, and taught that evening in Des Moines. . . . On Tuesdays, I was in Sioux City. So, by Tuesday morning--I think the class was maybe 11:30 to 2:30, they were always three-hour classes—I would be up in Sioux City, and I would teach that class. And then there was a break, and then I was six to nine in Sioux City. And then the next day, Wednesday, was Fort Dodge. And I did a morning, and an evening. And then on Thursday, I drove home. On that particular semester, I taught different subjects each of those times. One was dispute resolution, one was labor law, one was bargaining."

Challenging as the travel could be, labor educators came to recognize its critical importance to building relationships throughout the state and truly understanding the needs and concerns of Iowa's working people in all corners of the state. As Smith recalled, ***"It was a rigorous kind of thing. . . . But I certainly had an opportunity as a result of all that kind of activity to meet lots and lots of people in the labor movement."*** Over time, this approach distinguished the center amongst its peers through its close relationship to the labor movement and its commitment to working alongside Iowa's working people instead of from an imagined position outside of the struggles of workers everyday lives.

The strength and effectiveness of these relationships earned the center's staff the respect of their university colleagues—as Feekin reported, former Dean of Continuing Education Emmett Vaughan (namesake of today's Vaughan Institute of Risk Management and Insurance in the Tippie College of Business) once identified the Labor Center as one of the programs in which he took the most pride. While the center likewise took great pride in such remarks, they also cherished those from the people they served every day. Or, as Labor Center Director Laurie Clements later said, in a speech honoring Iowa Federation of Labor president James J. Wengert: ***"We [center staff] are not treated as academic outsiders whose job it is to study unions and workers; we are not treated as the folks who just turn up on Saturday to do stewards education . . . but as a part of the movement."***



Mark Smith and Roberta Till-Retz



Lynn Feekin



Dick Fallow, James Wengert, Mark Smith, and Don Rowan

An Enduring Commitment to Serve a Changing Iowa

Even as times changed, the solid foundation for worker education established by the state and Iowa workers provided the capacity necessary to address shifting needs. Between the 1960s and the turn of the century, the center responded, again and again, with programmatic changes that met Iowans' demands for relevant and engaging labor education.

A Changing Iowa, A Changing Campus, A Changing Labor Movement

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the center was once again shifting to address changing needs. Black Iowans and their allies were pressing the state to make good on the promises of Iowa law. Women, cut out of industrial employment after World War II, were once again building a movement to demand equal access to good—especially unionized—jobs. At the University of Iowa and across the nation, students were demanding an end to the Vietnam War and public-sector workers were demanding the right to collective bargaining.

By the 1960s, Iowa's public-sector workers—federal, state, county, city, and school district—were demanding expanded rights to collective bargaining. Excluded from existing labor legislation, they had seen their buying power diminished and their rights and dignity at work trampled. In 1968—six years before Iowa's governor and legislature would respond to workers' demands for a statewide public sector law—the Labor Center put on a conference on public-sector collective bargaining, bringing together experts from in and outside of the state to meet with workers and labor leaders.

During the late 1960s, the Action Studies program was formed at the University of Iowa to provide students with courses addressing pressing social needs and the potential for societal transformation. In the Spring of 1969, the center responded by offering a course taught by Anthony Sinicropi on "Labor and Radical Reform in America: History and Current Issues," which explored "the institutional and economic forces shaping the American labor movement." It attracted a diverse crowd of undergraduate and graduate students, including several who would go on to shape the Iowa labor movement: John Schacht (a center graduate employee who would work on worker interviews), Dale McCormick (an undergraduate who would go on to be the first woman to graduate from a joint Carpenters' apprenticeship training program in the US), and Joe Berry (who would later work for the center). Clara Oleson (who would work for the center in the 1980s and 90s) recalls that the Action Studies program was



Women in Industry Conference, May 1963



Iowa NALC Institute, Feb. 1969



Anthony Sinicropi (center, kneeling) at 13th Annual Labor Short Course, 1964



John Schacht, John McKerley, and Paul Iversen at the American Dream Conference, 2016
Photo by Mark Lanning

held around the same time that she and other women formed the Student Wives Equity Action Team and began organizing for gender pay equity, which prompted her to enroll in law school.

In 1968, the Labor Center was selected as one of five sites nationally to hold a "Training Institute for Young Trade Unionists" sponsored by the national AFL-CIO Department of Education.

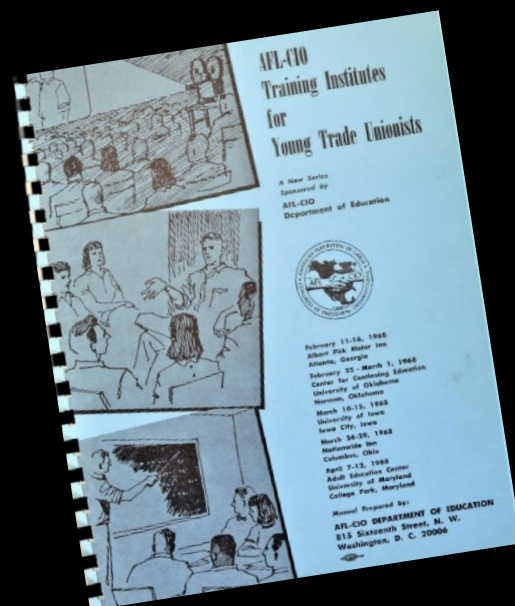
Facing the Changes of the 1980s and a New Century

As a new century dawned, Iowa workers would again face rapid and jarring changes in the form of deindustrialization, globalization, and new forms of management that sped up production as wages stagnated. Again, the center responded, shifting its offerings to address these needs. During this period, the center was directed by a series of labor educators including Lynn Feekin, Roberta Till-Retz, Laurie Clements, and Dan Holub.

In addition to traditional programming, new offerings addressed issues such as gender equity, immigration, new forms of "lean" management, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and health care policy. One of the most popular classes developed during these years was on the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The center's materials—originally developed by Till-Retz—address workers' rights under the law to access protected, unpaid leave for qualified medical and family related reason. These rights became increasingly important as globalization intensified competition and production demands, and parents of school-aged children were increasingly at work in full-time jobs.

Roberta Till-Retz was an instructor and a director at the Labor Center during her two-and-a-half-decade tenure, which began in the early 1980s – a tumultuous time for labor. U.S. Senator Tom Harkin paid tribute to Till-Retz when she retired, praising her as "a prolific author, a respected scholar, an enormously popular teacher, a mentor to up-and-coming union activists, and a valued consultant to the labor community, not just in Iowa but nationally. . . Over the years, she has served as executive director of the Iowa Federation of Labor's Iowa Labor History Oral Project, as vice president of the United Association for Labor Education, and as book review editor for the Labor Studies Journal. . . So I salute Roberta Till-Retz for a job brilliantly done. As long as I have known her, she has always had a tank full of enthusiasm and a heart full of dreams..."

In the early 2000s and 2010s, new educators joined the center, including Jennifer Sherer, Matt Glasson, Angel Gonzalez, Robin Clark-Bennett, Paul Iversen, and Guillermo Morales.



Worker Education in a New Century:

Tradition and Innovation

Many of the Labor Center's earliest traditions have withstood the test of time and remain central to the center's educational programming. As it has throughout its history, the Labor Center also continues to develop innovative curriculum and teaching methods to meet the needs of Iowa workers in the 21st Century.

The Labor Short Course

From April 25 – 29, 2022, a group of emerging workplace leaders from across the state completed the 70th annual Labor Short Course on the University of Iowa campus. Participants came from aluminum, food processing, rail, health care, aerospace production, and machine shops. The program featured many of the topics that appeared in the earliest Short Course agendas (labor history, labor and employment laws, public speaking, leading effective meetings, and member communications) as well as sessions such as bystander intervention, labor and climate policy, and gender equity. In keeping with tradition, Labor Center instructors were joined by lawyers, labor leaders, and other university staff (such as law professor César Rosado Marzán, attorney Jay Smith, Teamsters leader Jesse Case, and Jennifer Sherer with the Economic Policy Institute).



Worker Leader Institutes

As in the past, the Labor Center continues to host a beginning/advanced leadership school for the Communications Workers of America, which attracts leaders from across 15 states in District 7 to Iowa City. The center also regularly hosts leadership programs for rail workers, postal workers, the Midwest Labor Press Association, federal workers, fire fighters, transit workers, the Alliance for Retired Americans, the Center for Worker Justice, and others.

Conferences on Law and Policy Issues

The Labor Center offers on-campus programs each year to enhance the skills of worker advocates in a variety of areas related to labor and employment laws and policies. These conferences frequently feature guest speakers from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, practicing attorneys, and faculty from colleges such as: Law, Medicine, Public Health, and History.

- collective bargaining
- duties of union financial officers
- union representation and dispute resolution
- workers' compensation
- occupational safety and health
- family and medical leave
- harassment and discrimination in the workplace



Public Conferences: convening labor, community, and campus leaders around challenging contemporary issues

For the past ten years, the Labor Center has hosted a popular series of public conference that bring together 80 to 100 labor, community, and campus leaders with national keynote speakers to discuss national and state initiatives addressing the most challenging issues of our time. In 2022 the Labor Center convened the state's first labor and climate policy summit. Other public conferences have addressed such issues as immigration, labor and civil rights, conditions facing restaurant workers, wage theft and workers' centers, and workers' rights in the pandemic. Keynote speakers have been leading voices in these topics from across the U.S. and Canada.



Engaging Iowans through Accessible Education

The Labor Center staff today continue to teach the majority of their classes in workers' home communities across the state's 99 counties. These customized classes are sponsored by worker groups throughout the state, at times, in locations, and in languages that they find accessible. Some recent classes have reviewed collective bargaining law and practice, effects of workplace fatigue, workers' rights under the Railway Labor Act, and workplace violence and de-escalation strategies. The Labor Center is constantly developing new curriculum to meet the changing needs of Iowa workers and their unions in the ever-evolving world of work.

Developing Curriculum for Unions and Workers' Centers

The Labor Center has been awarded contracts in recent years by several national and regional labor organizations and foundations to develop curriculum on union representation, coalition building, community organizing, collective bargaining, and diversity and inclusion. The curriculum often includes an instructor's manual, participant worksheets and exercises, slide presentations, and more recently videos.

Recent examples of work on curriculum development projects include:

- Interviews and development of case studies documenting base-building techniques used by members and leaders of the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa in forming the organization and launching successful campaigns to win the Midwest's first accessible community ID, secure the state's first local minimum wage increase, and lead high-profile campaigns to combat wage theft. Sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- An educational video for CWA members in the Southeast and Puerto Rico highlighting ways in which telecommunications workers have engaged in contract negotiations.
- Interviews and development of a comprehensive case study documenting a groundbreaking statewide contract campaign of nearly 20,000 long-term care members of SEIU 1199 New England who, in response to the crisis they experienced in the pandemic, organized a multifaceted campaign that culminated in contracts with affordable health insurance, new pensions, substantial pay increases, and racial justice language.
- Focus group discussions and production of a toolkit highlighting best practices in responsible construction bidding procedures in local communities in Iowa.



Convening Labor & Climate Initiatives

Throughout this year, the Labor Center has worked with the Iowa Federation of Labor, the Iowa Environmental Law and Policy Center, the BlueGreen Alliance, and dozens of Iowa labor and environmental organizations across the state to convene a series of biweekly statewide meetings to find common ground on two of the most urgent issues of our time – the climate crisis and the crisis of soaring economic inequality and deteriorating labor standards. The discussions have spurred formation of a new BlueGreen Alliance of Iowa, working to advance equitable living wage jobs and climate action.

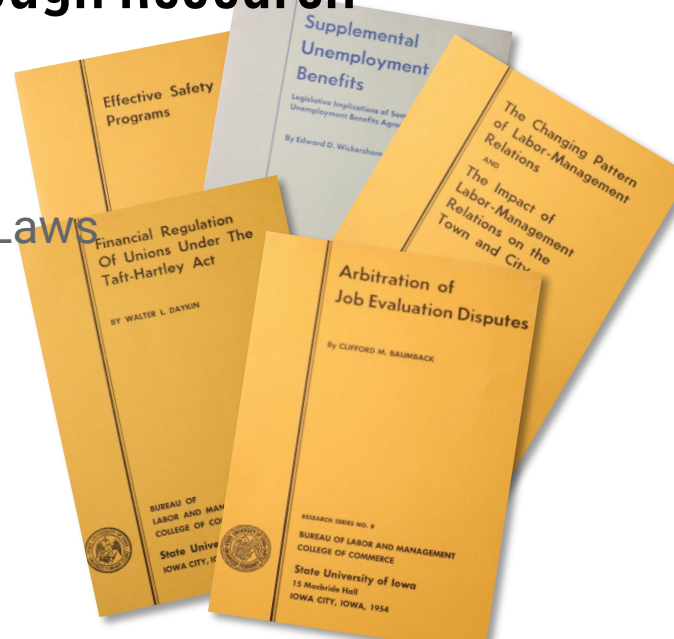


Serving Workers and the State through Research

For seventy years, the Labor Center has served workers in Iowa and around the US through its own research and by supporting the worker-centered and interdisciplinary research of its partners, on and off campus. Some examples include:

Public-Facing Scholarship on Workplace Laws

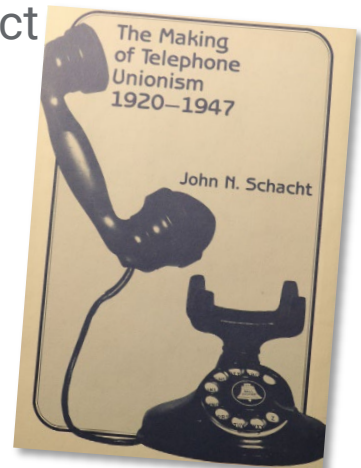
Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the center produced a Research Series of pamphlet-style publications to provide Iowans with access to practical and cutting-edge research addressing pressing workplace issues. As an innovative experiment in public-facing scholarship, the series provided an opportunity for the university's faculty to reach a wider audience and to make important impacts on ongoing debates. For example, in 1960, a young Willard Boyd, who would go on to become university president, took advantage of the series to co-write an article on Iowa's workplace compensation system.



Law students working as research assistants at the Labor Center gain unique opportunities to conduct applied legal research relating to contemporary workplace issues, assist Iowa workers in solving challenging real-world problems, and publish their findings. For example, first-year law student Emily Schott worked with the center to research the impact of changes to state workers' compensation law, which she presented to the Iowa Workers' Compensation Advisory Committee. She later co-authored a report with center staff and the Iowa Policy Project.

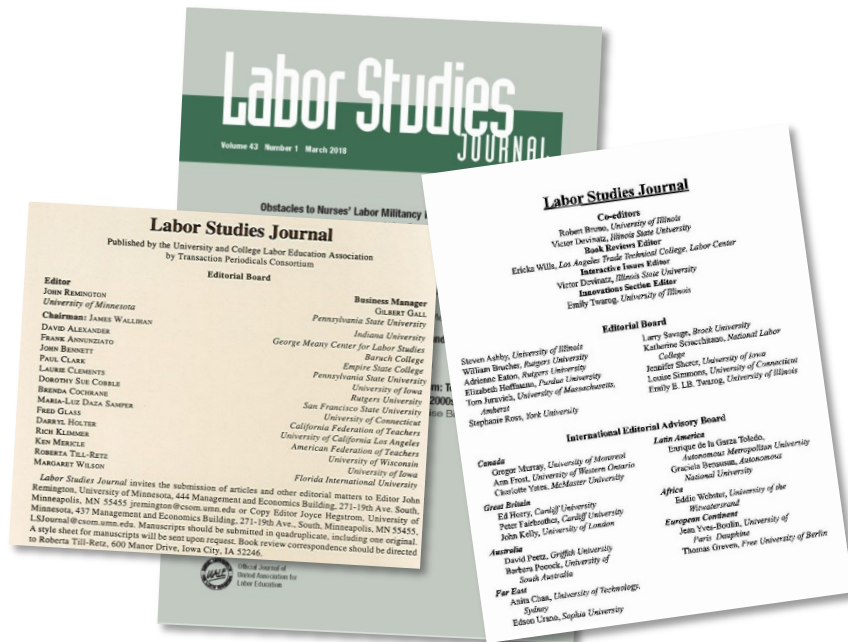
Communications Workers of America Oral History Project

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Labor Center built on its longstanding relationship with the Communications Workers of America (CWA) to undertake a nationwide oral history project to document the union's formation during and after World War II. In coordination with the CWA, which funded the project, the Labor Center hired an Iowa History graduate student, John Schacht, to travel around the country to interview a wide range of local and national leaders. The resulting project produced bound volumes of transcripts that were preserved and made available to the public through the University of Iowa Special Collections and through the CWA collection at the Tamiment Library and Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. The project became the basis for Schacht's dissertation and later book, *The Making of Telephone Unionism, 1920-1947* (Rutgers University Press, 1985).



Labor Studies Journal

The Labor Center staff also has a long tradition of service on the editorial board of the Labor Studies Journal (LSJ), the primary journal in the field, published by the United Association for Labor Education (and, previously, by its predecessor, the University and College Labor Education Association). The LSJ is "a multi-disciplinary journal covering issues related to work, workers, labor organizations, labor studies, and worker education in the US and internationally." For example, UI Labor Center educators Roberta Till-Retz and Laurie Clements served on the editorial board throughout much of the 1990s, and educator and former center director Jennifer Sherer has served since 2009.

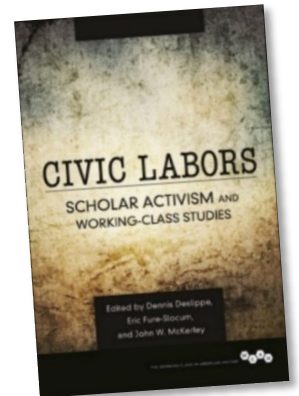


Child Labor Research Initiative and Education Project

In 2002-2004 the Labor Center, in partnership with The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to design a series of curricular materials on international child labor and its relationship to international workers' rights, international trade, and children's health issues. The resulting Child Labor Public Education Project generated four interactive popular education modules which were piloted and disseminated through a series of over 50 workshops presented to Iowa unions, teachers, students, and churches. All curricular materials remain available for download and remain popular sources for researchers, teachers, and students of all sorts.

Civic Labors

In 2016, Labor Center oral historian John McKerley co-edited Civic Labors: Scholar Activism and Working-Class Studies, published by the University of Illinois Press. An outgrowth of a conference honoring the career of University of Iowa History professor Shelton Stromquist, the book documented examples of engaged scholarship over several decades and across two continents and included contributions from Labor Center director Jennifer Sherer and other leading scholars in the fields of labor education and history, including Yale professor emeritus David Montgomery.



“A Gift to All the People of Iowa”:

The Iowa Labor History Oral Project

Arguably the center's most important and enduring contribution to research is the Iowa Labor History Oral Project (ILHOP).

The project was the vision of Iowa Federation of Labor leader James J. Wengert, who recognized the value of Iowa workers' stories for the labor movement, educators, and the general public. In the 1970s, Wengert partnered with Labor Center educator Mark Smith (who would go on to join Wengert in the leadership of the Iowa Fed) to found the project with the assistance of an advisory board of labor leaders, historians, and archivists from around the state. By the 1980s, the project's day-to-day administration had passed to the Labor Center staff, who guided it into its current form, as one of the largest and longest-running, labor-focused oral history projects in the world.



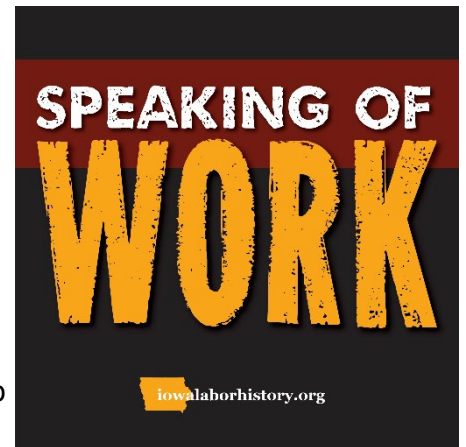
James J. Wengert

As ILHOP oral historian Paul Kelso and distinguished UI historian Ellis Hawley (a project advisor) wrote in 1977, from the beginning, the project's purpose was "to gather together and organize interviews and other materials so that future generations of researchers, scholars, students and private citizens may learn how and why unions developed in Iowa and the contributions they have made to Iowa life." According to its founders, the project was to "add to the historical record, illuminate a large cross section of human enterprise and finally, be a gift to the people of Iowa, now and in perpetuity."

Since the 1970s, the project has met this mission by collecting some 1,500 interviews with Iowa workers, broadly defined, as well as over 800 linear feet of other manuscript and archival materials. Since the 1970s, all physical materials have been maintained through a partnership with the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City. Since approximately 2015, that partnership has expanded to include the University of Iowa Libraries, which now maintains and makes available the project's digital materials.

The interviews explore over seventy-five occupational groups and dozens of unions and communities from across the state. They record memories stretching from people like Mike Dillon, the oldest interviewee, who was born to Irish immigrants in Clinton, Iowa, in 1878, to recent immigrants from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They provide particularly rich descriptions of the labor and working-class history of Iowa and the Midwest, along with workers' perspectives on a wide range of topics, including race, gender, sexuality, migration, architecture, childhood, religion, sports, technology, and the history and culture of a host of other states, regions, and nations around the world.

Founded as an educational research project designed to reach a wide audience, ILHOP has, over the years, developed a series of partnerships and activities designed to broaden its reach. These have included (in partnership with the Iowa Labor History Society) developing an exhibit, Speaking of Work, which traveled the state as part of the UI's Mobile Museum, visiting thirty-two counties and engaging over thirty-five thousand visitors at fifty-four events, including the State Fair. In 2019, the project built on this success by launching a podcast (also called Speaking of Work) to tell the "everyday and extraordinary" stories of Iowa and Midwestern workers. Most recently, it launched a new website, in partnership with the University of Iowa Libraries, to provide unprecedented access to the project's interviews and to become a hub for teaching and research about Iowa and Midwestern workers.

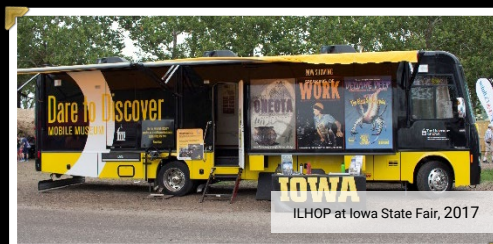


ILHOP has also contributed to the university's teaching mission. Since 2016, in partnership with Cornell College, SHSI, Inc., Kirkwood Community College, the UI's Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Obermann Center, ILHOP has sponsored ten interns on a range of projects, from auditing and editing transcripts to website design and podcast production. In keeping with the project's origins, these internships have a particular focus on providing research and other educational opportunities to first generation students and people from other marginalized communities.

Over the decades, the project has won numerous awards, including prizes and grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



ILHOP interviewee Irma Concepcion Villa, 2016



ILHOP at Iowa State Fair, 2017



Three generations of ILHOP directors, staff, and advisors: (Standing, from left to right) Justin Baumgartner, John McMerley, Heidi Parker, Mary Bennett, Ken Sagar, Jennifer Sherer, and Janet Weaver. (Seated, from left to right) Shelton Stromquist and Merle Davis. Photo by Charles Scott.

Renewing the Commitment

Today, in 2022, the Labor Center and its staff are proud to uphold the tradition their predecessors have built over the past seven decades—engaging Iowa workers by bringing the best of labor and worker education, applied research, and outreach to communities across the state. This Center continues to have an outsized impact on cross-disciplinary research into the world of work in a time of historic transformation. Its classes and educational materials remain influential on the national and even international stage. Yet still, its existence can never be taken for granted.

Just 4 years ago, this Center was unexpectedly targeted for closure. Iowans from every corner of the state responded. An estimated 10,000 students, workers, faculty, alumni, elected officials, faith leaders, parents, and community members came together for over eight months to “Save Our Labor Center.” They held town hall meetings, signed petitions, passed resolutions, and convened summits in support of the vision of the university articulated by Virgil Hancher and the Iowa workers who collaborated with him in the early 1950s to create a new institution in another time of profound change.

That vision was of a university for *all* Iowans.

As in the past, realizing that vision requires a commitment from all stakeholders: the state, the university, the staff, the labor movement, and Iowa residents. The Labor Center remains open today because Iowans from all walks of life displayed their commitment to preserving this bridge to their public university. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, Iowa’s workers and unions have sponsored and attended more classes than in any of the past eight years. Labor Center staff are passionately undertaking the hard work of engaging all the state’s people—on their own terms and in their own communities—through research and education that responds to their struggles and their hopes, day in and day out. With a renewed state and university commitment, the Labor Center is poised to uphold its tradition of programmatic excellence and expand its service to the university community and Iowa’s workers.



Current Labor Center Staff

The Labor Center's dedicated Labor Educators, Labor Historian, and Administrative Secretary conduct research and coordinate and deliver programming to support Iowa's workers, community members, and their organizations. Whether it's research or tailored education and training, the Labor Center team is ready to help make it happen.



Robin Clark-Bennett, Director

robin-clark-bennett@uiowa.edu

Robin serves as an educator and Director of the University of Iowa Labor Center. She teaches classes on basic labor and employment rights, representation and collective bargaining skills, organizing, communications, labor-community coalitions, labor history, and the intersection of labor and immigration policy.

Member, United Association for Labor Education and AFT Local 716; Board Member, Center for Worker Justice



Sarah Clark, Secretary

sarah-j-clark@uiowa.edu

Sarah was delighted to re-join the Labor Center staff in July 2010, after a 20-year hiatus on the West Coast. Sarah handles administrative work, registration and conference logistics, and materials preparation associated with all Labor Center on-campus and off-campus programming.

Professional Service and Engagement: Treasurer, AFSCME Local 12



Paul Iversen, Labor Educator

paul-iversen@uiowa.edu

Paul joined the Labor Center as a Labor Educator in January 2011. He teaches on a range of subjects, and has expertise in labor and employment law, contract administration and enforcement, labor arbitration, occupational health and safety, and building and construction trades issues (including the application of Davis-Bacon and prevailing wage statutes).

Professional Service and Engagement: Member, United Association for Labor Education; President, AFT Local 716



John McKerley, Oral Historian

john-mckerley@uiowa.edu

John is an oral historian, archivist, and documentarian specializing in US labor and working-class history. Since 2013, he has served as curator of the Iowa Labor History Oral Project (ILHOP), an oral history project directed by the Labor Center in collaboration with the UI Libraries, the State Historical Society of Iowa, the Iowa Labor History Society, and the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

Professional Service and Engagement: President, Iowa Labor History Society



Guillermo Morales, Labor Educator

guillermo-morales@uiowa.edu

Guillermo is a transplant from El Paso, Texas by way of California where, as a labor advocate, he contributed to the success of the California School Employees Association (CSEA), a statewide union representing over 260,000 classified public school employees. His expertise is in strategic planning, worker advocacy and representation, negotiations, and labor/management relations.

Professional Service and Engagement: Treasurer, United Association for Labor Education

Current Labor Advisory Committee

Members meet with Labor Center staff and College of Law representatives at least twice per year to assess the educational needs of Iowa workers and suggest programming to meet such needs. The Committee reviews and evaluates Labor Center programs, generates proposals for new education programs or research projects, promotes Labor Center programs, and works to sustain relationships between the state's public universities and its organized workforce.

Jesse Case

Secretary-Treasurer, IBT Local 238
jcase@iowalabor.com

Herb Copley

President, Iowa State Assoc. of Letter Carriers, NALC
hejojake@cltel.net

Greg Cross

International Representative, UE
iupunion@gmail.com

Rick Eilander

President, AFSCME Council 61
reilander@afscmeiowa.org

J.D. Fitch

Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, IUPAT, Dist. Council 81
jdfitch81@gmail.com

Bill Gerhard

Iowa LECET
wm.gerhard@gmail.com

Roger Grobstich

International Representative, RWDSU
rgrobstich@rwdsu.org

Ryan Hanghian

President, Iowa Professional Fire Fighters
ipff.president@gmail.com

Jeff Hartford

Staff Representative, USW
jhartford@usw.org

Becky Hawbaker

President, United Faculty-AAUP, University of Northern Iowa
becky.hawbaker@uni.edu

John Herrig

Directing Business Rep, IAM&AW District 6
jherrig.dl6@outlook.com

Peter Hird

Secretary-Treasurer, Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
peter@iowaafclcio.org

Gregg James

National Vice President, AFGE 8th District
gregg.james@afge.org

Kim Karol

President, Iowa Postal Workers Union-APWU
iowaapwuprez@gmail.com

Simplice Kuelo

President, UFCW Local 431
skuelo@ufcw431.com

Coy Marquardt

Assoc. Executive Director for Affiliate Services, ISEA
cmarquardt@isea.org

Paula Martinez

President, South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
pmartinez.scifl@gmail.com

Mike McCarthy

President, Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans
mikeandjeanmcc@msn.com

Rick Moyle

Executive Director, Hawkeye Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO
rmoyle@hawkeyelabor.us

Andy Roberts

Business Manager, UA Local 33
aroberts@ualocal33.org

Mazahir Salih

Executive Director, Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa
mazahir@cwjiowa.org

Brad Schwanda

International Representative/Education Coordinator, UAW Region 4
bschwanda@uaw.net

Jeff Shudak

President, Western Iowa Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
president@wilfaflcio.org

Barb Stanerson

Vice President, SEIU Healthcare MN & IA
barb.stanerson@seiuahcmn.org

Tom Townsend

President, Great River Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
tom@ibew704.com

Lorri Walker

President, USW Local 444L
warsawwalker@yahoo.com

Patrick Wells

President, IBEW State Conference
phwells@ibewlu347.org

Bonnie Winther

International Representative, CWA
bwinther@cwa-union.org

Charlie Wishman

President, Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
charlie@iowaafclcio.org

Kevin Washburn (ex-officio member)

N. William Hines Dean and Professor of Law
kevin-washburn@uiowa.edu



Founded in 1972



THE LAW FIRM OF BLAKE & UHLIG, P.A.

CONGRATULATES

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LABOR CENTER
FOR ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Michael Amash
Eric Beckemeier
Scott Brown
Anthony Ealy

Jordan Glasgow
Michelle Graves
Samantha Groark
Nathan Hill

Nathan Kakazu
Eric Kobet
Toni Martin
Jason McClitis

Quinlan Moll
Amanda Rhodes
Cayla Rodney
Michael Stapp

Nathan Terry
Brandon Wood
Frederick Zarate

www.blake-uhlig.com

CWA

LOCAL 7108

1695 Burton Avenue, Suite #9 • Waterloo, Iowa 50703
office: 319-291-6601



**Congratulations
to the
University of Iowa
Labor Center
on their
70th Anniversary!**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK.



**“Education is the
most powerful
weapon we can
use to change the
world” Nelson Mandela**

**Thank you University of Iowa
Labor Center for 70 years of
changing the world.**

**The best Labor Center in the
Country!**

**From the Officers,
Staff, and Affiliates of
the Iowa Federation of
Labor, AFL-CIO**



We Love



The University of Iowa Labor Center Happy 70th Anniversary

Iowa Postal Workers Union



Congratulations

University of Iowa Labor Center

We honor your 70-year legacy of
providing education and research
support for Iowa's workers.



3400 E. Euclid Ave • Des Moines, IA 50317

Smith & McElwain

LAW OFFICES

Attorneys

Jay M. Smith & Dennis McElwain

**Congratulations to the Labor
Center on 70 years of
Strengthening Iowa
Through Worker Education!
We look forward to the next 70!**



Des Moines

**3209 Ingersoll Avenue
Suite 104
Des Moines, IA 50312
515/255-9487**



Sioux City

**505 Fifth Street
Francis Building, Suite 530
Sioux City, IA 51101
712/255-8094**

smitmcel@aol.com

www.smithandmcelwain.com

***Representing the Interests of Labor Unions and
Working People for 70 Years !***



Congratulations!
*on 70 years
of education and success.
Thank you for all you
have done and provided
for us at AFGE Local 2119.
Here's to 70 more!!*



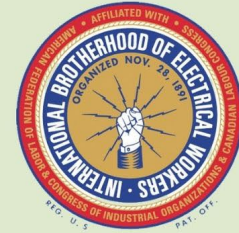
Local 2547

Congratulates the Labor Center on
70 years of educating and
supporting Iowa's Workers

IBEW Local 13

1205 N. Central Avenue
Burlington, IA 52601
319.752.0452

congratulates
the Labor Center
on 70 years of
educating workers
across Iowa



LOCAL 150 INTERNATIONAL UNION of OPERATING ENGINEERS

*Congratulations on 70 years
of educating workers*

6200 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525

<https://local150.org/>

3511 78th Ave West
Rock Island, IL 61201



2707 62nd St Ct
Bettendorf, IA 52722
563-332-2158

Congratulations

to the Labor Center
for 70 years of providing education
to workers

RN Rush & Nicholson
Lawyers

**FREE INITIAL
CONSULTATIONS**

WE PROUDLY REPRESENT YOU

With **over 100 years of combined experience**, we proudly represent Injured Iowa Workers, Iowa Labor Unions, Wage Theft, FMLA & Other Employment Law, as well as Personal Injury Claims.

115 1st Ave SE, Suite 201 | Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
319.363.5209 or Toll Free 877.467.7874 | www.rushnicholson.com



We're Proud to Support The University of Iowa Labor Center

Michael Helmer
Luke Smith

Congratulations and
Happy 70th Anniversary to the
University of Iowa Labor Center
from your friends at Segal



Proudly Supporting the University of Iowa Labor Center



Teamsters Local 554

representing workers in Nebraska and Iowa since 1937

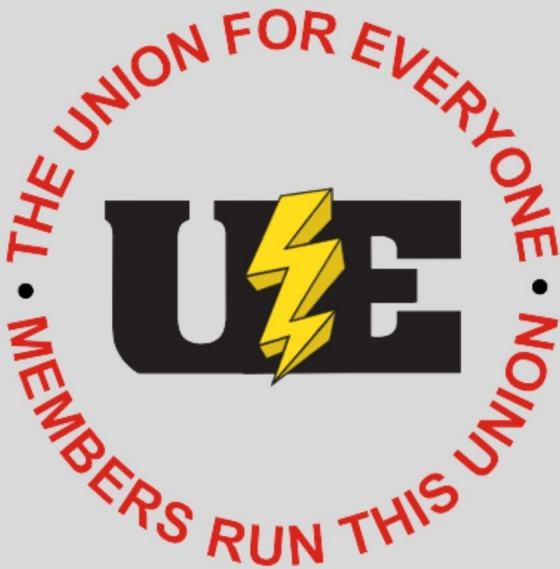
4349 S. 90th Street
Omaha, NE 68127

Congratulations

on 70 years of educating workers
across the Midwest



Region 4 Retirees Council



United Electrical Workers (UE)

4 Smithfield Street, 9th floor
Pittsburgh, PA

www.ueunion.org

USW LOCAL 105

proudly celebrates

the Labor Center's 70 year legacy of
strengthening Iowa through worker education



880 Devils Glen Road
Bettendorf, IA 52722
563.355.1181

Congratulations to
the Labor Center for
70 years of service
to Iowa workers

— From your friends at



Common Good Iowa informs policymaking to turn
Iowa values into bold policy solutions that advance
opportunity for all Iowans.

Visit www.commongoodiowa.org





*IFIF thanks the University of Iowa
Labor Center for its work in
solidarity with undocumented
people in our community.
Congratulations on 70 years!*



The UI Obermann Center for Advanced Studies congratulates everyone at the Labor Center for your crucial work on behalf of Iowa's working people.

Thank you for collaborating with us!



**Quad City Federation of Labor Proudly Salutes
the University of Iowa Labor Center!**

Quad City Federation of Labor
Address: 4600 46th Ave Suite #4
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Phone: 309-788-1303
Email: solidarity@quadcityfed.com
Website: www.quadcityfed.com

Facebook: Quad City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO



Local 1260

1008 William St, Suite 101A
Iowa City, IA 52240

Congratulations

UI LABOR CENTER
ON 70 YEARS OF
PROVIDING QUALITY
WORKER EDUCATION IN
IOWA AND BEYOND!



Local 444L

301 Blondeau St
Keokuk, IA 52632

IOWA

Labor Center

Thank you all for celebrating with us!



Women of Industry Conference, May 1963



AFGE, June 1970



Unknown training, 1950s



Jen Sherer, Angel Gonzalez, Matt Glasson, and Dan Holub, 2007



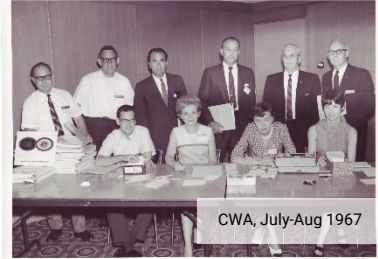
John Whiston, CWA 2008



George Copp, Mary Lou Kelly, Vern Cody, Kermit Mead, UAW, date unknown



Unknown, no date



CWA, July-Aug 1967



Unknown, no date



John Allen and Paul Iversen, 2010s



Ken Sagar



Jen Sherer and Roberta Till-Retz



Angel Gonzalez



AFGE, Aug 1980



Charlie Wishman



IA State Council of Machinists,
Labor Center Records, UI Archives



AFGE, June 1970



2nd Annual Labor Short Course, 1953



70th Annual Labor Short Course
April 25-29, 2022

70th Anniversary Celebration Sponsors*

The Labor Center and Iowa workers thank you!

Worker Justice Level

Smith & McElwain Law Office

Dignity Level

Iowa State Association of Letter Carriers
Iowa State Building & Construction Trades Council
Dr. Katherine H. Tachau
UA Local 125
USW Local 105
Honorable Nathan T. Willems & Margaret Willems

Bread & Roses Level

AFGE Local 2547
Bruce Clark
Mike Helmer (Segal Co.)
Iowa State Education Association
Dennis M. Sansone & Nancy Meyer Sansone
Jay & Alissa Smith
UAW Local 94
Dr. David S. Weiss

Solidarity Level

AFSCME Local 12
Carpenters Local 678
Greg Cross
Lawrence E. Dube
L. Morris Grabau
Amber Hartford & Jeff Hartford
Dr. Karissa A. Haugeberg
Steven W. Hiatt
Kevin D. Holzhauser
Jody Hovland & Ron Clark
Paul Iversen
Dr. Joseph L. Jones
Kathleen E. Lyons & M. Gregory Bales
Teresa L. Mangum & Corey K. Creekmur
Ken Sagar
Gordon Tribbey & Janet Smith
Western Iowa Labor Federation

**Contributions received as of April 28, 2022*



IOWA

Labor Center

Connect with Us

We are always looking for innovative projects and collaborations that improve the lives of workers. If you have something in mind, reach out to us. Let's talk about it.

Follow us

-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Twitter](#)
-  [Instagram](#)
-  [YouTube](#)
-  [SoundCloud](#)

Contact us

100 BioVentures Center, Room W130
Iowa City, IA 52242-5000
labor-center@uiowa.edu
319-335-4144
laborcenter.uiowa.edu