

March 25, 2011

TO: UALE Membership
FROM: Cate Poe, Membership Drive Coordinator
RE: Update on UALE membership drive

Last August, I was hired to coordinate a drive to build the membership of UALE. This report is to bring you up to date on that work. A fuller report will be shared with the Board.

UALE MEMBERSHIP DRIVE TIMELINE

Though the original conception was to spend the \$25,000 allocated for the membership drive on a part-time person working 20 hours per week, September – February, my proposal for a more flexible timeline that would take into account the Fall election and academic calendars as well as multiple holiday breaks was accepted.

August – early September -- I held one on one meetings and phone calls with 25 UALE leaders about their about their histories with the organization and their visions for how best to build it. These informal conversations enabled me to begin compiling a long list of potential constituencies for UALE outreach. Even more importantly, they provided insight into each leader's current and potential base – the relationships they most need to build, not just for UALE, but also for their own effectiveness as labor educators.

Mid-September – November Executive Board Meeting – The original plan included: a concentrated, six-week recruitment drive, largely aimed at the easiest, most accessible prospects – the “low-hanging fruit”; webinars and one-on-one follow-up to train Board members in effective outreach; and, preliminary research and initial discussions that would enable us to learn more about the potential for reaching beyond UALE's traditional base.

November 5-6 Executive Board -- After a broader mapping of potential labor education constituencies, Board members set both individual and organizational priorities for outreach. An online googledoc system was created to enable Board members to report in on the results of their outreach to individuals and institutions.

January-February 2011 -- UALE's membership drive shifted focus to four priorities: 1) calls to individuals in the UALE database most active in labor education, 2) Washington, D.C. meetings with representatives of International Union Education Departments (February 22-24) , 3) Outreach by Board members and leadership outreach to 115 individuals/ and 29 institutions, and 4) Building a UALE Facebook presence to engage a broader network of supporters -- now at over 800 “likers”.

RESULTS OF CALLS/E-MAILS

A big surprise was the number of “revolving door UALE members” -- individuals from within UALE's core constituency of university and union-based labor educators either drop on and off our membership roles or participate, or hang-out as though they were members, but never pay dues.

In January, UALE Treasurer Dawn Addy sent membership renewal notices to 900 of the 1025 individuals in the UALE database by mail, email, or both. My calls focused on several subsets of non-members most active 2008-2010:

- 19 Leaders -- Executive Board members or co-chairs of working groups and “superstars” (widely recognized names in the field)
- 72 individuals who paid dues two out of three years.
- 64 non-members listed on 2011 conference panels who were not members in 2010
- 150-200 non-members who attended 2008, 2009, or 2010 conferences
- Still to identify – additional non-members active on list-serve, working groups, Labor Studies Journal and women summer schools

Methods used in reaching out to this audience included:

- Two rounds of calls and personalized individual email follow-up to individual members on UALE database.
- Extended conversations with broad range of individual members about where UALE fits into their role in labor education, what we need to become in order to be more relevant.
- Request to join and forward template email introducing the organization to others.

RESULTS, RESPONSES, ISSUES

- **Good news** -- Half of those called agreed to join and/or renew dues.
- **It's extremely time consuming and difficult to figure out whether or not they did** -- Because of the redundancy and complexity of UALE's website and database systems, we don't know if they did or didn't. We have a Filemakerpro database that must be emailed back and forth and carefully monitored to make sure that everyone edits the most recent version, so changes are not lost. We experimented with uploading this to a googledoc so multiple officers could check the membership lists, but at this point there are at least six individuals through which a membership must pass before an individual is both recorded and approved for participation.
- **The website discourages people from joining and in other ways engaging with UALE.** Multiple individuals reported: giving up after several attempts via the website and paypal; thinking they'd joined, but hadn't; or, never figuring out how to join – period. This experience discourages people, not only from joining, but from interacting with the website – and UALE.
- **Institution vs. Individual membership** -- People argue that they are very active in UALE and/or their institutions are members, so they don't need to join.
- **People see little distinction between rights/benefits of members and non/members** -- People assume they are members because they are treated that way. Since UALE's multiple database systems provide no easily accessible way to determine who is/is not a

member, for example, 875 people were polled for a membership vote on UALE awards, when only 82 people had renewed for 2011, and 294 people in 2010.

	Total Members - 2/18	Joined 2/17 – 10/30	Joined 9/1/ -- 10/30	TOTAL UALE members as of 10/30
2009	33	237	16	286
2010	139	155	14	294
2011	82 ¹			

CONCLUSION:

As the experience of the 2011 Convention reminds us, UALE is a vibrant, network of labor educators, poised to become a critical convenor, hub/clearinghouse for a very broad community of labor educators. No one else is doing this. People know it needs to be done. Recent D.C. sessions involving Union and University-based directors, convened by Elissa McBride and Bob Bussel, in partnership with the National Labor College and the AFL-CIO have heightened awareness of the role UALE could play in relation to both long-term development of the field and critical shorter-term campaigns.

Recognizing this potential, UALE leaders committed to an experiment: a concerted membership drive. In the course of that experiment, several critical needs have emerged which in my opinion must be addressed before a significant growth will be possible:

1. An inviting, easily navigable website and on-line communication system that encourages people to join and engage, including a fully functioning “back end” database for managing contacts and memberships.
2. Options for ongoing engagement beyond the annual conference, journal and listserv, particularly those that take advantage of new social media technology.
3. Clarity and possibly expansion of what UALE Membership means, including the relationship between individual and institutional dues.
4. A willingness to confidently and proudly enforce the distinction between membership and non-membership, one that is determined.

¹ A of March 24, 2011 – 145 members