

# Educating for Change:

## How Labor Education Centers and AFL-CIO Bodies Can Grow and Transform Together

by

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## Executive Summary

As the union movement continues to search for ways to revitalize its fortunes in this ever more hostile environment, there are two groups well positioned to contribute to that quest for renewal: leaders of AFL-CIO central bodies and educators at university-based labor centers. Both, in their own way, offer space for leaders and activists from every sector of the movement to come together and explore innovative labor strategies. This report examines how central labor bodies and labor education centers can work together in ways that enhance the impact of their individual as well as shared activities. We believe there is significant capacity in both central labor bodies and labor education centers that is underutilized and that building more dynamic partnerships between the two can both expand that capacity and bring it to bear on the formidable challenges facing labor today. By examining several of the more promising partnerships, we hope to provide some lessons on how to build stronger relationships between central labor bodies and labor education centers for their mutual benefit and the interests of the larger labor movement.

This report examines, in their entirety, the innovative relationships between labor education programs and their respective labor councils and state federations in five states (Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, Iowa, and West Virginia). These cases include those with long-standing strong relationships and those that have had to have been recently rebuilt or rethought. In several cases the labor education centers owe their very existence to the work of state labor leaders to who helped found them and, more recently, to maintain and expand their resources. In addition, we document the role played by the UCLA labor education program in revitalizing the Orange County AFL-CIO, as well as two key partnership programs of Cornell and the AFL-CIO in New York: the Union Leadership Institute and the New York City Capacity Building Initiative.

Our case studies provide many examples of how labor education centers and AFL-CIO bodies have worked together to the benefit of both while respecting the uniqueness of the role that each plays. In the main body of the report we organize these stories through three major categories of partnerships. The report's appendixes offer case summaries that detail each partnership on a labor education center by education center basis.



Worker Education At Cornell

## 1. Beyond the Workshop: Joint Educational Programs

Shared educational programs can take many forms – from incorporating educational sessions into routine AFL-CIO meetings to joint annual conferences and worker schools. The report details the many benefits to both labor education centers and AFL-CIO bodies in pursuing shared educational work. Labor educators bring the rich set of tools, perspectives, and skills that come from the craft of adult education. AFL-CIO leaders ground education work in the practical, day-to-day pressures, needs, and opportunities faced by labor leaders and activists. AFL-CIO channels help expand the reach of labor education centers into affiliates. At the same time effective education can offer a “value-added” that brings unengaged locals back to AFL-CIO bodies. Joint education can go beyond the typical topics of labor education to strategically focus on the specific leadership development needed to build the local and regional labor movement. For example, the fifteen-year-old Union Leadership Institute (ULI) run by Cornell and the New York AFL-CIO self-consciously fosters transformational leaders skilled in internal organizational capacity building, bridge-building, and regional movement-building via local AFL-CIO bodies.

## 2. Supporting the Development of Innovative Movement Programs

Today, state and local AFL-CIO leaders are being called upon to develop and implement innovative new programs. Both they and labor education centers should see the skills of labor educators as reaching well beyond the classroom. For example, a partnership between the Washington State Labor Council and the Labor Education and Research Center developed a growing young emerging labor leaders initiative. In Oregon, Iowa, and Massachusetts labor educators and AFL-CIO leaders worked together to launch several different immigrant worker initiatives. Joint efforts by the UMass-Lowell education center and the North Shore Labor Council fostered the New Lynn Coalition to bring together diverse groups around regional economic development. These and other examples illustrate the value of labor educators’ skills in meeting facilitation, strategic planning, bridge building, grant writing, and leadership development. Partnerships have also helped to translate the research mission of academia into very practical movement-building tools. In Orange County and in Iowa research on the regional economy provided the framing needed for focused and effective conversations within the house of labor as well as for pulling together ongoing labor-community coalitions. In Boston, hands-on participatory research among women in the trades provided a central tool for building the successful Policy Group on Tradeswomen’s Issues.

## 3. Transformational Strategic Partnerships

Reaching beyond the kinds of individual program initiatives described above, labor education centers, AFL-CIO bodies, and the labor movement in general face major strategic choices in addressing the threats and opportunities of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As our cases demonstrate, the rethinking needed to address these challenges can be far ranging and is best done in collaboration. The report details how state and local labor leaders worked closely with the UCLA labor center to transform the Orange County Central Labor Council from a moribund body to a key player in turning around labor’s fortunes in the



region and the state. The formal aspects of this partnership included framing research, planning, and leadership development. At the same time, UCLA labor center staff played a central role as a peer leader facilitating change. The partnership not only produced a revitalized labor council but also a new labor education center at UC-Irvine.

The New York State AFL-CIO, the New York City CLC, and The Worker Institute at Cornell has been engaged in a Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) that was launched to address and alter a dynamic of local unions getting caught in tough fights without sufficient planning or preparation to win, reaching out late in the game to the State Federation and Central Labor Council for vitally needed assistance, and relying on other labor leaders to help a desperate affiliate avoid a potentially calamitous defeat. The Initiative has engaged affiliate and AFL-CIO leaders in a systematic and structured conversation to develop and implement capacity-building projects formally adopted by the relevant AFL-CIO bodies' boards. Transformation can and should be mutual. For example, the UMass-Dartmouth labor center decided on a new direction for their program as a result of the collapse in union density in their area, and that they decided to implement that new direction by working through their CLC's committees.

## Lessons

- 1) While the resources and capacities of the central labor bodies and labor education centers featured in this report vary widely, we believe there are some common lessons that can be drawn from the partnerships they all have worked to build.
- 2) Just like the affiliate leaders they both serve, central labor body leaders and labor educators cannot continue doing what they have historically done – just better and harder – and expect significantly different outcomes. The most promising partnerships are built by labor leaders and educators who are both creative and willing to take some risks.
- 3) Effective partnerships are typically built by partners who see education as a vital part of what the labor movement does.
- 4) Functional partnerships are constructed on a foundation of trust and confidence. Cultivating both personal and institutional relationships is essential. These relationships require time, patience, mutual respect and ongoing effort.
- 5) Mutual respect also entails an appreciation and understanding of the skills, experience, and perspective and challenges that central labor body leaders and university-based labor educators each bring to the table. Labor educators in particular increasingly come to the job with experience not just as labor organizers, but also as community organizers and activists.
- 6) Labor educators should be responsive to the articulated needs of central labor body leaders, should be cautious about presuming to know what those leaders can or should do to build a more powerful movement, yet should also be willing to challenge those leaders – in an appropriately respectful way – to consider new ideas and to fully utilize the capacities that reside within university-based labor

education centers.

- 7) Both partners can bring distinct roles to collaboration. Labor education centers specialize in training and education, facilitation, assembling and presenting new information and knowledge, and applied research. They can also potentially serve as bridge builders. AFL-CIO leaders oversee an official process of decision-making and provide space for labor leaders to see and share with each other. They can speak for the labor movement as a whole, are deeply involved in the political process and, like the labor education centers, can initiate cross-union programs.
- 8) While the roles of labor education centers may begin with the provision of basic skills training, limiting labor educators' contribution to "maintenance" activities underutilizes their capacities and denies a movement striving for renewal access to a potentially powerful partner. Labor leaders should also be willing to challenge labor education centers to take on new functions and to better align their existing programs to the needs of the labor movement today. In addition to training and education, university-based labor centers should expand and deepen their capacities to provide strategic research, facilitation and technical assistance, high-level leadership development and other vital support to those central labor body leaders.
- 9) The rich partnerships found in our case studies have expanded the role of labor education centers in the labor movement. As such they challenge union and AFL-CIO leaders, as well as labor educators themselves, to see the potential for labor educators to become peer leaders.
- 10) None of these long-term partnerships are possible unless university-based labor education centers are well funded, secure and sustainable. That can only be achieved with significant labor movement support. While all parts of the labor movement – including labor education centers – are under attack, several of our case studies have actually seen partners expand the resources going to labor education centers. This tells us that AFL-CIO bodies may be underestimating their ability not only to defend, but also to expand the capacity of labor centers. In turn, expanded capacity for labor education will deepen the foundations and resources for an evolving labor movement.

# Educating for Change

## How Labor Education Centers and AFL-CIO Bodies Can Grow and Transform Together

### Introduction

As the AFL-CIO prepared for its national convention in 2013, it initiated hundreds of listening sessions to engage thousands of leaders in a conversation about what a 21<sup>st</sup> century labor movement should be. Federation leaders encouraged an honest and sober analysis of the state of organized labor. At one gathering, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka exhibited remarkable candor when he said, “Our basic system of workplace representation is failing to meet the needs of America’s workers by every critical measure.” Most unionists understood the severity of the challenges they faced. The previous year, labor had lost nearly half a million members as union density continued to decline. While over 15 million workers still depended on union representation, the American system of collective bargaining was becoming increasingly irrelevant and largely inaccessible to nearly 90% of the working class.<sup>1</sup>

While commentators had been talking for decades about the existential crisis facing the labor movement, the spirit of the national conversation that preceded the federation’s convention was unusually open and even hopeful.

Speaking to a group of union and university activists and academics, President Trumka declared, “I am here to tell you that the American labor movement cannot and will not continue down the same well-traveled road, but the path forward is far from clear. We need your help to chart that path.” Since the 2013 AFL-CIO Convention, the perils and possibilities of this moment have only increased. The spread of right-to-work initiatives and the threat represented by Supreme Court’s *Friedrichs* case portend tough times ahead, while the Fight for Fifteen and other campaigns challenging growing inequality can energize labor.

As the union movement continues to search for ways to revitalize its fortunes in this ever more hostile environment, there are two groups that are well positioned to contribute to that quest for renewal: leaders of AFL-CIO central bodies and educators at university-based labor centers. Both, in their own



Fighting Back in Orange County

<sup>1</sup> All photos are taken from the websites of the labor education centers or central labor councils of the case study identified by the captions.

way, offer space for leaders and activists from every sector of the movement to come together and explore innovative labor strategies. AFL-CIO leaders and staff and university-based labor educators bring a unique set of skills and knowledge to the conversation about how to build a powerful labor movement that works for working people.

This report examines how central labor bodies and labor education centers can work together in ways that enhance the impact of their individual as well as shared activities. We believe there is significant capacity in both central labor bodies and labor education centers that is underutilized and that building more dynamic partnerships between the two can both expand that capacity and bring it to bear on the formidable challenges facing labor today. By examining several of the more promising partnerships, we hope to provide some lessons on how to build stronger relationships between central labor bodies and labor education centers for their mutual benefit and the interests of the larger labor movement.

One key point emerges at the outset. The labor leaders and labor educators found in our cases did not pursue the partnerships we describe below because things were going so well that they had the luxury of considering new ways of working together. Rather both sets of partners faced serious challenges that compelled them to rethink what they were doing in order to survive and grow in the future. The challenges provided an opportunity to deepen their relationship by working through tough issues and questions together. The results offer hopeful signs that much can be done.

## Purpose and Overview of the Report

The fate of the nation's labor education centers and local and state AFL-CIO bodies are intimately linked. Beginning in the post-World War II era and continuing into the 1970's, state AFL-CIO bodies lobbied successfully for the establishment of labor education centers at state universities<sup>2</sup>. In the best of cases, there was a dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership between labor educators and labor leaders. The mid-1990s saw a renewed commitment to building more effective central labor councils. This emphasis created a crucial opening for more direct participation by labor education center staff in CLC activities. It also facilitated a stronger relationship between labor education centers and the AFL-CIO. Among other things, this led to the establishment of a UALE Task Force on Central Labor Councils and State Federations in 1996. (Many of the authors of this report have been active members of that Task Force since its inception.) As labor education centers and the AFL-CIO struggle to define their roles and revitalize their fortune in the increasingly challenging conditions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to remind ourselves of the value of this partnership and mutual support.

This report aims to capture a number of critical lessons for the relationship between AFL-CIO bodies and labor education centers. First, it attempts to focus on how AFL-CIO bodies and labor education centers can support each other's development and dynamism when the relationship is nourished and respected over time. Second, our report emphasizes accomplishments and lessons learned from promising partnerships between labor educators and labor leaders that are happening now. Third, it suggests how those

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<sup>2</sup> Two university programs, at the University of Wisconsin and University of California, were established in the 1920's (Alice Cook & Agnes M. Douty, *Labor Education Outside the Unions*, 1958, pp. 82-88).

lessons and accomplishments can be further extended to support efforts to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century labor movement.

As the labor movement has confronted an unrelenting assault by anti-union forces, labor education centers have also come under increasing political and financial pressure. Across the country, many of these vitally important university-based programs have been forced into a defensive posture, fighting against budget and staff cuts. The specter of a negative Supreme Court decision in *Friedrichs v. CTA* at the end of the Court's 2016 term has intensified fears of major budget cuts among labor leaders and university-based labor educators alike. We believe this is the time to move beyond defense and to focus on expanding labor education centers and strengthening their partnership with central labor bodies. University labor education centers came into existence because the labor movement – especially state federations – demanded them and organized to ensure their robust funding. Today, labor education centers continue only where organized labor has mobilized to support them. A few have even managed to expand. The key message of this report is that dynamic partnerships between labor education centers and central labor bodies can and should be a strategic element of labor movement revitalization.

We want to emphasize that neither labor education centers nor central labor bodies can continue doing what too many of them have been doing – just better and harder – and expect dramatically different outcomes. Given the challenges labor faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is a time for labor educators and labor leaders to work together to pursue new ideas and new initiatives.

## Overview of the Cases Studied

For this report the Task Force team conducted seven case studies of labor education programs whose activities highlight some of the best practices in building dynamic and mutually beneficial partnerships between those centers and AFL-CIO central bodies. Researchers worked with the labor education centers to document their work and interviewed State Federation and CLC leaders to get their perspective. Before delving into the findings we briefly summarize each case here. They vary significantly by the size, the context of their regional labor movements, and the innovative programming they have developed. The appendix to this report provides full write-ups of each case study so that readers can delve into greater detail on the innovative work and how it fits into the context of the AFL-CIO/labor education center partnerships.

Two of our cases, UCLA and Cornell, come from the nation's largest cities. The University of California system has a vibrant and growing network of labor education centers whose funding the state labor movement has had to repeatedly fight for. Within that system, the UCLA program has played a key role in the labor movement's revival in the region -- working closely with the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, several very dynamic unions, and trend-setting labor-community coalitions. For this report we did not attempt to capture all of the innovative work of the UCLA center and its other UC peers. Instead we focused on the highly instructive role that UCLA played in the state labor movement's transformation of what had been the moribund Orange County Federation of Labor.



Since its founding in 1945 with significant labor movement support, the Cornell ILR School has worked closely with the New York AFL-CIO and New York City Central Labor Council in a broad range of programmatic work including training, education, research, technical assistance, strategic planning and other activities. Three years ago a new Worker Institute at Cornell was established as an umbrella for all of the work done by resident and extension faculty members in support of the institute's mission of promoting worker rights and collective representation. As in California, this work has taken many different forms. For this report we focus on two specific Worker Institute programs intimately connected to partnerships with AFL-CIO bodies: a joint Union Leadership Institute and a new Capacity Building Initiative.



By stark contrast, two of our other cases come from largely rural states with largely all-volunteer central labor bodies. Since its founding in the 1950s, the University of Iowa Labor Center has had a very close relationship with the Iowa Federation of Labor (IFL) and with Iowa's 14 CLCs. Over the course of many decades, the Labor Center has provided scores of non-credit education programs to CLCs, led annual State Federation Convention workshops, facilitated strategic planning and coalition-building sessions for the IFL and CLCs, coordinated a massive IFL-initiated statewide labor oral history project, and contributed research and education to support CLC work on specific issues and contract campaigns. The Labor Center and the IFL have tried to use educational programming to help revitalize many labor councils. They have also partnered with the Iowa City Federation of Labor to develop new immigrant worker organizing. The Labor Center currently has five educational staff.

The West Virginia Institute for Labor Studies and Research (ILSR) has a similar long-standing history with its state AFL-CIO. ILSR was established as the Institute for Labor Studies in 1959, with research added later when another department was merged. Part of the relationship with the State Federation has been ILSR's long-standing engagement and outreach with the state's thirteen Central Labor Councils. While some of these CLCs cover a single county, others may cover in excess of six. Working with the state federation, the ILSR has been intimately involved in work to strengthen the central labor councils through both education and direct participation. Details of the innovations with the South Central Labor Council are included in the full case study. The ILSR has seven tenure-track faculty.

Having had to survive both neglect from its institutional home and direct political attack, the Washington State Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at the South Seattle Collage is alive today because the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) fought for it. Originally established as the Evergreen State College Labor Education and Research Center in 1987, its historical relations between

the WSLC and the council's affiliates were not particularly close. However, a key AFL-CIO leader, now WSLC President, Jeff Johnson proved instrumental in building what is today a very close relationship with a transformed LERC. Among the achievements the partnership has helped launch are a successful Emerging Leaders Initiative, a Leadership Education and Activist Program run in conjunction with the Spokane Regional Labor Council, and a statewide May Works program aimed at reviving labor culture. LERC operates with four staff.

Conceived by the Oregon AFL-CIO and established in 1977 by an act of the Oregon Legislature, the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) has worked closely with the state federation and local central labor councils on research, training programs, and strategic planning. The partnership's most recent accomplishments include promoting labor-community engagement and helping to found and maintain an Immigration Network. One of its faculty, Barbara Byrd, serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO on a part-time basis. LERC's work is done by six faculty and five staff located in Eugene and Portland.

Finally, the University of Massachusetts Labor Education system operates on four campuses with a graduate program in Amherst and labor education centers in Boston, Lowell, and Dartmouth. Despite periodic cutbacks, a statewide extension program was added in the nineteen nineties with the aid of an activist president of the state AFL-CIO, and UMass Boston is currently in the process of adding a degree program. Taken as a whole, the system is an example of how labor education can survive in an adverse economic environment, while supporting new forms of worker organization and activity as the economic environment changes. In each case, the active role that faculty and staff play with the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and their region's labor councils has proven central to the ability of both the labor centers and central bodies to respond to changes in the economy and the workforce. At Dartmouth, outcomes have included a CLC-based labor-community coalition called People First, a community-based organization called Bus Riders United, and long-term support for Guatemalan immigrant workers struggles in the seafood processing industry. In Boston, the labor center worked with community and labor stakeholders to conduct a participatory research project, the Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues, that has expanded the role of women and minorities in the trades and in union leadership. In Lowell, working with the leadership of the CLC helped provide resources both to revitalize the central labor council and to establish New Lynn, a labor community coalition focused on economic justice and development.



## What Each Partner Brings to the Table

Both labor education centers and AFL-CIO bodies provide critical institutional frameworks that help leaders and activists reach across individual unions and sectors to build a more powerful labor movement. Within these frameworks, labor centers and AFL-CIO bodies in turn play a number of unique roles. We think that understanding and appreciating these roles is one of the keys to forging effective partnerships.

AFL-CIO bodies bring five specialized roles to partnerships. First, their **state and local conventions** provide the broadest gatherings across the labor movement as well as a mechanism for making formal decisions across sectors. Second, in conjunction with their affiliates and allies they engage in coordinated **political action**. Third, more and more AFL-CIO bodies are also being expected to initiate **cross-union programs**, especially in the realm of labor-community coalitions. Fourth, AFL-CIO bodies at each level are called on to **represent the labor movement as a whole** within the progressive movement and to the broader society. Finally, within these four roles AFL-CIO bodies also provide **space for labor leaders to see each other**, share experiences and insights, and talk about and plan for the movement as a whole.

Labor Education Centers in turn bring six roles to the table. First, they provide **training and education**. Second, through their educational programming and outreach, they **convene labor leaders and activists** in spaces outside the official ranks of labor. Third, because their staff frequently have diverse and rich backgrounds in both labor and other progressive circles, they can serve as **bridge builders** between different constituencies. In this same vein, labor centers can also help initiate relationships by reaching out to groups that might, at first, be too controversial inside a labor council or state federation. Fourth, as skilled trainers, labor educators can also provide effective **facilitation** in other contexts that engage all participants and help create a sense of progress and momentum. Fifth, as members of a global community of scholars labor educators stay abreast of what is happening to and in organized labor both in the U.S. and abroad making them excellent resources for **new information and knowledge**. Finally, while university-based research in general can be helpful to the labor movement, as activists, labor educators engage in **“applied research” and “participatory research”** that not only responds more specifically to the information needs of the labor movement, but the very research process can be used an organizing tool to forge new initiatives and coalitions.



# Key Ways Partnerships Between Labor Education Centers and Central Labor Bodies Can Enhance One Another's Effectiveness and Impact

Our case studies provide many examples of how labor education centers and AFL-CIO bodies have worked together to the benefit of both while respecting the uniqueness of the role that each plays. We should note at the outset that not all labor education centers currently do these things. The wide range of programs highlights the adaptability of partnerships to local contexts and needs. Here we focus on examples of what effective and innovative labor education centers can do.

Innovative partnerships between AFL-CIO bodies and labor education centers have taken three major forms: joint education programs, new and innovative labor movement projects, and potentially transformational strategic partnerships.

## 1. Beyond the Workshop: Joint Educational Programs

Labor education centers by their very mission must engage in educational programming that typically takes the form of workshops, conferences, classes run out of the university that are open to all workers and/or customized training for specific unions. AFL-CIO bodies may also sponsor training programs such as Common Sense Economics. Our cases demonstrate the special benefits of pursuing some programming jointly.

Training partnerships can take many forms. Some state federations and CLCs incorporate workshops led by their labor education centers at their meetings such as annual conventions and legislative conferences. Each year, many state federations and/or CLCs also sponsor additional schools conducted by their local labor education centers. For example, the Iowa Federation of Labor co-sponsors all University of Iowa Labor Center on-campus programs and pays for up to four Labor Center programs for each of the state's 14 CLCs each year. The North Shore Labor Council sponsors an annual education conference and education sessions at their monthly meetings that the UMass Lowell Labor Education Center has helped to structure. The Oregon AFL-CIO sponsors an annual Summer School, planned and taught by the University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center, which is the largest multi-union gathering in the state other than the State Fed convention. The West Virginia State Federation sponsors an annual state-wide CLC Conference that is planned and taught by the West Virginia University Institute for Labor Studies and Research.

### The Many Benefits of Joint Educational Programs

The benefits of partnership are numerous. Each side brings crucial elements to enhance the quality of joint programs. AFL-CIO leaders and staff help ground education in the practical, day-to-day pressures, needs, and opportunities faced by labor leaders and activists. Labor education centers develop customized training with specific unions that typically focus on internal skills such as grievance

handling, collective bargaining, FMLA, and parliamentary procedure. As cross-union bodies, state federations and central labor councils provide particular insights into the type of training in the skills, knowledge, and perspectives needed to grow the labor movement as whole: like electoral and lobbying approaches, coalition-building and broader economic issues.

At the same time, labor education centers bring a vast collective knowledge of what makes an effective educational program to the partnership. U.S. society generally has a vast under appreciation of the level of skills, perspective, and experience needed to engage in effective education. The media overwhelming portrays teaching in terms of the sage instructor speaking in front of captivated students. This image can lead to the assumption that having a good power point presentation is enough to engage in effective education. Research shows, however, that people retain only a small portion of what they hear. Furthermore information alone is often not enough to change someone's perspective, cultivate confidence that they can engage in action, or inspire commitment. Effective education is a much more holistic undertaking than simply planting knowledge in the heads of students. Labor education is built around the perspective and techniques of adult and popular education. These approaches emphasize interaction as participants tap their own experiences, learn from each other, try out what they are learning, experience a wide range of teaching techniques, and develop meaningful personal relationships. Labor educators are also often skilled in how to “train the trainers” in dynamic education.

High quality holistic education helps build the reputation of both partners. Joint education shows what labor education can do and enhances the experience of labor educators as part of the labor movement and as a resource to affiliates. Joint training can provide a service that AFL-CIO bodies provide that is valued by affiliates. Indeed, educational programming itself can be part of the revitalization of central labor bodies. For example, in Iowa several previously moribund central labor councils used effective



joint educational programming as a vehicle for re-engaging affiliates and attracting

unions not yet affiliated with the council. The North Shore Labor Council in Massachusetts emphasized education in its revival by building small group discussion and educational sessions into its monthly meetings.

Training partnerships bring together people from different unions who do not often find themselves in a common space and engaged in a common conversation. An educational context can allow participants an opportunity to take a break from the constant demands of the moment to step back and consider long-term needs, difficulties, opportunities, and plans. The popular education format generally used by labor educators ensures that participants talk to and get to know each other. Participants gain perspective from other unions and sectors of the economy and begin to build cross-union relationships which can be important to the State Fed and CLCs in trying to mobilize the larger labor movement. The relations begun through education can make bridging gaps among unions as well as with non-traditional work organizations easier and help foster deeper cooperation. Joint education links participants and their unions to the AFL-CIO which is then seen as a vehicle for bringing people together. At the same time union leaders and activists come to see the health and growth of labor education centers as a core part of strengthening their area's labor movement. This is particularly true in building ties across the labor movement and between labor and community groups. In the words of the NSLC president, "You can't overcome the sectoral, racial, and gender divisions without some glue, and that glue is political education. It's part of what we have to do all the time. [The labor education center] is the key to that ... It's absolutely essential."

Joint education can also meet strategic goals of the State Feds and CLCs in other ways. When strategic goals for the central bodies include reaching groups the local movement does not usually engage, the labor education center may be uniquely situated to connect with some of those groups. In Oregon and at UMass Dartmouth, for example, the labor education centers took the lead in connecting local unions and the CLC with immigrant advocacy organizations -- helping to overcome mistrust and build the capacity for coalition work. Common Sense Economics education training, for union members and for the general public, is part of the strategic plan of many central bodies. Central bodies have used a number of the labor education centers to provide Common Sense Economics training. The Washington LERC's statewide right-to-work training is a good example of a State Fed using the labor education center in its state as an efficient and effective method to provide necessary education statewide. Joint programs can also provide a central tool in reaching out to community allies. In Iowa, joint programs have provided education for community allies as well as union members to assist in building coalitions and supported training for members of the first Worker Justice Center in Iowa. In Massachusetts, education provided by the University of Massachusetts labor education programs has been used to train community organizers for work within labor-community coalitions and to assist a local worker center in planning education for its members. Both of these programs are part of ongoing efforts to build labor-community coalitions in the area.



## Training for Institutional Leaders

As cross-union institutions, labor education centers and AFL-CIO bodies can also partner with affiliates to develop training specifically designed for institutional leaders as opposed to more general programs that include rank and file activists and concerned workers. State Federations and/or CLCs in Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia all use the labor education center in their states to conduct annual leadership institutes. These institutes equip labor leaders with some of the knowledge and skills necessary to not only lead their unions, but also to take part in leading the labor movement as a whole. The institutes also bring together emerging leaders from a wide variety of unions and sectors of the economy. They help these leaders to build relationships, transcend the sometimes more narrow and even parochial interests of individual affiliates, and develop broader movement perspectives that can be important to winning labor's future struggles. The knowledge, skills and relationships developed through those institutes can help energize the labor movements in those states. As new and particular issues arise within a city or state, the joint programs customize these institutes to meet the immediate and long-term needs of both individual unions in the state and the labor movement as a whole. Over time, several of these advanced leadership development programs have also become much more strategic in the specific skills, knowledge and movement-building perspectives they need to target.

The fifteen-year-old Union Leadership Institute (ULI) run by Cornell and the New York AFL-CIO is one of the most extensive and impactful of these programs. The program was initially launched after the State Federation President, the NYS Director for the national AFL-CIO, and the AFL-CIO Northeast Regional Director worked collaboratively with Cornell ILR to align its labor education programs more closely with the needs of the labor movement and to address what many identified as one of the most profound unmet needs: high level leadership development. This has been a flagship program for The Worker Institute at Cornell and serves as a model for several similar programs including the Pennsylvania Labor Leadership Institute and the newly-established National Labor Leadership Initiative (NLLI). The NYS AFL-CIO helped Cornell secure public funds to support this collaborative leadership development program because the substantial tuition paid by participants is not sufficient to ensure ULI's long-term sustainability. The Union Leadership Institute consists of an opening week-long seminar in Ithaca; four three-day seminars over the course of the year that address internal organizational capacity building, organizing for power and growth, building solidarity across differences, and the global economy; and a concluding week-long seminar in Ithaca. The final week of

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the program directly aids central labor bodies by having affiliate leaders focus on moving from being a

union leader to a labor movement leader, as well as on the role of coalitions and CLCs. Over three hundred union leaders including the presidents of some of the largest locals in the country such as IBT 237 or UFT 1 have graduated from the ULI and gone on to serve as transformational leaders of their organizations.

In building for its future the labor movement needs to evolve its leadership so that it reflects the growing diversity of its current and future membership. AFL-CIO bodies can partner to foster new and strengthen existing leaders in targeted ways. Later in this report we will discuss partnerships focused on young workers. Several of our cases have also focused in developing female leaders. For example, in 2013 the Washington state labor center hosted the Western Regional Summer Institute for Union Women in Seattle for the first time. This drew upon a long tradition of the center having run its own Women's Summer Schools most years between 1987 and 2009. Lynne Dodson, the Secretary-Treasurer of the state federation, spoke about her early interaction with the LERC's summer school as one of the first experiences that helped her develop her identity as a labor leader. She then went on to hold multiple offices in her local union, and now helps lead the state fed as the first woman ever elected to one of the top offices. She has also engaged Washington State in national labor leadership development efforts through the AFL-CIO. While it's impossible to draw a direct causal relationship between the work of LERC and the rise of labor leaders like Dodson it can certainly be claimed that the center's work was a stepping-stone along the path.

## 2. Supporting the Development of Innovative Labor Movement Programs

To survive and even prosper in today's environment the labor movement needs new ways of doing things that build upon past strengths. Today, many AFL-CIO bodies are being called upon to develop and implement new innovative programs. Labor educators can be central partners as the skills, perspectives, and relationships that make them effective in the classroom can translate well into program development. As faculty and staff and also as delegates and council members, labor educators can be central sources and movers of new initiatives. They may be able to put time and attention to new programs in a manner different from federation and council staff whose responsibilities pull them in many directions. They also often have specialized skills in meeting facilitation and planning. Effective adult education requires that educators know how to draw out people's knowledge and thoughts, synthesize ideas, and build consensus – critical skills for pulling diverse people together to do something new. Labor educators typically have backgrounds in progressive activism that, along with their home in an educational institution, makes them potential bridge builders for reaching community groups and union locals with whom they have relationships. Furthermore, their research expertise enables them to contextualize programs within a broader framework and to specifically target and analyze complex data.

### Examples of Movement Programs

Our case studies provide excellent examples of this joint program-building role in action. For instance, many labor leaders see the need to better connect with and activate young workers inside and outside of unions. Such activists will be the next generation of labor leadership. When Sarah Laslett became Director of the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) in 2010, she talked with Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) President Jeff Johnson about how to formulate a new programmatic emphasis



that would both serve the Washington labor community and be the basis for a successful fundraising effort among unions. He offered two things: high school education and emerging leaders. Sarah thought the latter had more potential. They took a look at Oregon's young worker group, YELL (Young Emerging Labor Leaders), as a model. With staffing from the WSLC and LERC, Washington YELL was created and became a "massive success." The Emerging Leaders Initiative trained young unionists at a series of conferences which helped launch and continue to build YELL. At least one CLC (Southwest Washington) now has a Secretary-Treasurer who is a graduate of the Emerging Leader Initiative.

Some of the most important worker organizing today is happening among immigrant workers. Labor education centers have been key partners in building connections between central labor bodies and immigrant communities. For example, Oregon LERC director Bob Bussel's long-standing interest in immigration issues resulted in a 2008 report, *Understanding the Immigrant Experience in Oregon*. In 2013, parallel to the state federation's work to partner with immigrant advocacy groups in the state, Bussel helped put together an Immigration Network to help move progressive local immigration efforts



and, in particular, to give immigrant activists a voice in local and state policy. In May, 2014, the Network sponsored a conference in Eugene on immigration that attracted around 100 participants. This work has added to the state level partnerships that the state fed has nurtured by initiating difficult conversations at the local level, and Bussel consults frequently with state fed staff on these issues. The bilingual former director at UMass Dartmouth was instrumental in beginning a fifteen-year process of supporting immigrant organizing that was successful both in building labor leadership within the local Guatemalan community and in raising the issue of immigrant rights within the existing labor community.

Many in the labor movement believe we must not simply let “the market” decide our communities’ futures, but must instead build coalitions to fight for an alternative union-friendly vision of economic development. When the President of the North Shore Labor Center embarked upon a revitalization of the labor council he brought in the head of UMass-Lowell’s Labor Education Program (LEP) as a partner to help with leadership development, strategic planning, and political education. Among other objectives, rethinking the role of the labor council pointed to the importance of the NSLC representing the working class as a whole: drawing in those outside the ranks of organized labor as well as building bridges between affiliates. In furtherance of this goal; and to address job losses declining union density and the lack of services for working people; the labor council and education center worked together to give birth to the New Lynn Coalition, a community economic development organization. As its website explains, the coalition’s long-term goal is sweeping:

[C]reate a new progressive local [development] regime in which unions and community groups are the dominant force in regional economic development; business interests are reduced to one voice among many; goals for regional development revolve around social and ecological needs and concerns; there is a renewed sense of public role in social welfare; workers’ rights to form unions is seen as central to economic health and democracy and becomes a core principle protected by the local regime.



May Day: Labor and Community Take Lynn’s Streets

In addition to facilitation and strategic

planning, LEP was able to help provide New Lynn with crucial research capacity. Documenting the low wages and low education level of the region's workforce provided critical information for making an effective case that the existing economic development plans in Lynn needed to be rethought. LEP was able to recruit, mentor, and supervise graduate students who helped produce New Lynn's first report. The NSLC and LEP have partnered around leadership development within the New Lynn Coalition and have worked to integrate community coalition members into the NSLC's annual education conference.

Innovative programs cannot always run on volunteer energy, but typically reach a point at which they need paid staffing. In developing New Alliance and statewide reorganization the AFL-CIO is fostering regional AFL-CIO bodies with sufficient resources to support either the establishment or expansion of paid staff. As university-based programs, labor education centers can aid the larger resource gathering process. When labor educators are brought more directly into innovative work, they can directly provide some additional capacity. Furthermore, they may be well positioned to help seek grants and other resources that can support new work. For example, the University of Iowa Labor Center worked particularly close with the Iowa City Federation of Labor to launch the state's first workers' center. The labor center's education work began the conversation on immigrant issues with labor, faith, community, and immigrant rights leaders. Labor Center staff member Robin Clark-Bennett and Iowa City Federation of Labor Vice President Jesse Case jointly coordinated initial organizing within local immigrant communities. The two partners successfully sought grant money, established intern programs, and developed leaders and staff that allowed The Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa (CWJ) to launch in 2012. CWJ has become a core partner with the CLC and the labor education center in providing the resources to pursue campaigns around government-issued photo IDs (regardless of immigration status) and the first county-based minimum wage law in Iowa. The energize council has reengaged and expanded its affiliates.

## Activist Research

Labor education centers share their home educational institution's commitment to research. Indeed, center staff in tenure-track positions must engage in significant research and publication in order to obtain job security. However, even when center staff occupy non-tenure or "academic staff" positions, most centers define part of their core mission as including labor-movement-building research. Indeed, grant or public funding of this research role may directly support and help maintain staff positions at the labor education centers. As our cases demonstrate, when done in partnership with AFL-CIO bodies, activist research can play a critical role in building effective labor programs and initiatives.

The labor movement uses research undertaken by progressive faculty in such university departments as history, economics, political sciences, sociology, and urban planning. Academic research can provide labor leaders with specialized knowledge on specific issues, offer media-recognized experts, and evaluate and advocate for specific solutions. However, since labor education centers have one foot in academia and the other in movement-building, their research can help build innovation in deeper ways and involve more intimate partnerships with state federations and central labor councils.

For example, as we will detail later, the UCLA Labor Center played a significant role in transforming the Orange County Federation of Labor into a dynamic forward-looking organization aimed at building a

regional progressive movement for economic justice. To build such a movement required that would-be partners and the broader community share an understanding of what was happening to working people locally. Furthermore, they needed to see how advancing their own separate agendas required a shared effort to tackle key underlying forces. The UCLA Labor Center's July 2014 report "Orange County on the Cusp of Change" was much more than an academic exercise. It was



an integral part of the larger effort to analyze trends of change and to shape them in ways that would serve Orange County's working families. The report concluded that while the faces and economic bases of Orange County have dramatically changed in the last three decades, major obstacles to economic stability and full civic participation remained for working people. Not only did the research make a case for addressing these obstacles, but by engaging the community and labor organizations in the actual research on the shifting socioeconomic, political, and occupational demographics in the region, it built connections to the very people who needed to be brought together to organize for change. Indeed the labor council and the UCLA Labor Center have worked as partners to build these coalitions.

Such framing research can be broad or target a specific aspect of the larger economic justice picture. "Wage Theft in Iowa," which the Iowa Labor Center released in conjunction with the Iowa Policy Project, analyzed wage data, working conditions, and the regulatory framework to determine that wage theft in the state was prevalent in low-wage service work, food service, domestic labor, and construction. As in Orange County articulating the problem was a first step in building successful coalitions to make change. The Iowa center played a central role labor-community coalition created by the Quad City Federation of Labor. Similarly, The Worker Institute at Cornell conducted a study on job misclassification in New York State that revealed the depth of the problem and its impact on tax revenues. The NYS AFL-CIO made good use of the Cornell study to push for more effective enforcement and recently helped The Worker Institute secure additional state funds to update the misclassification study.

As these examples suggest the very act of doing research can be a tool for social change. UMass-Boston's work on the Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues (PGTI) was started in 2008 by the LRC at the request of the Metro Building Trades Council and the New England Regional Council of Carpenters in order to research and address issues of race, gender, recruitment, and training in the construction industry. Conveners of the project deliberately put participatory research at the center of this initiative. UMass-Boston staff engaged women in the trades not simply as subjects from which to gather data, but as co-researchers who helped define the issues, gather information, and brainstorm solutions. The project thus developed trades women as leaders as much as it researched them. Among its official products, the

PGTI developed a literature review on gender discrimination in construction, created a resource library on tradeswomen, and produced a guide on diversity in the construction industry for employers, unions, workers, and community organizations. The latter is currently being used on \$14 billion dollars of construction in Massachusetts. Progress on bringing more women into the trades has been slow. In March of 2014, PGTI conducted a community forum, “Game Changers: New strategies for crushing the barriers for women entering the construction trades,” that brought 130 leading stakeholders together on the UMass Boston campus to discuss best practices for recruiting and retaining women in the building trades. Martin Walsh, a Laborer who became head of the Boston Building Trades Council in 2010 and launched numerous additional initiatives to promote diversity in the trades, was elected Mayor of Boston in 2014, largely on his reputation and commitment to diversity and a strong local economy for all working people.



Tradeswomen in Boston



### 3. Transformational Strategic Partnerships.

Reaching beyond the kinds of individual program initiatives described above, labor education centers, AFL-CIO bodies, and the labor movement in general face major strategic choices in how they address the threats and opportunities of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As our cases demonstrate, such rethinking can be far ranging and is best done in collaboration.

Both AFL-CIO bodies and labor centers provide unique spaces needed for reflection and re-evaluation. This capacity comes into play most obviously in the course of strategic planning. Many state federations and central labor councils, including most in our study, have tapped labor education centers for their expertise in facilitation and deeply-engaging strategic planning. However, limiting labor educators to facilitating official strategic planning sessions misses critical opportunities for broader reflection and transformation. Rather than viewing strategic planning as a one-shot tool for identifying specific goals during a set period, our cases demonstrate that strategic planning can and should be thought of more broadly: as an ongoing process in which the labor movement and its constituent parts—unions, AFL-CIO bodies, labor centers, and other worker organizations—transform themselves in the face of a dramatically restructured economy.

#### Transforming Orange County

The UCLA Labor Center work in Orange County provides a key example of the possibilities of an expanded role for educators in planning and of the evolution of the planning process itself. By 2007, the Orange County Central Labor Council was in a state of crisis with a small staff, unions in conflict, major affiliates pulling out, and a moribund political program that was jeopardizing statewide campaigns. The California Labor Federation, led by Art Pulaski, launched an intervention and contacted the UCLA Labor Center to assist in a strategic planning process to forge a new direction for the Orange County CLC. The state federation engaged the statewide leadership of major unions and asked them to reach out to local affiliates. The planning process also fully engaged the labor council's staff and leaders. The planning process began by generating a conversation about what type of CLC leaders wanted to build. UCLA and the state federation embedded the formal elements of strategic planning within a larger process of formal and informal discussions, education, and relationship building that used one-on-ones, retreats, and more formal planning sessions to overcome alienation and political divisions. The planning sessions integrated case studies drawn from real experiences in the California labor movement and brought labor leaders from other cities to share their lessons in union transformation, both positive and negative.

After a thorough recruitment and selection process which deeply involved the UCLA center, Tefere Gebre was chosen to help lead the change process. He was charged with first building the political mobilization capacity of the CLC. He had previously worked for the California Labor Federation and had a strong background in political mobilization. Tefere was subsequently appointed as the interim leader and ultimately became elected as the Secretary Treasurer of the renamed Orange County Labor

Federation. The transformation of the Orange County Labor Federation was impressive and attracted national attention. Indeed, because of the transformation of its labor movement, the political change in Orange County has been a crucial part of the story as to why California's political trajectory has gone noticeably opposite to the conservative drift of the nation as a whole. Tefere's success as the leader of the OCLF ultimately led to his election as the Executive Vice-President of the AFL-CIO in September 2013. These activities transformed not only the strategic direction and effectiveness of the Orange County Labor Federation but augmented the role of the UCLA Labor Center with other labor constituencies. UCLA Director Kent Wong is not simply a technical assistance provider but a peer leader joining with other leaders in continuing to transform the state's labor movement. Such a role and achievements are not typical among labor educators but point toward a high standard and potential for what partnerships between AFL-CIO bodies and labor educators can achieve. Building on the success of the overall project, the Orange County Labor Federation successfully pushed for the creation of a new labor center at UC-Irvine thereby deepening work between labor educators and the AFL-CIO in California. We should also note that the Orange County intervention followed in the wake of a broader strategic rethinking process initiated by the California Labor Federation which Jeff Grabelsky has documented in "Building Labor's Power in California: Raising Standards and Expanding Capacity Among Central Labor Councils, the State Labor Federation, and Union Affiliates."<sup>3</sup>

## New York Capacity Building

Having facilitated several strategic planning projects with both the NYS AFL-CIO and the NYC CLC over many years, The Worker Institute at Cornell is currently engaged with both organizations in a Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) that similarly goes



Cornell Strategic Training

well beyond traditional strategic planning. The Initiative was launched to address and alter a dynamic that has become increasingly untenable: local unions getting caught in tough fights without sufficient planning or preparation to win, reaching out late in the game to the State Federation and the New York Central Labor Council for vitally needed assistance, and relying on other labor leaders to help a desperate affiliate avoid a potentially calamitous defeat. The initial stage of the project involved meetings and interviews with about twenty key leaders and staff, drafting a report, and facilitating a discussion on Cornell's findings and recommendations. These meetings included a retreat with the NYC CLC's Executive Board, a briefing for the State Federation's Executive Council, and a webinar with all statewide Area Labor Federations and Central Labor Councils. The conversations have been organized around three key questions: what are the essential organizational capacities that union affiliates should have or develop to be better prepared for the fights that they are likely to face; how can the NYS AFL-

<sup>3</sup> Published in *Working USA*, March 2009, Volume 12, Number 1, pp. 17-44.

CIO and NYC CLC assist local affiliates in acquiring these essential organizational capacities; and how can the State Federation and CLC and their affiliates provide timely and effective support to local unions that are or will be engaged in bitter and consequential struggles with generally well-resourced and strong-minded adversaries? The CBI identified five key capacities for future development: (1) Membership Mobilization; (2) Communications; (3) Coalition Building and Community Engagement; (4) Political Action and Organizing; and, (5) Strategic Campaigning. The next stage of the Capacity Building Initiative will involve working closely with the State Fed, ALFs, statewide CLCs and the NYC Central Labor Council to implement the nine project recommendations that have been adopted by the central bodies' governing boards.

Both the Orange County and New York initiatives take place in an urban context and in states with relatively high union density and well over two million union members. By contrast West Virginia presents CLCs that are largely rural and spread over multiple counties. Their fate and that of the West Virginia University Institute for Labor Studies and Research (ILSR) have been linked. A decade ago a partnership with the United Steelworkers, ILSR and the CLCs created successful regular classes that enhanced the value of the labor center and the labor councils to local unions. However when the Steelworkers needed shift their focus and pull away, the educational partnership lost financial resources and USW member attendance that had helped maintain it. Both the ILSR and the CLCs withered as a result. Looking to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the CLCs, the West Virginia AFL-CIO partnered with the ILSR to rebuild an educational program whose format and focus directly served the needs of strengthening the councils. ILSR provides officer training and leadership development programs both through CLCs and the State Federation's week-long summer school. It also partners with the State Federation on an annual two-day CLC retreat. Following the national AFL-CIO's expectation of planning for State Federations and CLCs, the ILSR led the strategic planning process for the West Virginia AFL-CIO and worked one-on-one with CLCs to develop and implement their own. The ILSR conducts ongoing leadership training and capacity building workshops for all thirteen CLCs. The diverse subjects include effective meeting management, coalition building, state policy details and impacts, strategic organizing, and leading an effective team. It has also worked with the AFL-CIO to educate CLCs about Working America and to use social media more effectively. In addition to building the AFL-CIO bodies in the state, this partnership has been instrumental in helping ILSR maintain seven full-time tenure-track positions – a staff greater than in many states with larger labor movements.

## Transformation is a Mutual Process

The recent history of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth illustrates how transformation is a mutual process between labor education and AFL-CIO bodies. Indeed, the Dartmouth program used its participation in ongoing CLC committees to redirect its own mission in light of a changing environment. UMass-Dartmouth faced a region where both manufacturing and union density were shrinking, and an unorganized immigrant workforce was expanding in a previously unionized industry. Making use of the opening created by the AFL-CIO's New Voice slate, the labor center utilized its membership on CLC committees to initiate and obtain material support for relationship building, non-traditional organizing, and community-based educational work. These efforts resulted in several joint center-council initiatives.



The Labor Education Center (LEC) led the formation of People First, a CLC-based community-labor committee that took up as its first project challenging corporate tax breaks through the area's Tax Increment Financing scheme. With the center's help, People First held three conferences that included participation from elected officials. The LEC provided seed money and training for a student organizer to ride buses and recruit membership for the new Bus Riders United. Working with the Amalgamated Transit Union, the group led successful campaigns for increased state transit funding, expanded local bus service, and a voting voice for bus riders on the regional transit board. Over a 15-year span, the LEC has participated in support work for a community of Guatemalan immigrants working in what had previously been a heavily unionized seafood processing industry. Organizing around health and safety issues grew to a broader struggle for workplace justice. The center produced an educational program for the labor council on the AFLCIO's immigration policy and a film series on undocumented workers. As a result of this work both the center and the labor council have put themselves at the center of economic justice organizing in their region.

Other labor centers in our study provide examples of activities that have become transformative because of the continuity of effort and support from labor leadership. For example, the Washington State Labor Education and Research Center's work with state and local labor councils has been pivotal in developing youth leadership through the Young Emerging Labor Leaders (YELL). YELL has in turn galvanized additional efforts targeting non-union workers and immigrant communities. The North Shore Labor Council (NSLC) in Massachusetts has a long-standing commitment to strategic planning that has included follow-up work and monitoring of action plans. The NSLC's decision to involve the University of Massachusetts-Lowell extension program in helping to lead its sessions grew the capacity of the labor education center; enhanced the capacity for ongoing discussion and analysis within the council; and deepened the center's role in formal and informal education within the council, outreach, coalition building, and work with other regional labor groups.



Our studies consistently show the value of labor

center/AFL-CIO relationships that foster ongoing reflection and dialogue so essential to strategic change. Above all, our study suggests that transforming the labor movement is not merely a matter of union transformation. In response to the needs of unions and unorganized workers, labor education centers are actively re-examining their roles and how to fulfill them. This re-examination includes – but goes far beyond – the question of what courses to offer. It involves reevaluating the entire context in which labor education takes place, as well as the role of labor educators in non-traditional organizing and relationship building. Just as the scope and composition of the labor movement have dramatically changed in the last quarter century, so too are the scope, activities, and priorities of the labor education centers with which labor organizations work.

Changes within both the AFL-CIO and the labor education community are thus complementary and synergistic. They are the result of significant investments of time and effort into ongoing formal and informal conversations about our past, present and future. These connections have fostered innovative ideas and generated close and ongoing working relationships that help to strengthen and evolve AFL-CIO bodies as well as the labor centers that work with them.

## Lessons

- 1) While the resources and capacities of the central labor bodies and labor education centers featured in this report vary widely, we believe there are some common lessons that can be drawn from the partnerships they all have worked to build.
- 2) Just like the affiliate leaders they both serve, central labor body leaders and labor educators cannot continue doing what they have historically done – just better and harder – and expect significantly different outcomes. Given the challenges of a changing world, both need to be open to new ideas and innovations. The most promising partnerships are built by labor leaders and educators who are both creative and willing to take some risks.
- 3) Effective partnerships are typically built by partners who see education as a core part of what the labor movement does. An effective movement for social and economic change, supported by effective educational programming, helps people to develop their sense of what needs to happen, see their role in making change, provides them the needed skills to be effective, and set them in motion.
- 4) Functional partnerships are constructed on a foundation of trust and confidence. Cultivating both personal and institutional relationships is essential, especially if labor leaders and labor educators hope to pursue new strategies that involve some degree of risk. These partnerships feature collaboration that can range from frequent phone consultations to joint participation in highly visible projects. But behind the scenes, there is deep mutual reliance and acceptance. As one of the CLC presidents said of the educators she worked with, “they were always there.”
- 5) These kinds of relationships require patience and mutual respect. They are not built overnight. The

very best partnerships have evolved over many years of collaboration. Many projects have also taken years to develop and could not have been achieved if trust had been withdrawn. These kinds of durable relationships do require continual effort to maintain them. This is especially true when individuals may come and go or change positions. Ongoing participation of labor educators in AFL-CIO committees, on the one hand, and of AFL-CIO leaders in steering and search committees of labor centers, on the other, help maintain both continuity and trust.

- 6) Mutual respect also entails an appreciation and understanding of the skills, experience, perspective and challenges that central labor body leaders and university-based labor educators each bring to the table. Labor educators, in particular, increasingly come to the job with experience not just as labor organizers but also as community organizers and activists. This experience deepens the capacity of labor educators to respond to demands the labor movement faces, to serve as bridge builders with non-traditional groups, and to provide insights into labor's challenges.
- 7) Labor educators should be responsive to the articulated needs of central labor body leaders, should be cautious about presuming to know what those leaders can or should do to build a more powerful movement, yet should also be willing to challenge those leaders – in an appropriately respectful way – to consider new ideas and to fully utilize the capacities that reside within university-based labor education centers. Organized labor should see labor education centers as one source of ideas, and labor educators should be prepared to respond to demands for new ideas and projects.
- 8) As discussed earlier in this report, both partners can bring distinct roles to collaboration. Labor education centers specialize in training and education, facilitation, assembling and presenting new information and knowledge, and applied research. They can also potentially serve as bridge builders. AFL-CIO leaders oversee an official process of decision-making and provide space for labor leaders to meet and share with each other. They can speak for the labor movement as a whole, they are deeply involved in the political process and, like the labor education centers, can initiate cross-union programs.
- 9) Central labor body leaders should recognize the unique roles labor educators can potentially play in building a more dynamic, inclusive and powerful workers' movement. While these roles may begin with the provision of basic skills training, limiting labor educators' contribution to "maintenance" activities underutilizes their capacities and denies a movement striving for renewal access to a potentially powerful partner. Labor leaders should also be willing to challenge labor education centers to take on new functions and to better align their existing programs to the needs of the labor movement today. Labor education centers have played a key role in helping foster and implement the AFL-CIO's recent priorities including immigration reform, community coalitions, and the Common Sense Economics program.
- 10) In addition to training and education, university-based labor centers should expand and deepen their capacities to provide strategic research, facilitation and technical assistance, high-level leadership development and other vital support to those central labor body leaders who are committed to building a transformative movement and willing to partner with skilled and experienced labor educators.

- 11) The rich partnerships found in our case studies have expanded the role of labor education centers in the labor movement. As such they challenge union and AFL-CIO leaders, as well as labor educators themselves, to see the potential for labor educators to become peer leaders.
- 12) None of these long-term partnerships are possible unless university-based labor education centers are well-funded, secure and sustainable. That can only be achieved with significant labor movement support. While all parts of the labor movement, including labor education centers, are under attack, several of our case studies have actually seen partners expand the resources going to labor education centers. This tells us that AFL-CIO bodies may be underestimating their ability not only to defend, but also to expand the capacity of labor centers. In turn, expanded capacity for labor education will deepen the foundations and resources for an evolving labor movement.

## Conclusion

As the labor movement as a whole rethinks what it is doing and needs to do to survive and prosper, AFL-CIO bodies and labor education centers have an opportunity to help each other by partnering for change. Both sides need to reconsider and challenge each other over how their institutions function and what they can contribute to a revitalized labor movement. As our case studies make clear, there are many promising opportunities to partner in ways that deliver concrete results and success while also building longer-term capacity for change. A 21<sup>st</sup> century American labor movement will need both effective AFL-CIO bodies and innovative labor education centers that work together in dynamic partnerships.

## Cornell Worker Institute Case Study

Founded in 1945 by an act of New York State's legislature, the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) offers students a comprehensive range of undergraduate and graduate courses in a social science-based analysis of work, employment, economics, and labor relations. Its broad programs develop scholars who gravitate into both management and labor ranks at work. Other trainings and worker-oriented education include skills-based and leadership courses, such as contract bargaining and communication techniques, for certificate programs in New York, Buffalo, and Rochester. Many of these are offered in one or two-day formats, a dramatic shift from six and eight-week certificate program courses that the Buffalo center, for example, formerly offered. Additional certificate programs at Cornell include online courses in the subject clusters of History, Law, Bargaining and Electives. A collaborative partnership between Cornell's Worker Institute and the CUNY Joseph P. Murphy Institute provides students with a rigorous, extensive set of course offerings in urban history, public sector history, labor law, labor relations, labor and the economy, and arbitration.

Three years ago, the Worker Institute at Cornell University was formed as the aegis under which serve all faculty who fulfill the Institute's mission to promote workers' rights and collective representation. Its multidisciplinary faculty is comprised of well-regarded practitioners in the fields of law, labor education, history, and labor relations broadly defined. Critical to the success of the Worker Institute are the labor education programs that faculty, based in New York City as well as Cornell's Ithaca campus, plan and deliver. Especially for those drawn from the ranks of organized labor, their movement experiences have yielded prolonged, mutually respectful relationships with key labor leaders and organizations locally and nationally.

The additional subject areas that Worker Institute faculty covers are capacious, entailing specific fields such as construction, public sector work, human rights and labor, environmental policy, and global and comparative workers movements. At the Institute, this contributes to prolific academic and applied research that undergirds Cornell's well-earned reputation for high quality scholarly work. To facilitate this, the Institute has concentrated some of its innovative work into several initiatives to spur public engagement and dialogue about pressing social, economic, and policy issues. These initiatives include strategic leadership, labor and environmentally sustainable work, workplace equity, and precarious work.

Although it has sustained its share of attacks, the labor movement in the state and New York City remains relatively strong. With just over two million union members, New York State's labor movement ranks second in size to only California, which has double the population, and New York's overall union membership rate of 24.7% and 68.6% public-sector membership rate both lead the nation. Relative to national averages, figures within New York City in several significant metrics parallel those of the state overall. Its heavily unionized public sector (70%), as well as the construction (28%) and private sectors (15.3%), represent nearly double the national averages. The racial and gender composition of New York City and State's union memberships reflects a much more diverse labor movement here than in the US, with women and people of color joining unions at over twice the rate of their counterparts nationally.<sup>4</sup> In its programmatic focus and organizational bodies, the Worker Institute

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<sup>4</sup> Union figures for New York City are derived from CPS data to June 2015, from Ruth Milkman and Stephanie Luce, *The State of the Unions 2015: A Profile of Organized Labor in New York City, New York State, and the United States* (NYC: Joseph P. Murphy Institute, 2015).



seems well attuned to the dynamics of diversity in the state and New York metro region.

The structure and function of the Worker Institute represent more than adaptive responses to the current educational and organizational needs of their labor constituents. Key features and programs in the Institute's infrastructure also reflect a forward-looking deployment of intellectual and organizational resources to more closely align its work with the increasingly interconnected peoples and spaces of labor defining the early twenty-first century. Its thirteen Fellows, who bring years of academic and applied experiences in labor, community, and media organizations, illustrate the Institute's commitment to both innovative studies of work, and to the racial and gender diversity of those who perform it. Through their scholarship, outreach, and instruction at the Worker Institute/Murphy Institute partnership as well as the Union Leadership Institute (ULI) discussed below, Fellows direct research initiatives on environmental and economic policies, global trade unionism, immigration, low-wage work, and women's rights and equity. One labor leader noted the importance of a Fellow-led project on the Arts and Entertainment Industry by providing keen insights into a field central to the city's economy, yet changing rapidly as a result of employment practices and new technologies. In the process, they and other scholars disseminate new research on work-related subjects to Cornell's campus-based and outreach audiences, and link local conditions and developments to broader, often global forces shaping and shaped by them. Similarly, the Institute's newly formed Advisory Council mirrors the racial and gender diversity of its Fellows, and demonstrates the scope and impact of Cornell's programs. Comprised of twenty-one members who lead local and national labor, community, and non-traditional workers organizations, the Council demonstrates an array of important professional relationships the Institute has cultivated. Some have attended Cornell's educational programs and later risen to leadership positions in labor.

Yet perhaps more importantly, its composition indicates an inclusiveness shown to constituents, whose input can help inform the Institute's direction and priorities. Through their research and education programs, Cornell faculty at once commands respect from and conveys respect for its constituents as peers. Consequently, this respect permeates the structures, function, and personnel of the Institute, and serves to replenish the mutually constructive relationships to which they have been committed over time.

That is not to say that there have not been obstacles that each side has identified. For example, some labor leaders shared that programs in which Cornell faculty have played facilitation roles required patient dialogue and discussions about direction to realize the best results. Yet those assessments tended to be introspective, and descriptions of their working relationships often entailed words and phrases such as "collaborative," "very strong," "a lot of mutual respect," "finely tuned," "a common frame of mind and sense of purpose." This comes from Institute faculty not having a tin ear to the voices of labor constituents, nor dictating to them, but instead having a long-term commitment to the people in the programs. That Worker Institute faculty spent years in the labor movement, and bring key insights and broad experiences to bear on their academic work and professional relationships, is crucial and has paid important dividends. It is worth adding that, in addition to their combined professional experience, stability among faculty has been a cornerstone for Cornell's program building endeavors, and the relationship building that must accompany them.

## **A “Strong Coalition with Partners in a Rapidly Changing World:” Cornell and New York State AFL-CIO Union Leadership Institute**

One of Cornell’s flagship labor education programs has been the Union Leadership Institute (ULI). Founded in 2000, ULI resulted from a strategic collaboration between state and regional labor leaders and Cornell ILR to align its educational programs more closely with labor movement needs, especially for high-level leadership development. The outcomes for organized labor and labor education, both in New York and throughout the country, have been prolonged and pronounced.

ULI provides new and emerging labor and alt labor leaders with rich thematic content in a rigorous learning environment, spread over the course of a year. Students spend intermittent time at Cornell’s Ithaca campus immersed in courses such as internal capacity building, developing broad-based solidarity campaigns, and examining global economic trends that link local and organizational dynamics across organizational, sector and national boundaries. Participants also complete individual projects and electives, with all the coursework intended to instill new skills, sharpen existing ones, and ultimately develop sharp leaders driven by transcendent values of fairness, dignity, equality, safety, and health. This innovative program has graduated approximately 300 students, some of whom have gravitated into local and national leadership positions and can therefore attest to and advocate for ULI.

Moreover, ULI’s demonstrable successes have provided a template for other labor education leadership programs, perhaps most notably the National Labor Leadership Initiative (NLLI). Initiated in 2013, NLLI attracts dozens of the top labor leaders in the country and immerses them in three week-long sessions, spread throughout the year, that cultivate their capacities for individual, organizational, and indeed mutual growth. The cohort approach to leadership training and capacity building

impressed one labor leader, who noted how the cross pollination of labor movement leaders with new, and sometimes younger leaders from environmental justice organizations and worker centers broadened the bases of relationships that attendees had, and at times exposed them to other groups’ particular concerns and new organizing strategies. Additionally, NLLI draws faculty from other well-regarded labor education programs such as Oregon, Illinois, Rutgers, and Harvard in addition to the Worker Institute. The value of this was not lost on another leader, who appreciated the exposure to other faculty and their own innovative programs that equip leaders with new strategies and prisms into the dynamic challenges confronting labor in the early twenty-first century.

## **“From Defense to Offense:” -- The New York State AFL-CIO/New York City Central Labor Council Capacity Building Initiative**

A pair of recent labor disputes—a lockout and a strike—in the New York City area prompted a series of discussions among state and city labor leaders about their own and their affiliates’ capacities to confront formidable challenges from employers. In particular, they conveyed serious concerns about the extent to which some affiliates had identified, developed, and utilized their own strengths and the resources at their disposal. At the same time, leaders strove to maximize their own capabilities to assist affiliates in times of crisis and, to the extent possible, to stave off high-profile losses that would impair both particular locals and the labor movement as a whole. This led leaders of the state and New York City federations to form the Capacity Building Initiative (CBI). With their long-standing history of strategic planning with Cornell, the state and city federations invited the Worker Institute to conduct a series of meetings and interviews with various labor leaders and staff. These forums focused on what essential strengths and qualities that affiliates either currently or should have in order to achieve workplace and political successes, ways



in which central bodies can help to pinpoint and augment the capacities that affiliates need, the importance of strategic planning for these organizations, and methods of crucial support that federations can offer affiliates.

While the CBI is at an early stage, Worker Institute faculty and labor leaders have already detailed some important outcomes. The Worker Institute synthesized its research culled from interviews and discussions into a report disseminated to labor leaders, and facilitated a discussion on its conclusions and recommendations. Throughout this process, Cornell faculty have been instrumental in facilitating and advancing strategic analyses of the organizations involved, and proposing paths they may take to build their capacities. On the one hand, interviews indicated some serious

deficiencies among some affiliates in capacities and strategic planning. However, many labor leaders closely involved in this endeavor highlighted the crucial roles faculty played in adroitly navigating sensitive conversations through “constructive dialogue” about existing problems, and helping local and state leaders to generate possible solutions. Moreover, labor leaders stated that this Initiative has spurred a re-visioning of how and why to expand their capacities. Seeking to transition organized labor’s position in confrontations “from defense to offense,” as one official said, labor leaders through CBI’s inception see the need for and the potential to develop an “early warning system” that can troubleshoot situations and address affiliates’ needs *before* crises confront them.

## UCLA Labor Center in Orange County

California's labor movement is easily the largest among the fifty states with almost 2.5 million union members, over 400,000 more than New York's second-highest total. At 15.9% union density, its overall rate is sixth highest in the nation. Generally speaking in recent years union membership and density in the state has increased year by year. Ranked fifth nationally at 55% density, California's public-sector membership is comprised of over 1.3 million members, more than half the state's organized labor movement and thus emblematic of the national shift in union density from private to public sector. Not only does this constitute the highest public-sector membership total of any state but also, if California's public sector alone were the only unionized segment of the state's workforce, it would still rank second to only New York in total union membership.

Founded in 1964 by a statewide joint university-labor committee, the Center for Labor Research and Education, later renamed the UCLA Labor Center, was established within the Institute for Labor and Employment (ILE). In 2007 ILE was remained the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) and receives line-item-funding in the state budget. Growing resources allowed the Center to open a Downtown Labor Center in 2002. Located in close proximity to many union offices and worker centers, as well as diverse immigrant communities, the Downtown Labor Center serves as a crucial conduit between UCLA and these community constituents, as well as between the respective organizations representing labor and community groups. The UCLA Labor Center has worked closely with the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and aided the invigoration of that body that began in 1996 with the election of President Miguel Contreras and has continued under subsequent leadership.

A full overview of the vibrant and rich work of the UCLA Labor Center is beyond the scope of this case study. Several characteristics stand out, however. The Center has been a central

resource for strengthening the participation of women, people of color, youth and LGBTQ workers who have been historically marginalized within the workforce. For example, the Black Worker Center, the city's first of its kind, was launched in 2010 by the Labor Center to address the job crisis in the African American community. The Labor Center has also been at the forefront of initiating new programs to facilitate the integration of immigrant workers and students within the economy and their communities. The Dream Resource Center, launched in 2011, promotes the immigrant youth movement and provides access to higher education for immigrant youth. Center programs also bridge the gap between worker activism and academia. It participates in a Community Scholars Program that brings labor and community leaders into the university to focus and plan around key issues in the regional economy. Its Summer Internship Program places students with worker and community organizing, such as the Car Wash Industry Campaign in 2016.

The Center's bridge and program-building roles with immigrant, youth, and labor groups are evident in UCLA's prolific research profile, which has continued to grow in tandem with its relationships with southern California's labor organizations and communities. IRLE faculty perform prolific high-quality research on local, national, and global labor issues, and economic and workforce trends illuminating the possibilities and challenges unions, workers, and nontraditional labor groups face in the increasingly precarious twenty-first century. Paralleling this research that has helped to elevate its faculty's reputation for scholarly excellence, the Labor Center has expanded its applied and academic research scope, illustrating its impactful relationships with labor groups and community organizations, and important directions for intellectual inquiry. It

has produced over two dozen reports in the last several years, with a particular focus on the region's sizable immigrant communities, their workplace and social conditions, and the disparity in economic, political, and social opportunities they often face. These research projects and initiatives are clustered in the several centers such as the Dream Resource Center, the Global Solidarity Project, the Black Worker Center, and the ReWork Institute for Worker Justice—a program focused on garment workers, restaurant workers, domestic workers, and day laborers.

### **“A Culture and Agent of Change:” Orange County, the Orange County Labor Federation and the UCLA Labor Center**

Perhaps best illustrative of the work, scope, and impact that the UCLA Labor Center has had is its working relationship with the Orange County Labor Federation, formerly known as the Orange County Central Labor Council. The Labor Center was a key partner in helping revitalize this body.

The early 2000s proved to be a pivotal period for organized labor in California as a whole, and Orange County in particular. In 2003, the California Labor Federation and other organizations successfully supported the Health Insurance Act (HIA), a state bill that would have required employers with over fifty employees to either provide health care coverage, or contribute to a state fund that would have equaled approximately eighty percent of health care costs. This proved to be the last bill Governor Gray Davis signed into law before he was recalled from and replaced in office in a special election. Opponents of both organized labor and the act achieved another victory in November 2004 when they repealed HIA through Proposition 72, a closely contested referendum in which HIA opponents cast just over fifty percent of the votes. This came on the heels of a prolonged strike and lockout of

70,000 grocery workers at Vons, Ralphs, and Albertsons, in which health care negotiations were a crucial sticking point, and whose settlement resulted in some gains for but also key givebacks from unions involved. These political and labor-relations setbacks prompted state labor groups to examine their operational capacities and strategic approaches. Among other initiatives, this redirected effort included widespread exit polling that revealed room for growth and impact in places such as Orange County, which was the second-largest county in the state.

Beginning in 2004 the California Labor Federation engaged in an ongoing strategic planning process that has evolved into a systematic effort to elevate the performance of all of the labor movement's constituent parts, including its labor councils.<sup>5</sup> The state fed's Strategic Planning Committee chose Orange County as its first labor council effort in 2006. The county had performed among the bottom in the Proposition 72 campaign despite being home to roughly 200,000 union members. Furthermore, a changing economic and population base suggested that real power building by labor and its community allies could transform the county's long-standing reputation for conservative politics. Reinvigorating the Orange County Federation of Labor required a process that engaged both affiliates and those unions currently not affiliated or not active, especially unions that were contemplating major organizing initiatives. The State Labor Federation enlisted the assistance of UCLA Labor Center Director Kent Wong Labor to facilitate a Leadership Summit and subsequent meetings of labor leaders who would determine their direction and priorities. From the start the

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<sup>5</sup> This statewide process, as well as the work in Orange County, is detailed in Jeff Grabelsky, “Building Labor's Power in California: Raising Standards and Expanding Capacity Among Central Labor Councils, The State Federation, and Union Affiliates” in *Working USA*, March 2009, Volume 12, Number 1, pp.17-44.

Summit took a positive tone and asked participants to “imagine a central body that would deliver strategic value to the affiliates and would, therefore, be worth joining and supporting”<sup>6</sup>.

Initial meetings and surveys identified areas of need such as effective, broad-based communications, dissatisfaction with current political conditions and organizational capacities, and an innovative vision for what type of labor council its leaders wanted to develop. Additional planning resulted in Tefere Gebre, who had worked as the Southern California Political Director, leading the change process as interim CLC leader and, later, secretary-treasurer of the renamed Orange County Labor Federation. Labor Center staff and especially Kent Wong proved instrumental in facilitating the Labor Federation’s strategic planning process that developed the trust, respect, inclusiveness and productive relationships necessary for the council to systematically design, plan, and achieve everyone’s priorities. Sessions incorporated successful case studies of CLCs: their experiences, cautionary notes, and the leaders involved in them. Later, Wong facilitated biennial OCLF strategic planning retreats that one labor leader termed “invaluable.”

This revitalization process paid dividends for the labor movement within a short period of time, notably through extensive labor-community coalitions. In 2006, campaigns passed a far-reaching living wage ordinance in Irvine and Santa Ana big-box ordinance the following year -- preventing Wal-Mart from building there. Partnerships between the Building Trades and construction contractors ensured that most area construction work was both union and at a prevailing wage scale. Through coalition work the OCLF helped to organize several hundred sanitation workers and prevent employers from deporting undocumented workers during this drive. Combined with other successes, such as adding

15,000 new members and increasing its community and political outreach, these mobilizing endeavors led the California Labor Federation to subsequently tab the OCLF as one of its highest-performing labor councils -- recognizing it as an “agent for change” in the region.

Labor leaders readily noted the Labor Center’s work in assisting the OCLF’s rapid resurgence, crediting the faculty’s respectful approach, facilitation skills, and research capacity that “provided value for everybody” involved, and “brought significant credibility to everything they did.” According to one leader, UCLA’s work helped labor to make new inroads into immigrant and community groups, and shore up some organizational relationships that had fallen into disrepair, because UCLA helped to demonstrate that “the value of working together [was] clear and long lasting.” Its research shed important insights into policy issues such as Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), immigration policy, economic inequality, and employment opportunities and disparities often affecting people of color and young workers in southern California. A strong example of Labor Center research is its July 2014 report, *Orange County on the Cusp of Change*. This in-depth research braids together several crucial aspects of the relationships the Labor Center has cultivated with—and between—labor and community constituents. Its quantitative analysis of important economic and demographic changes in the last half-century at once demonstrated that the faces and bases that made Orange County a conservative political bastion have dramatically changed, and that those changes have erected barriers to economic stability and full civic participation, disproportionately affecting immigrants and people of color now constituting the bulk of the changing economy’s workforce. Crucially, *Orange County on the Cusp of Change* did not merely study these demographic groups or speak to the challenges and the social groups facing them; it incorporated their voices and engaged their organizations through these partnerships.

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<sup>6</sup> Grabelsky p. 31.

This innovative collaboration has had national ramifications as well. Gebre's work with the OCLF and throughout southern California helped to catapult him to the highest levels of US labor leadership when, in 2013, he became the first immigrant and man of color to be elected executive vice-president of the national AFL-CIO. President Richard Trumka affirmed the importance of Gebre's work in Orange County and the need to replicate that across the country, including to several large southern metropolitan areas. He placed particular emphasis on community coalitions and capacity building for labor councils.

In turn, UCLA and the Labor Center benefited significantly from its work with the Labor Federation. One leader noted how working with the OCLF helped to deepen existing and forge new relationships with many of labor's partners, since UCLA's broad-based pedagogy and research demonstrated to them "what UCLA

could do and what they were about." Organized labor urged foundations to support UCLA's work at a critical budgetary juncture for the University and its labor institutes. As organized labor faced the political and labor-relations challenges between 2003 and 2004 mentioned above, the IRLE and Labor Center faced a prolonged era of budgetary uncertainty from the state after Governor Davis's recall. A combination of university restructuring and faculty and community support staved off line-item threats to IRLE's budget in 2004 and 2008, but financial pressures have remained. Despite uncertain support from the state since, the IRLE and Labor Center not only maintained productive professional relationships with labor and community constituents, but also managed to strengthen those ties. In an era of financial and organizational retrenchment nationally UC-based labor network has actually grown with the opening of a new labor center at UC-Irvine.



## Washington State

### The History and Context of the Labor Center and Unionism in Washington State

The Labor Education and Research Center in Washington State was created in 1987 through legislative action that established the Center at The Evergreen State College. The founding Director was faculty at that state college, and was its champion and advocate, both within the legislature and within the college. Since that time the Labor Center has had three other Directors and, in 2010, moved from The Evergreen State College to South Seattle Community College. As part of that move the name was changed to the Washington State Labor Education and Research Center (WA LERC).

The history of the WA LERC has been characterized by simultaneously supportive and tense relationships with both the institutions of higher education of which the center was a part, and the leadership of organized labor and labor councils in the state. It has also struggled with chronic underfunding. For only one year did the Center receive public funding that exceeded \$300,000. Other than that, the Center has received in the ballpark of \$100,000 - \$160,000 per year in state funding. Despite this tiny public investment, the Center is tasked with serving the entire state of Washington and has struggled, with some success, to fulfill that mandate. Throughout its history, the Center's budgets have been supplemented by some grants, private donations, and fee-for-service income, but its financial marginality has been a constant struggle. The Labor Center has had a consistent champion for increased funding within the Washington State Labor Council over the years. That individual has held many different positions within the Council and, as he has become more influential in the organization, has continued to work tirelessly to increase the Labor Center's public funding, and foster

stronger ties between the Labor Center and Washington State unions. He has also made intentional efforts to engage the Council more directly in the work of the Center.

Unfortunately, despite investment of significant political capital, his and the Council's attempts to increase the Labor Center's public funding has met with minimal success. However, the programmatic relationship between the Council and Center has flourished, enhanced in recent years by deep involvement by other top officers and staff with the workings of the Labor Center.

The institutions of higher education of which the WA LERC has been a part have also had mixed relations with the Center. At Evergreen the Labor Center was one of a number of "public service centers" whose explicit mission was to connect the campus with the broader community. This was a comfortable context for the Labor Center. However, at various moments of financial stress, the college would see the Labor Center, and all the public service centers, as expendable. Existing on the margins of what the college considered its core mission, the college has attempted to shut down the public service centers on a number of occasions. The Labor Center fought this several times, most recently in 2008-2009. The support of the Washington State Labor Council and state legislators that worked closely with organized labor was essential to beating back this attack, although the college did end up taking half of the Center's legislatively allocated budget.

The budgetary threat became coupled with a more explicitly political attack from the Landmark Legal Foundation. That led Evergreen to implement an internal audit of the Labor Center which was highly ideological in nature. It did not simply consider whether or not the Labor Center was following budgetary rules for a public institution, which is an appropriate use of the audit process. Rather, it raised the question of whether or not the fundamental mission of the Labor Center was a misuse of

public funding. The internal college audit essentially concurred with this ideological position, although the state auditor refused twice to initiate a state-level audit because he saw no conflict between the mission of the Center and its legislative mandate. This also led to major conflict between the then-Director of the Center and the Evergreen State College President and other top leadership. Between the budgetary threats and the political clash fostered by the Landmark Legal Foundations action, it became clear that Evergreen was no longer a safe or healthy space for the Labor Center and so, in 2010, again with instrumental help from the Washington State Labor Council, the Labor Center was moved to South Seattle Community College and a new Director (the fourth) was hired.

In many ways the move of the Labor Center to South was a very good thing. It brought the Labor Center more in to the heart of union density in Washington State, and allowed the Center to connect to the worker-training and apprenticeship mission of that college. This is an entirely appropriate context for labor education and the Labor Center has had some success there. However, the Labor Center's public funding has not improved, and the relationship between the Labor Center and the college administration at South, while not explicitly conflictual (yet), has not improved significantly over what happened at Evergreen. This includes explicit refusal on the part of the college administration to partner with the Washington State Labor Council in lobbying for increased legislative allocation for the Labor Center. In fact, as recently as early 2015, the President of South Seattle College made statements indicating that he did not see the Labor Center as a program of the college. This took place in the context of yet another political attack against the Labor Center, this time from the Freedom Foundation. Throughout all of these ups and downs, the relationship with the Washington State Labor Council has been instrumental to the Labor Center's stability and reputation.

In addition to the WSLC, the Labor Center has had a successful and ongoing collaboration with the Spokane Regional Labor Council. Some labor education work has also taken place with the Martin Luther King County Central Labor Council and the Pierce County Central Labor Council. These three CLCs are the largest in the State of Washington and the mutual support between these CLCs and the Labor Center has been very important. The Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies and the Labor Archive of Washington State at the University of Washington have also been important partners for the Labor Center, and the three organizations have tried to act in concert, with the help of the WSLC and major unions in the state, to get public funding for these three labor education institutions - the only ones in the entire state. These funding struggles have not produced major results, and this is particularly surprising in a state with such a strong union movement.

Washington State has the fourth highest union density in the United State. In 2014 the overall percentage of the workforce that was covered by union contracts was 18.4%. In the private sector, density was at 11.8%; public sector was 53.6%. Washington State remains free of right-to-work laws and has been able to maintain a core of advanced manufacturing jobs in the aerospace industry, significant unionization in the construction industry, and has a robust public sector, health care, and education union presence. Even the retail and hospitality sectors have robust unions, despite the difficulty of organizing in those industries. On the flip side, the emergent high-tech economy remains non-union, the increasing impact of the precarious and low-wage economy is polarizing economic status in the state, and the largest unionized private-sector employer – the Boeing Company – is stepping up its war on the unions that represent its workforce. Washington's labor movement is healthy, and embattled.

## Innovative Practices: What Makes the Relationship Between the Labor Center and the Central Labor Bodies Strong

As stated above, the Washington State Labor Council has been a tireless advocate for the Labor Center. This has been true in structural as well as programmatic ways. Some of the examples of structural support, in addition to ongoing advocacy for the Labor Center's state funding include:

- Having a consistent representative on the Labor Center's Advisory Committee. In recent years this has been the Secretary-Treasurer of the state fed who has also co-taught Labor Center classes;
- Doing fundraising among state fed affiliates to directly support both the Labor Center and the Labor Archive of Washington State at the University of Washington;
- Participating in hiring committees for Labor Center personnel;
- Making significant effort, with mixed success, to mediate the relationships between the Labor Center and the leadership of the institutions of higher education of which the Center was and is a part.

Programmatically, the Washington State Labor Council has talked up the Labor Center's educational offerings among affiliates and consistently spoken of the Labor Center as crucial to the Washington State labor movement's educational infrastructure. Some specific programs have been direct collaborations between the state fed and the Labor Center include the Emerging Leaders Initiative, May Works (a labor culture program), and a series of classes developed about the threat of right-to-work laws. Unfortunately, this last program drew intense political heat from the right-wing Freedom Foundation which has not helped the Labor Center to stabilize its position politically or financially.

The Emerging Leaders Initiative has

significantly expanded the presence and participation of young workers and leaders in the WA labor movement by fostering the development of Washington Young Emerging Labor Leaders (WA YELL). Three specific examples of younger leadership emerging from WA YELL include the President of the state's largest stage hands local, and top officers in two of the state's CLCs. Bringing in new perspectives on the experience of younger workers, raising the visibility of issues that are important to younger workers but not traditionally within the core of union concerns (like marriage equality), and creating an entirely new wing of structural organization functioning through the WSLC for unions and labor councils across the state, WA YELL represents a real advance in the character and power of the Washington State union movement. WA YELL would not exist without the dedication of the Labor Center to its Emerging Leaders Initiative. This initiative was developed because of strategic conversations between the Director of the Labor Center and the top leadership of the state fed. It has served both organizations well.

The Labor Center and the Labor Council have also convened strategic spaces for each other in important ways. The WSLC has consistently created space at their annual conventions for a focus on labor education, both to highlight programmatic content and to encourage donations from affiliates. The Labor Center has a free table at the convention and facilitates workshops as part of the multi-day convention program. Workshops have included such topics as the Labor Center's Washington State Workers' Rights Manual, cultural organizing and May Works, and even a session on the legal and economic implications of free vs paid internship - again, a focus on young workers. This last example also points to a kind of space that the Labor Center has opened for the Council within the community college. It should be said that, between apprenticeship programs and the power of organized labor on the workforce development boards for the state, organized labor already had a strong presence in the world of workforce development and what

the Labor Center has added to that has been minimal. Nevertheless, having the Labor Center housed at the largest apprenticeship training center in the state, and working within the structures of the college to integrate labor education in to workforce education created a new avenue for organized labor to have a voice within the higher education system. There are two concrete examples of this. First is a workforce round table that the Labor Center held in 2013 that brought together high level leadership from unions, higher ed, workforce development and, some extent employers. The second example, which also indicated the important of the Labor Center as part of the WSLC convention, was the awarding of the Bruce Brennen Memorial Award from the Labor, Education and Apprenticeship Committee of the WSLC to the Director of the Labor Center in 2014. The Director was told that, for the many years that this award had been given, it had focused almost exclusively on apprenticeship. For the award to go to the Director of the Labor Center is an indicator of how much the relationship between the state and the Center has broadened the space for considerations of labor education within the union movement.

Another programmatic example of excellent collaboration between the Labor Center and the central AFL-CIO labor bodies in Washington State is the LEAP (Leadership Education and Activist Program), also referred to as the rank-and-file school in early years, put on by the Spokane Regional Labor Council. This multi-day, multi-union and community leadership school has been a joint program of the SRLC & the Labor Center for many years - since before the Labor Center moved to South Seattle College. According to the leadership of the SRLC, what made this collaboration work so well for them was the Labor Center's ability to listen carefully to their needs and concerns, adjust curriculum accordingly, and incorporate the political context of this Eastern Washington city into the program. This is a very different context than the highly progressive

Seattle/Tacoma corridor. The Labor Center's ability to serve in this context shows its flexibility and creativity, qualities that have come to be valued by Washington State unions even while, in early days the Labor Center's willingness to go its own way programmatically was an impediment to developing strong relationships with union leaders. According to the leadership of the SRLC, this school also helped to build the Council by legitimizing the work of their education committee, thereby strengthening their committee structure more generally, and bringing a kind of legitimacy to the Council in the eyes of their local delegate unions because they consistently provided a valuable educational program.

The Labor Center has also made concerted efforts to work with the two other large CLCs in the state - in King & Pierce Counties. For years the Labor Center ran a book group for the MLKCLC. This has been a consistent project of their Education Committee, even when the committee itself struggled to function. The Labor Center has also worked with the PCCLC to try and help their education committee develop programs responsive to the needs of their delegates. This work is ongoing and the Labor Center hopes to reproduce the success of the Spokane LEAP in Western Washington, working with the MLKCLC, the PCCLC, and more recently, engaging the Snohomish County CLC in this dialogue as well.

These are all examples of bridge-building activities that the Labor Center and the Labor Councils have engaged in together.

Another strong example of collaboration between the Labor Center and the WSLC has been May Works. When the Secretary-Treasurer of the WSLC (who sits on the Labor Center's Advisory Committee) came in to her office, she was determined to reinvigorate the cultural aspects of the labor movement in Washington State. To that end, working with the Seattle Labor Chorus, a May Works committee was convened which has now run 4 continuous years of successful programming during the month of



May. Starting with May Day (International Workers Day) which, in Seattle as in so many other cities around the country, has been reclaimed and reinvigorated by the immigrant rights movement, the WSLC, the Labor Center, the Labor Chorus, and other union, labor council, and community partners runs a series of labor culture events across the state. Expanding beyond the Seattle/Tacoma corridor is challenging, but something that is seen as a crucial way to engage the CLCs across the state. The Labor Center has been instrumental in the success of May Works, including tying it to its Emerging Leaders Initiative in 2012. The Director of the Labor Center and the Secretary-Treasurer of the WSLC co-authored an article on May Works for the New Labor Forum in 2013.

The Labor Center also hosted the Western Regional Summer Institute for Union Women in Seattle for the first time in 2013. This draws upon a long tradition of this Labor Center having run its own Women's Summer Schools almost annually between 1987 & 2009. The Secretary-Treasurer of the WSLC speaks about her early experience with the LERC's summer school as one of the first experiences that helped her develop her identity as a labor leader. She then went on to hold multiple offices in her local union, and now helps lead the state fed as the first women ever elected to one of the top offices. She has also engaged Washington State in national labor leadership development efforts through the AFL-CIO. While it's impossible to draw a direct causal relationship between the work of the Labor Center and the rise of labor leaders like this, it can certainly be claimed that the Labor Center's work was a stepping stone along the path.

In the political sphere the WSLC also built bridges for the Labor Center. Arranging direct meetings between labor education leaders both from the LERC and the UW and legislators, and even with the Governor of the state, shows a huge investment by the WSLC in the higher education labor education infrastructural of the state. This has paid off for the Labor Archive of

Washington State which saw its first public funding in 2015. While the direct pay-off for the Labor Center in terms of increased funding has not yet succeeded (other than a brief expansion in 2007-8 which was immediately undone in the following fiscal year), increasing the visibility of the Labor Center with supportive legislators can only help these efforts in the future.

The collaboration with the most mixed results for both the WSLC and the LERC was the right-to-work classes offered in 2013-14. At the time there was the threat of a right-to-work initiative targeting the public sector in Oregon, and a national labor communicators network had begun to look at that messaging battles that took place between pro and anti RTW groups. The WSLC asked the Labor Center to partner in developing and delivering a series of workshops about the threat that RTW posed to the Washington State economy and unions, which they did. These classes were quite successful and will, hopefully provide an educational base to work from when a right-to-work initiative is actually put on the ballot in Washington State. However, this program also drew the attention, infiltration, and ire of the right-wing Freedom Foundation. This has lead to a series of harassing public information requests to the college about the Labor Center's activities. Accusations have ranged from illegal (or at least unreported) lobbying, to inappropriate relations with legislators, to using Labor Center activities to lobby for a public initiative. Interestingly, although the RTW program was what initiated this set of attacks, no concrete accusations or charges has arisen from it but, using that as an excuse to request thousands of documents and emails from the Labor Center, the Freedom Foundation has found a number of ways to try to discredit the Labor Center. In addition to the Labor Center being made more vulnerable by these attacks, the public information requests also result in the release of documents and communications from and about unions that are caught in the broad net of the public document search. This is not necessarily information that the unions or labor councils would want released, and might not have to release directly,



but this is a risk of working with the publicly funded agency. All records in this context are public. While it's not clear that there has been any direct damage caused to the WSLC, CLC, or unions from these document releases, the prospects are worrisome.

As another sign of how important the WSLC sees the Labor Center and its work, individuals from that organization and others have set up a legal defense fund for the Labor Center to help cover costs generated by these attacks.

## Oregon

The Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at the University of Oregon was established in 1977 with funding provided by the Oregon Legislature. LERC's founding was promoted by an alliance of unions, legislators, university faculty, labor relations professionals, and community leaders who believed that workers and unions in Oregon needed a specific program granting them access to the resources and expertise of the state's higher education system. There were several labor leaders involved in the establishment of LERC, including Irv Fletcher, then President of the Oregon AFL-CIO. There was disagreement among supporters over where the labor center should be located. Ultimately, the new center was based in Eugene, at the main campus of the University of Oregon, rather than in Portland, where the majority of union members in Oregon lived and worked. Advocates for housing the center in Eugene argued that locating the program at the University's flagship campus would enable the program to maintain visibility and access needed resources during its critical early years of development and beyond.<sup>7</sup> In 1988, LERC opened a satellite office at the UO campus in Portland.

LERC quickly established relations with both the state federation and local labor councils (twelve at the time), and its advisory committee included leaders from several of those bodies. LERC faculty attended state fed conventions and taught workshops and coordinated conferences when asked; they also attended Central Labor Council meetings, occasionally serving as delegates. An early project was the residential Oregon AFL-CIO/LERC Summer School through which the relations between the LERC and the state federation were solidified. Over the years, LERC cemented its relations with CLC's by co-sponsoring workshops for affiliate members/leaders around the state. (See below for more information about these ongoing programs.)

In 2006, one of LERC's faculty members, Barbara Byrd, was appointed to fill the vacant office of Secretary-Treasurer, at the time an unpaid position. She has been elected to the position twice since then. Importantly, there is a clear distinction drawn

between Byrd's LERC role and her AFL-CIO leadership role but, without doubt, her position as a statewide union leader has helped build the relationship between the OR AFL-CIO and the LERC.

### Oregon's labor movement

Oregon is a relatively small state, population-wise, with about 4,000,000 people, and a not very diverse state – 77% white, 13% Latino, 5% Asian and 2% Black. Built on an economic foundation in extractive industries such as wood and paper products, as well as manufacturing, Oregon has steadily lost family wage jobs in virtually all of its core industries. These jobs have been replaced by a handful of high-wage jobs in high tech, and greater employment in the service sector and hospitality industries.

At 16%, Oregon's union density is higher than the national average of 11%. Approximately 37% of public sector workers are organized, and 9% of private sector. About 130,000 of Oregon's 240,000 union members are represented by AFL-CIO unions. The rest are in SEIU and the Oregon Education Association, as well as some smaller independent unions. While public sector unionism remains vibrant and politically powerful, private sector unionism has suffered and is struggling to regain its footing.

### LERC – State Fed/CLC Programs

One of the most popular programs that LERC conducts each year is the **Oregon AFL-CIO Summer School**, which is largely planned and implemented by LERC faculty, with the active participation of state fed officers and staff on the planning committee and as instructors. The weekend starts with a Friday night plenary, during which the state fed President presents a "state of the unions" address. The local CLC (Lane County Labor Chapter) usually welcomes the participants and funds a opening night reception. The school extends from Friday night until Sunday at noon and typically attracts 120-160 participants. Other than state fed

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<sup>7</sup> A second labor center, the Pacific Northwest Labor College, was established in Portland in 1974, funded primarily by a grant from OSHA and with help from the Woodworkers Union and others. It closed in 1984.

conventions, it is the largest multi-union gathering in the state. At the Summer School, workshops have been offered on traditional topics as well as transformational issues like immigration, common-sense economics, organizational change, new communications methods, and raising labor standards.

Another co-sponsored program that LERC has coordinated is the **Oregon AFL-CIO Legislative Conference**, which until recently was held in the month preceding the biennial legislative session. Consisting of issue workshops and facilitated conversations with state legislators, the conference provides an opportunity for union leaders and activists to prepare for the upcoming session. LERC has also conducted “Unions 101” type workshops for state legislators.

LERC has also coordinated **organizing research and organizing summits** for the state federation since the early 2000’s. The research resulted in a series of reports on union density in Oregon’s industries and occupations; the summits were designed to highlight the urgency of organizing non-union workers as density has shrunk in the state.

At the state fed’s biennial convention, LERC frequently conducts workshops on a variety of topics.

In recent years, some of LERC’s work with both the state fed and CLCs has focused on **strategic planning**. With increased emphasis at the national AFL-CIO level on this work, LERC has stepped in to assist the state and local bodies with developing their plans. This work has centered largely around the larger CLCs – Northwest Oregon Labor Council, and the Lane County, Marion-Polk-Yamhill and Linn-Benton-Lincoln Labor Chapters . LERC has also helped develop the state fed’s **constituency groups** via planning and educational assistance.

Until recently LERC co-sponsored **regional Leadership Schools** with some CLCs. In those cases, the CLCs provided financial and logistical support and help to a greater or lesser extent with recruitment, while LERC provided recruitment

assistance and instruction. How to serve unions and workers in less densely populated parts of Oregon with LERC’s own limited capacity has become a significant dilemma for in recent years, especially in light of declining density and reduced CLC capacity in many parts of the state.

## Deepening The Relationship

The relationship between LERC and state and local AFL-CIO bodies has always been close in Oregon, but the new focus of the national AFL-CIO on community engagement and organizing has provided opportunities for deeper collaboration. LERC has helped to generate and train leaders and activists – people willing and able to support the progressive agenda of the Oregon AFL-CIO. LERC faculty have also helped develop relationships with community organizations. These – relationships which in turn have facilitated the state federation’s community engagement work.

Long interested in immigration issues, Bob Bussel, LERC’s director, edited an important publication in 2008, *Understanding the Immigrant Experience in Oregon: Research, Analysis, & Recommendations from University of Oregon Scholars*. In 2013, parallel to the state fed’s work to partner with immigrant advocacy groups in the state, Bussel convened an Immigration Network to help move progressive local immigration efforts, and in particular to give immigrant activists a voice in local and state policy. In May, 2014, the Network sponsored a Eugene conference on immigration that attracted around 100 participants. This work has added to the state level partnerships that the state fed has nurtured by initiating difficult conversations at the local level, and Bussel consults frequently with state federation staff on these issues. In prior years, Bussel also helped establish a relationship with Voz, the Day Laborers Center in Portland, and helped to neutralize anti-worker center resolutions circulating within Northwest Oregon Labor Council and the Portland area building trades council .

Similarly, LERC’s work in the community engagement arena has helped create space and provided a resource for the state fed’s work. LERC faculty have long taught coalition-building classes and conducted research and projects designed to bring unions together with community organizations (economic development programs, labor-

environmental work, etc.). LERC has worked with organizations like the Rural Organizing Project and Western States Center and has been able to help build bridges to the state fed and CLCs with those groups.

As the drive toward greater community engagement has become a priority for the state federation, LERC has been brought in to help facilitate planning and other activities at regional **Oregon Strong Voice** tables (OSV is the state fed's community engagement program). LERC faculty have participated actively in OSV statewide summits and have consulted with state fed staff on potential partners and strategy. LERC has been particularly involved in the Eugene area Strong Voice chapter, helping to facilitate its strategic planning and working directly in supporting its activities. As a precursor to the emergence of Oregon Strong Voice and more recent public sector union cooperation, Director Bob Bussel convened the early meetings of public sector union leaders from across the state to discuss responses to the attacks on their unions and members.

LERC has been "pushing the envelope" for years in areas like organizing, coalition-building and assisting immigrant workers. The new AFL-CIO direction, which promotes all these activities, has meant that the work now syncs up better, and is potentially more helpful, to the state federation.

More recently, LERC has been involved in education and research that sheds light on the disappearing middle class in Oregon, and programs to raise the floor for low-wage workers. In 2014-15, LERC faculty member Raahi Reddy spearheaded a report on the low-wage economy in Oregon, *The High Cost of Low Wages*. Reddy also organized a well-received 2015 conference on the low-wage economy that brought labor and community leaders together to discuss innovative approaches for raising labor standards and promoting equitable economic development. Fair Shot Oregon, a labor-community alliance, won impressive victories during the last state legislative session in this arena. The Oregon AFL-CIO was an integral player in the effort, which included other unions and key community allies. Fair Shot addressed not only issues of economic inequality but also racial, ethnic, and gender justice. The report on the low-wage economy won widespread attention and was cited by the AFL-CIO, other Fair Shot members, and key legislators as a

useful document supporting their legislative initiatives.

Most recently, LERC has been invited to spearhead the Pacific Northwest Labor Leadership Initiative, an offshoot of the National Labor Leadership Initiative (a program of the national AFL-CIO and Cornell University's Worker Institute. The PNW LLI will bring together top labor and community leaders from Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia to learn about organizational change and movement building. This program has received the endorsement and active assistance of the BC Federation of Labour and the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, as well as the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that LERC's relationship with the OR AFL-CIO has long been key to its securing political support in the legislature, and it has also helped the center enhance its credibility with other unions.

## Obstacles

One of the central challenges identified by LERC leadership vis-à-vis working with the state fed, labor councils/chapters, or large unions is leadership turnover. Though turnover is a basic characteristic of the democratic nature of unions and a healthy aspect of member voice within those organizations, for an outside organization like LERC it can generate relational instability that takes time to overcome. The need to clarify LERC's role vis-a-vis the state fed in light of leadership transitions periodically presents itself as a challenge. The need to evaluate and/or rethink established programs is part of this leadership turnover, as well as a reflection of changing needs of the labor movement. LERC has recognized and stepped up to this challenge, and LERC's ability to be flexible and responsive was identified by labor council leadership as one of the best qualities of that organization.

Another obstacle has been inertia among CLC's. Regional Leadership Schools (see above) have all but ceased. This inertia is related to declining union density, and the declining capacity of CLCs to do programmatic work, as well as the inability to attract new leaders committed to organizational change.

Two CLCs have ceased to meet during the past several years. Several have had difficulty getting quorums to conduct meetings. Most CLCs in Oregon lack the resources to launch any major initiatives and tend to focus on social activities such as Labor Day picnics and charity events. Most CLCs endorse candidates and provide them with financial support but lack the capacity to mobilize either during electoral campaigns or around local political issues. As a result although some CLCs have been interested in having LERC conduct educational programming for affiliate leaders and members in their region, they have had little appetite for organizational capacity-building efforts. With the 2015 restructuring of all but one of Oregon's CLCs into Chapters of the state federation, and with the addition of paid staff to assist the Chapters, it is possible that educational work with these organizations can be reinstituted. However, without such local coordination, it is difficult for statewide labor education programs like LERC to effectively reach outside the major metropolitan areas.

As in every state, there have occasionally been personality conflicts between LERC faculty and state fed/CLC leaders. But these are the exception; as a rule, relationships have deepened and improved over time.

## Lessons

The LERC experience has generated the following lessons for both faculty and labor leaders:

- Labor education programs need to engage in on-going work that is of use and builds relationships – work that creates a sense of tradition (like the Summer School).
- The politics of working with state feds and CLCs can be ticklish. Sometimes the risks of taking on a larger role have to be weighed against the benefits. It's important that state feds and CLCs be educated about these risks.
- Labor education programs cannot take relationships with state and local bodies for granted. The relationships may have to be rebuilt when new leaders come in, or when the inevitable misunderstandings and conflicts occur.
- If transformational relationships are the goal, there is a need for labor education programs to focus on organizational development and advanced leader training.
- The loss of union density and the decline of labor activism, especially at the CLC level, has created problems for labor education programs – questions of critical mass loom large these days.
- Labor education faculty need to balance their ideas for new programs and initiatives with a culture of respect for and listening to leaders of AFL-CIO bodies. It can be tricky to push the education envelope while also recognizing the need to let labor lead.



## West Virginia

The Institute for Labor Studies at West Virginia University was created by an act of the state legislature in 1959 through the crucial support of the newly merged AFL-CIO and, after being combined with a related department in the early 1990s, thereafter became the Institute for Labor Studies and Research (ILSR). Offering a range of non-credit courses for working adults, labor unions and labor-management programs, ILSR hosts and teaches summer schools for the UMWA and Glass, Molders, Pottery Workers (GMP) Internationals, the annual West Virginia AFL-CIO Leadership Academy, CWA District 2-13, and most recently the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association (WVSSPA). Faculty also provide instruction at the USWA's regional summer school in Virginia, as well as the AFT-West Virginia annual summer school. An important new program has been a collaborative partnership between ILSR, Building Trades unions, the state Community and Technical College System (CTCS), and contractors associations resulting in a construction management program for mid-career journeymen to further their careers through enhanced skill sets to plan, track, monitor, and control large industrial construction projects. Additionally, ILSR has held labor-management classes for municipal employees, and piloted labor history classes as part of a public sector initiative. Its faculty have coordinated and hosted the Southern School for Union Women as recently as 2012. From its inception, the program has enjoyed a good working relationship with the West Virginia labor movement and its attendant state labor bodies. There are currently seven faculty members and a research analyst within ILSR, with a cross-section of disciplinary backgrounds in law, labor history, economics, political science, health and safety, and labor education to fulfill organized labor's pedagogical and research needs. Heretofore, department funding within the WVU Extension Service, where ILSR has long resided, has been consistent and stable despite consistent cutbacks to the state's

higher education system.

Leadership continuity and stability in relationships have characterized and facilitated this relationship on both sides. As with predecessors who often served lengthy terms, program leader Tony Michael has led ILSR since 2007, while the state AFL-CIO, led by Kenneth Perdue since 2004, has had only four sitting presidents and eight secretary-treasurers since 1959. Innovative classroom instruction in core labor education and leadership development courses, as well as adaptive service-oriented functions, best capture ILSR's most durable relationships with the state federation and its central labor councils, with academic and applied research opportunities available to deepen its relationship with and assistance to West Virginia's labor movement.

### West Virginia Labor Movement and CLCs

There are thirteen central labor councils in the state, dispersed fairly proportionately geographically throughout the state. Exceptions to this are in the northeast corner of the Ohio Valley in northern West Virginia, where ten relatively small counties house five labor councils that, like most here, initially formed to represent building trades and industrial workers near coal, steel and manufacturing centers such as Wheeling, Weirton, Fairmont, and Morgantown. The other eight labor councils represent much larger and more rural areas that include the largest cities of Charleston, the state capitol and only city with over 50,000 residents, the former steel and shipping hub Huntington, and the petrochemical center Parkersburg along the Ohio River in southwestern West Virginia. Although many industrial businesses have left the state, these relatively small urban areas remain the largest cities in West Virginia which, according to the 2010 Census, is the third-most rural state in the US.

West Virginia's labor movement has experienced a significant numerical decline in recent years. Paralleling the rise and fall of its major, formerly heavily unionized industries of mining and steel, the state's union membership rates ranked among the nation's highest in the 1960s and 1970s, peaking in 1981 with 38.3%, highest in the U.S. However, deindustrialization and mining's shift to western states lowered West Virginia's unionization rates to 10.6%, 25<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. with private-sector union density dropping from 23.9% (109,692 members) in 1984 to 7.8% (42,293) in 2014. Automation in coal mining, crucial to the now-prevalent mountaintop removal (MTR) process, plunged mining employment in West Virginia from 59,700 in 1980 to 11,200 in 2004, while many other mines currently operate non-union. The results have devastated communities throughout the state, most notably in rural southern counties that for a century have heavily relied upon coal employment and extractive industries.

Conversely, West Virginia's public sector has grown dramatically in the last thirty years. Driven primarily by unionization within K-12 education, the public sector has gained 10,000 union members among the state's additional 35,000 public-sector workers since 1983. Its representatives now play prominent roles and hold offices in several labor councils, with one recently becoming president of the South Central Labor Council. Remarkably, public-sector ascendancy has transpired in a state that essentially lacks public-sector collective bargaining. Its meet-and-confer status has yielded contracts among municipal unions in Huntington, for example, but rarely elsewhere. This presents unique challenges for labor educators, who traditionally craft and deliver classes in contract bargaining and administration that, for the now-largest segments of the state's labor movement, historically have uncommon practical utility. Additionally, the recent and rapid turnover in the legislature in 2014 has resulted in the repeal of the state's prevailing wage ordinance, the passage of right-to-work, and the introduction of

a bill to enact charter schools.

## Innovative Work between Labor Bodies and ILSR

The annual AFL-CIO Leadership Academy, a week-long school that most CLC officers and delegates have regularly attended, continues to be the central educational forum in which ILSR faculty interact with CLC leaders. Held each June for over fifty consecutive years, and coordinated by ILSR faculty and state labor leaders, the school acts as a critical, interactive space for students to interrogate workplace and policy issues, inform mutual learning sessions and offerings on labor history, labor law, leadership development, and communication skills, and participate in policy forums. Faculty with backgrounds in public policy, labor history, and community campaigns have augmented the curriculum with courses on political systems, policy simulations, community engagement and mobilization. Although the number of Academy attendees since 2005 has been lower on average than in years past, it has remained sufficiently stable in numbers and financial support from the state federation, reflecting the ongoing value to it, its labor councils and affiliates. Over the years, ILSR faculty have taught many former and current labor leaders at all levels, in addition to rank-and-file members and activists, significantly impacting much of the state's labor movement. Most students derive from private-sector unions, the ranks of CLCs, and some building trades members, with only a handful of public-sector members attending largely because the AFT-WV summer school typically runs concurrently, thus siphoning off students from the state's largest union.

Top state labor leaders such as president Perdue have been outspoken advocates of ILSR's educational programs at labor and public events. They have also helped to sustain and replenish the program by serving on hiring committees for new faculty. Perdue, now-retired secretary treasurer Larry Matheny, and Matheny's

successor Joshua Sword have regularly consulted with ILSR faculty to adapt and expand the Leadership Academy's curriculum in crucial ways. One has been to complement core courses with classes in strategic organizing and coalition building drawing upon the experiences and expertise of faculty in these areas. Courses on the structure and function of the labor movement, as well as policy simulations, immerse experienced and emerging leaders in the details and impact of policies on unions and their membership. Another is the recent addition of programs intended not only to draw returning students, but to furnish them with additional knowledge bases in special topics classes in order to successfully engage diverse audiences, including state political leaders and community groups. The result for students has been an extensive, enriching curriculum and, for the state federation, cohorts of well-trained leaders engaged in their communities and locals alike.

ILSR faculty have worked closely with the state federation to plan and host the annual Union Women's Concerns Conference (UWCC). Typically held before or during the state's mid-winter part-time legislative session, the weekend session caters primarily but not exclusively to women labor leaders around the state. Stemming from the state AFL-CIO's 1979 creation of the Union Women's Concerns Committee, UWCC offers speaker forums, cultural heritage events, two-hour classes on historical and contemporary subjects, and panels on relevant policy proposals. In 2013, state legislator Meshea Poore opened the conference addressing the impending issues in the state legislature, while actor Karen Vuranch's one-woman "Coal Camp Memories" performance detailed the particular hardships women faced in mining communities. This combination of cultural forums and educational programs has afforded many of the highest-ranking women in the labor movement a distinct space in which to centralize workplace concerns for women, and gender-focused analyses of socioeconomic issues. In the process, UWCC has convened and connected labor, cultural, and community

groups that otherwise remained within separate orbits.

Financial constraints and challenges to replenishing the ranks of many affiliates within the CLCs often limit members' participation in sponsored classes to centralized functions such as the Leadership Academy and UWCC. This prompted labor bodies and ILSR to develop innovative approaches to delivering labor education classes, and helping to grow the councils' capacities. Starting in the late 1990s as part of a national effort, USWA partnered with CLCs and ILSR to fund labor education classes addressing contemporary issues, labor history, and leadership development drawing USWA members and other CLC members alike. During this period, USWA and CLCs also shared resources for educational sessions and political events and, continuing for several years, the AFL-CIO Summer School<sup>8</sup> featured a ten-hour course and other related subjects that were taught by ILSR faculty and the West Virginia Field Mobilization representative, and dedicated to CLC leadership. However, once USWA ceased funding this innovative collaboration, most classes ILSR held with CLCs waned by the late 2000s.

Consequently, ILSR faculty and the state federation have strategically reconsidered ways to collaborate with the labor studies program while augmenting the capacities of labor bodies. These initiatives include ILSR's helping to coordinate the state federation's annual Central Labor Council Conference, a two-day session at which, on occasion, ILSR faculty have taught or led sessions on selected topics of importance such as right-to-work legislation and other pertinent issues. Faculty have played important facilitation roles in strategic planning sessions for both CLCs and the state's top labor leaders, including a high-level convening of thirty leaders in February 2013 to address and respond

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<sup>8</sup> The Leadership Academy succeeded this in name and with some changes to curriculum but, in structure and purpose, is essentially the same ongoing educational program.

to their most pressing challenges. ILSR faculty have had success leading sessions with CLC leaders about maximizing outreach to and strengthening ties with affiliates by utilizing web-based outreach including social media, resulting in most councils' creating and maintaining Facebook and Twitter accounts to apprise their audiences of relevant issues. Overall, the results have been mixed, with both sides striving for ways to grow their respective capacities in order to deepen their long-standing partnerships.

### South Central Labor Council Case Study

ILSR has enjoyed a good, often close working relationship with some of the state's thirteen central labor councils. Yet perhaps the clearest example of the benefits of collaboration between ILSR and the state federation rests with ILSR's work with the South Central Labor Council (SCLC). Encompassing six counties south of the state capitol in Charleston, and nestled within the heart of the region's coal fields, the SCLC occupies an important geographic and industrial position in West Virginia. Accordingly, it has historically been an active council well attuned to developments in state politics. While most ILSR faculty are located on WVU's Morgantown campus near the Pennsylvania border, its one off-site faculty member, Robert Massey, is stationed 170 miles south in Beckley, within South Central's jurisdiction. When it hired Massey, ILSR made the strategic decision to locate him downstate in order to work more closely with its CLCs and West Virginia's diffuse labor movement, many of whose members still reside in its southern half. This has fostered a good working relationship between South Central and Massey, a former UMW representative who also serves as a union delegate to this CLC. His connections with officers and delegates for over a decade has built a considerable cache of trust and respect with South Central, resulting in a diverse body of programs he and ILSR have delivered.

Massey has led leadership training sessions for new CLC officers on leadership, effective meeting management and parliamentary procedure. Moreover, Massey has deepened the relationship with South Central by illustrating ILSR's adaptive capacity through frequent labor history sessions on subjects such as the West Virginia Mine Wars of 1912-1922, and sessions covering labor policies such as the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), FMLA, Medicare, economic issues such as financial crisis, Social Security and national debt, local economic development, and jobs skills classes such as resume writing for unemployed workers especially miners.

ILSR faculty have partnered with state and local CLC officers on various initiatives, with Massey's broad-based work central to their course downstate. Among these, one successful endeavor has been a book drive to incorporate labor issues and labor history into elementary schools. South Central Labor Council officers, including current president Debbie Elmore led fund-raising and procurement efforts for the children's book *Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type* to children in southern West Virginia. They each volunteered time to read the book to first-graders, distribute to children and school libraries hundreds of copies identifying the labor council's sponsorship, organize and participate in school field trips to see plays based on the book. As part of the WV Labor History Week Coalition that ILSR faculty helped to form and lead, Elmore and South Central officers worked with the state federation to purchase and distribute several thousand additional copies for children, teachers, and labor council delegates throughout the state. Influenced by classes that Massey and other ILSR faculty taught, Elmore—a frequent participant in local sessions and the Leadership Academy—led a successful public-history drive in Welch to place a plaque on the McDowell County courthouse steps, where Matewan sheriff Sid Hatfield was murder by Baldwin-Felts agents on August 1, 1921.



## Iowa

Iowa labor leaders successfully urged Iowa's legislature to designate funding for a university-based Labor Center in 1950 as part of what was then called the Bureau of Labor and Management within the University of Iowa's College of Commerce. Since its founding, the Labor Center has maintained a close relationship with the Iowa Federation of Labor. Initial short courses offered on campus starting in the 1950s were convened in partnership with the IFL, and often included IFL and other union education staff as instructors alongside university faculty members. In 1979, Labor Center educator Mark Smith left the Center when he was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Iowa Federation of Labor. He later served as IFL President from 1997-2007. Smith's close ties to the Center drew an even closer relationship between the IFL and the Labor Center during his nearly three decades as an IFL officer.

Today, the IFL's long-established relationship with the Labor Center is reflected in a range of formal institutional ties: for example, the IFL typically co-sponsors all Labor Center open-enrollment programs and publicizes these programs to affiliates, the IFL president is traditionally included as an ex officio member on Labor Center search committees, since the 1960s the IFL has provided funding for a Labor Center graduate assistant each year, Labor Center staff have since the 1970s directed the IFL-founded Iowa Labor History Oral Project in collaboration with the IFL, and Labor Center staff are routinely invited to attend all IFL-sponsored events. The Labor Center maintains a Labor Advisory Committee of labor leaders from around Iowa and the Midwest, which traditionally includes officers of the IFL and several CLCs.

Likewise, long-standing relationships with the IFL and CLCs have been essential to Labor Center's survival and expansion. IFL and CLC leaders have been strong advocates for the Center through organizational transitions within the university (first from the College of Business into the Division of Continuing Education, and more recently to the College of Law), proposals to add new staff in earlier decades, and periodic threats to existing Center funding or staffing levels.

Labor Center educators and IFL officers have

consciously prioritized maintaining a strong working relationship for over 60 years, through many changes in both Labor Center staff and IFL leadership. As current IFL President Ken Sagar describes it,

We [the IFL and the Labor Center] have a good relationship, we've been engaged with them in a variety of different ways . . . It has been this way for quite some time. We believe strongly in education. . . . All along the way, they've contextualized the labor movement, its role in history, its foundations and changes. They've put the labor movement into a big picture for members.

## Iowa Labor Movement and CLCs

Union members in Iowa work in a variety of industries including manufacturing (particularly of farm implements and related parts, electronic equipment, steel and aluminum products), meat and grain processing, building and construction trades, and the public sector. Along with Nebraska and Alabama, Iowa is one of only three historically "right-to-work" states where union density had remained above ten percent since the 1940s until 2015, when density dropped to 9.6% per cent (just under the national average of 11.1%). Iowa union membership has historically been concentrated in industries and construction trades clustered in and around the state's urban centers, most of which are located in the more populous and less rural eastern half of the state. Passage of the Iowa Public Employment Relations Act in 1974 strengthened the bargaining relationships existing public sector unions had attempted to establish with employers, and spurred waves of new organizing among state, county, municipal, and school district employees. Public sector workers now account for over 45% of all Iowa union members, and because of the nature of their membership, public sector unions are more likely to have membership dispersed throughout the state. Despite job losses in manufacturing,



industrial unions remain strong in Iowa, and continue to be major participants in Labor Center education programs, both on- and off-campus.

Iowa is a relatively small state of approximately three million residents. Ninety-two percent of Iowa residents identify as white, while 5.6% identify as Latino, and 3.4% as black, though employment recruitment has created much higher concentrations of Latino residents in many towns, and the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Iowa's largest urban centers has rapidly increased in recent years. This diversity is increasingly reflected in the membership of Iowa unions representing workers in industries like meatpacking, food processing, tire production, and some other industries.

Iowa currently has fourteen central labor councils. CLCs exist in the eight largest cities in the state (Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Sioux City, Iowa City, Waterloo, Council Bluffs and Dubuque) as well as smaller industrial centers. Most are volunteer-run CLCs, though Cedar Rapids and Des Moines support full-time staff. In recent years, the IFL has funded two full-time political staff as part of its "Working Iowa Neighbors" program, focused on local candidate recruitment and labor engagement in local and state elections, and these staff work closely with CLCs where they are assigned.

## Examples of Work between Labor Bodies and the Labor Center

For many years, the IFL has supported CLC education programming both financially (budgeting funding to cover Labor Center instructional fees for up to four Labor Center classes per CLC per year) and programmatically (promoting labor education to CLCs and consulting with the Labor Center on course topics and content). Labor Center relationships to particular CLCs have fluctuated over time depending on changes in CLC leadership and

priorities. Beyond standard educational programs, in recent years, the Labor Center has assisted CLCs in Lee County, Cedar Rapids, and Iowa City with developing strategic support for affiliates engaged in strike/lockout situations or contract campaigns, assisted the Quad City Federation of Labor with efforts to build new community coalition structures and deepen capacity of affiliates to mobilize members, and used a series of education and strategic planning events to help the Des Moines-Henry County CLC reestablish itself following a leadership transition.

Labor Center staff have facilitated strategic planning sessions for both the IFL and CLCs. Recent examples include an IFL executive board strategic planning session in 2015, a multi-part IFL strategic planning series convened in 2011 aimed at building trust and generating consensus among all affiliated and non-affiliated Iowa unions representing public sector workers for a joint communications and advocacy plan, and strategic planning for a small CLC undergoing leadership transition in 2013.

Most recently, the Labor Center has partnered with the IFL to initiate a series of discussions on organizing. These now quarterly "Organizers' Roundtable" sessions have grown from regular attendance of 20 to over 40 participants, and are sparking new interest in strategic approaches to new organizing and the need to build greater capacity for organizing within Iowa unions.

Some CLCs have used labor education as a way to attract affiliates to the CLC hall, highlight the work of the CLC and how the affiliates benefit from that work, and to provide an important service to the affiliates. For example, as part of efforts to reestablish itself, the Des Moines/Henry County CLC sponsored a steward school attracting 57 participants from 10 different affiliates. This was an important opportunity for labor activists in the area, many of whom had never met each other during previous decades of CLC inactivity, to share experience and strategies for countering employer tactics to diminish workers voices at their workplaces.

The Quad City Federation of Labor launched its now growing community coalition through a two-part planning series involving approximately 50

representatives of CLC affiliates, faith, and community organizations facilitated by Labor Center Director Jennifer Sherer. The planning sessions provided context for the importance of coalition work, reviewed case studies of effective labor-community transformations of regional power, and facilitated frank discussions of doubts and challenges anticipated by some coalition partners.

From 2011-2013, other Iowa CLCs sponsored worker academies, which consisted of four to six two-hour evening programs open to area workers (regardless of union membership). Typical workshops in the series included such topics as Common Sense Economics, Labor History, One-on-One Communication, and workshops on current issues facing the local labor movement.

## Iowa City Federation of Labor Case Study

Over the past several years, the Labor Center has worked especially closely with the Iowa City Federation of Labor (ICFL) as a partner in the launch of Iowa's first workers' center. The process of building coalitions necessary to found the Center has initiated a broader process of transformation within the local labor movement and the CLC.

Starting six years ago, after many years of conducting labor education on immigration issues, the Labor Center began to convene gatherings of eastern Iowa labor, faith, immigrant rights, and community leaders who had previously not worked together. Relationships built in these settings established a broad base of support for envisioning the formation of a new workers' center. In this context, starting in 2011-2012 the Labor Center devoted staff and graduate assistant time to incubating a new workers' center in partnership with ICFL Vice President Jesse Case. Labor Center roles during this incubation phase included coordination of community surveys within local immigrant communities, grant writing and labor fundraising to build capacity, and coordination of a series of community discussions with labor and faith allies on issues ranging from wage theft to immigration reform, and the role of workers centers in supporting organizing among low-wage and immigrant workers.

Following a year of such organizing and community education, the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern

Iowa was founded as an independent nonprofit in October, 2012. The CLC opened a new shared meeting/office space with the workers' center, and CWJ has since become an affiliate of the CLC and the IFL via the AFL-CIO's Worker Center Partnership program. Labor Center staff members continue to play roles in the worker center's development, providing popular education, guidance on nonprofit development, connections to expertise of faculty and students in other university departments, and grant-writing support (Labor Center labor educator Robin Clark-Bennett serves on CWJ's board of directors and other staff members serve on CWJ committees and play a range of volunteer roles).

Research and education focused on wage theft was also a key component of enlisting statewide support for the worker center's launch. Labor Center staff co-authored "Wage Theft in Iowa" with Iowa Policy Project researchers in 2012, and conducted numerous education sessions based on the report's findings with the IFL and individual unions around the state. Reform of state wage payment enforcement has since become a state labor movement legislative priority, and the Labor Center more recently contributed to a follow-up survey of 300 low-wage workers which became the basis of a second Iowa Policy Project report on wage theft published in 2015.

Over this same period of time, Labor Center staff worked closely with CLC Vice President and later President Case on transforming the CLC into a more powerful force in the community and a full partner in all workers' center campaigns. For example, Labor Center Director Jennifer Sherer is a delegate to the CLC and served on its strategic planning committee. Implementation of the strategic plan has included some significant developments such as the launch of a new "Candidate Academy" for local candidates and elected officials (which has included Labor Center presentations on Common Sense Economics or introductions to the labor movement), an active re-affiliation and delegate recruitment program, increased internal and external communications, successful interventions in support of a CWA affiliate facing imposition of a management final offer after contract expiration, and coordination of local political programs by full-time lost-time staff for the first time in years. The Labor Center has also worked in partnership with the CLC to use education to promote union leadership

development for underrepresented constituency groups, including a 2014 regional Women's Conference and a 2016 Black Workers' Conference.

Iowa City Federation of Labor's main obstacles to transformation were its small size, lack of staff, and uneven engagement of affiliates. These obstacles have not been fully overcome, but under new leadership and in close partnership with the new workers' center, the CLC has taken on new energy, strengthened relationships with many state and local elected officials, attracted new affiliates and delegates, and begun to initiate its own issue campaigns. A successful year-long CWJ and CLC campaign to implement the first program in the Midwest to make government-issued photo ID to all county residents regardless of immigration status resulted in Johnson County adopting the first community ID in the Midwest in 2015. A similar CWJ and ICFL campaign resulted in Johnson County becoming the first county in Iowa to adopt its own minimum wage, which will increase to \$10.10 per hour by 2017. Based on Johnson County's success, other Iowa CLCs are considering launching their own campaigns.

Joint CWJ and CLC campaigns (e.g., wage theft, immigration reform, community ID, and minimum wage) are coming to be seen by coalition partners, media, and elected officials as a signal of the local labor movement's commitment to broad systemic change and relevance to all workers. Joint work on these campaigns has strengthened CWJ's influence with employers and elected officials, while engaging CLC affiliate members in new forms of activism. For example, a 2013 CWJ wage theft case involving a cleaning subcontractor for Outback Steakhouse became a joint statewide campaign when CLCs in Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Sioux City, and the Quad Cities all mobilized members in a coordinated day of action targeting every Outback location in the state.

Buoyed by new levels of activity, Iowa City Federation of Labor delegates unanimously approved increased per capita payments doubling the CLC's budget in 2015. Support for developing capacity of the new workers' center (grant funding, staff, intern programs, and member leadership development) has in turn increased the CLC's capacity whenever the two organizations work jointly on campaigns. A string of local electoral

victories has accompanied the CLCs increased activity in the past year, including election of a majority of endorsed school board and county supervisor candidates, and an unprecedented sweep of Iowa City city council elections by four endorsed candidates who unseated a business and developer-backed slate to shift the council majority into progressive hands for the first time in forty years.

## Lessons from the Iowa Labor Center's Experience

University-based labor education programs can help build bridges to coalition partners that may be difficult for labor leaders to build on their own. Once these bridges are built, labor educators can support the new relationships, but also must step aside so that leaders of organizations can establish their own working relationships directly with each other.

Labor education programs can help labor leaders leverage capacity, resources, and expertise of university and community partners in support of labor movement initiatives. This is a function that is often underutilized if CLCs see labor education programs only as a place to do one-time education and/or don't yet see education as part of their own strategic plans or in relation to their day-to-day struggles. As ICFL President Case put it in his interview:

We are a better organization when we can draw upon the knowledge of academics. That is a tough sell for some people because a lot of working people know the fight on the ground, and their experiences come from ground wars and not classrooms. What they've come to find is that the Labor Center brings the ability, through education, to make those ground wars more effective through the curriculum they teach.

Relationships necessary to support this type of partnership develop over time because of mutual respect between labor leaders who recognize the value of labor education and labor educators who honor and respect the challenges labor leaders face. Regular, ongoing dialogue is necessary to discern how labor education can contribute to sowing seeds of transformation within organizations that exist at wildly different stages of development. And such

relationships, built over time, cannot be taken for granted.

As IFL President Sagar notes, “I have learned that [the relationship between the IFL and university-based educators] is not the norm across the country, and I don’t understand why that is. Clearly, the labor movement is in a tough fight, and not having educational resources available is inordinately insane.”

At the same time, the Iowa City case study suggests that transformation becomes possible most often at moments of leadership transition. Labor educators can introduce and promote transformative ideas, but these will take root only if key leaders adopt and champion them, and if resources are available to support sustained change over time.

## Massachusetts

In contrast to the norm of one to two labor centers in most other states, Massachusetts has four active labor centers. Three of the centers responded to the survey for this study: the Arnold M. Dubin Labor Education Center at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth (LEC), the Labor Resource Center at the University of Massachusetts, Boston (LRC), and the Labor Education Program at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell (LEP).

Over the years, each of the University of Massachusetts' labor centers has operated distinct credit, union education, and research programs. For most of their existence, the centers also had distinct extension programs. However, in 1995, an activist president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO who was also a trustee of the university system succeeded in securing funding from the university for an integrated statewide labor extension program.

Since then, extension coordinators at each campus have worked individually in their own regions as well as collaboratively on statewide programming. The state federation also brings in the different extension coordinators at different times to lead or demonstrate labor education programs at the annual state federation education conferences and to do facilitation. Although now on hold, recently, the four programs began designing a leadership academy for local leaders of the state federation. In the past, all four centers have participated in the now inactive state federation education committee.

The accomplishments of all three centers in this study are closely linked to the active role that faculty and staff play in their local labor movements. Faculty members in all three programs have served as representatives or officers on central bodies, and a number were local officers or organizers before becoming educators. Faculty at each center also have

strong connections with community partners, including sitting on boards. And all three centers are located in areas where traditional and non-traditional labor organizations are exploring and expanding their relationships.

Nevertheless, each center represents its own highly honed approach to the mix of labor education with labor and community activism. On the one hand, these approaches are specifically crafted to the needs of the areas served. On the other hand, the success of each approach is highly dependent on the specific backgrounds of faculty and the ability each center has had to pursue consistent but flexible agendas over an extended period of time that make use of those backgrounds.

- In an environment where both union density and manufacturing have plummeted, labor educators at UMass Dartmouth have used their skills as organizers and their membership in state and local labor communities to make a successful transition from a program primarily focused on union education to an expanded economic and workers rights agenda.
- At UMass Lowell, educational work with the CLC pivots around the vision of a progressive president who has successfully revived a moribund CLC, instilled structures for participatory decision-making and ongoing educational activities, and built a joint labor-community organization for economic justice..
- The labor education program at UMass Boston built on previous work by its director in construction and joined with emerging leadership in local and regional union bodies and community stakeholders to conduct an extended participatory research project aimed at increasing women's employment in



the trades, deepening the diversity of leadership in the labor movement and yielding new benefits from long-term alliances.

## University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

Union density in Massachusetts remains higher than the country as a whole. But, like the rest of the country, Massachusetts has experienced a large loss of manufacturing jobs.

In Southeastern Massachusetts, home to the UMass Dartmouth labor center, the needle trades, fishing, and, for a time, defense production formed the backbone of the economy. The needle trades played the largest role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, until work moved to the south in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, one high-end men's manufacturer remains, and fish processing has narrowed to the scallops and remains non-union. Most of the rest of jobs in the region are in health care, other service industries, and government, including the University of Massachusetts. The United Food and Commercial Workers is the largest union in the area

The Labor Education Center of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth was founded in 1975 by the New Bedford and Fall River Labor Councils, affiliated unions, the university administration, and the Massachusetts Department of Labor. In 1998, The New Bedford and Fall River Labor Councils merged in to become the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council.

Initially, the LEC's main function was conducting training classes and annual conferences. Over the past several decades, the massive deindustrialization suffered in Southeastern Massachusetts has led to high unemployment, a poor education system, and plummeting union density. Faced with a potential loss of relevance, the LEC made a

concerted effort to become a vehicle for broader social change by helping to create an expanded economic development and workers' rights agenda in both New Bedford and Fall River.

To accomplish this objective, LEC faculty first drew on their activist backgrounds and relationships with local and statewide groups to increase the amount of direct work they did with community organizations. Simultaneously, the LEC linked as much of its community work as it could to CLC structures and committees. For example, in the nineteen nineties, the LEC's director became the AFT's representative to the local CLC; he later served on the CLC's executive board. The director's role on the executive board in particular facilitated a deeper involvement and influence on the direction of the CLC. The LEC director was also the chair of the CLC's education committee and a regional representative on the Green Justice Coalition. The LEC's relationship with the CLC continued to deepen over the years as the LEC initiated various programs that involved labor-community coalitions and relationship building. The LEC's role in these initiatives was in turn facilitated by the extension coordinator's position on the boards of Massachusetts Jobs With Justice, the Massachusetts Coalition on Occupational Safety and Health, and the Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD).

In addition to raising the need for a broad-based economic agenda, the key role of LEC has been in helping to build and cement relationships between the local labor movement, social change organizations, community activists, and the growing immigrant community in southeastern Massachusetts.

- In 1999, the LEC led the formation of People First, a CLC-based community-labor committee focused on worker-centered economic development. The committee's first project involved challenging corporate tax breaks that had been extended under a Tax Increment Financing scheme. With the help of the LEC, People First held three

conferences that included the participation of elected officials. The LEC also collaborated with labor researchers from UMass Amherst to analyze the business climate of the area and to start to identify companies that had failed to meet goals for job creation on which their subsidies had been conditioned.

- Based on the work of People First, the Amalgamated Transit Union approached the LEC about tackling the problem of access to public transportation in the area. In 2010, working closely with the CLC, the LEC provided seed money and training for a student organizer to ride city buses and recruit membership for a new organization, Bus Riders United. Bus Riders United functions in collaboration with the ATU and the local Community Economic Development Center (CEDC), a broad-based community organization that has been the primary community partner to People First. Successful campaigns have included a state-level campaign for increased transit funding, local campaigns for increased bus service, and a campaign for a bus rider to be an official, though as yet non-voting, member of the regional transit authority. Though work with the CLC and ATU, this became one of the statewide legislative priorities for the state federation. This transit organizing is now regarded by ATU as a national model.
- Over a 15-year span, the LEC has participated in support work for a community of Guatemalan immigrants working in what had previously been a heavily unionized local industry, seafood processing. As with the transit organizing, LEC's immigrant work has been facilitated by the strong relationship it has built with the Community Economic Development Center (CEDC). Organizing among Guatemalan immigrants initially began around issues of immediate survival and cultural preservation. Together, the LEC and the CEDC organized community groups to intervene in one of a number of health and safety dispute for the immigrants; the LEC then advocated for joint training of the workers by a state COSH group and the LEC director. This training led to the creation of a cadre of leaders; this leadership development in turn led to a shift in emphasis to organizing for workplace justice and to a list of demands for workplace standards that -- 15 years later -- a local workers center is now taking up. The LEC also participated in organizing around the Bianco leather factory immigration raid of 2008. While the LEC's immigrant organizing was not always fully accepted or supported within the labor community, it eventually led to LEC facilitated discussions on immigration within the CLC, an education program for the CLC on AFL-CIO immigration policy, and a film series on undocumented workers.
- Recent projects have included a legislative campaign to strengthen the rights of temp workers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants; a "Fair Wage" project that began as a grant for Massachusetts Jobs with Justice to bring abuse of immigrant workers to the attention of the Massachusetts Attorney General's office; and work on a code of conduct for use in a campaign organizing fish processing workers.
- Most recently, the labor extension coordinator of the LEC led a series of strategic planning sessions mandated by the national and state AFL-CIOs. The sessions led to plans for a series of workers' rights trainings in the broader community as well as facilitated discussions around work and community issues. This has become a funded mandate as a result of the CLC winning a Solidarity Grant, and the CLC has just hired a former student of the LEC, now enrolled in the UMass Amherst Master's in Labor Studies program, as the organizer.

Overall, the work of the LEC has involved nearly twenty years of relationship building with community organizations. LEC faculty were able to play key leadership roles in these efforts because of their long-time membership and participation in community organizations and the state and local labor movements. These relationships have not only supported the creation of an expanded workers rights and economic development agenda, but also resulted in a gradual realignment in priorities of the local labor movement and CLC with the more progressive agenda of the national AFL-CIO.

### University of Massachusetts at Lowell

Like the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council, the North Shore Labor Council faces a loss of manufacturing jobs and a changing workforce that unions can no longer expect to reach with traditional organizing strategies.

The NSLC encompasses Essex County on the northeastern shore of Massachusetts and a small part of neighboring Middlesex County. Within that area, Lynn, where the NSLC office is located, is the largest city. General Electric is the largest private employer in Lynn, and the IUE-CWA Local 201, which represents workers at GE in Lynn, has historically been the largest local. As head of that largest local, the president was recruited in 1991 to step in to revive what had essentially become a moribund central labor council.

An activist, the president has participated in the Battle of Seattle and the fight against the FTAA, as well as several human rights delegations to Columbia with Witness for Peace. He serves on the State Fed and Central Labor Advisory Committee of the AFL-CIO. He has been active in the past on the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Steering Committee, and he has written for journals such as New Labor Forum, Working USA, and Labor Notes.

In the president's view, the unions of the North Shore Labor Council had become sectorally focused to such a degree that no unified labor movement remained. He set a goal of building a CLC that represented the working class as a whole, a task that in his description ranged from reaching out to a growing immigrant population to helping the building trades in their traditional function of finding work for their members.

To accomplish the goal of building a CLC that represented the working class as a whole, the president also committed himself to rebuilding the CLC's capacity from the ground up by (1) implementing a participatory strategic planning process; (2) fostering collaborative decision-making; (3) organizing around economic issues; and (4) ensuring a central role for education in all aspects of the CLC's work.

These commitments were approached in three rough stages. At each stage, the director of the LEP was asked to, and did, play a critical role. Like the staff at both UMass Dartmouth and UMass Boston (see next case study), the director of the Labor Education Program at UMass Lowell (LEP) is not only a union member, but has played a leadership role as an officer of her central labor council. Like the staff at UMass Dartmouth, she also does a substantial amount of her work in the labor movement with CLC committees and committees of related organizations. The role she played therefore drew on both her expertise as an educator and on the relationships she had built with labor leaders and activists over the years.

**Strategic planning:** As the NSLC president has stated, "it's one thing to require a strategic planning process; it's another thing to have to do strategic planning without someone who knows what to do and can help you." In the case of the NSLC, the director of the LEP contributed needed expertise over the course of a decade by developing a multi-layered planning process that ensures broad-based participation, ongoing review of goals, and accountability.

Working with the organizer of the council, the LEP director facilitates discussions that begin each year with the executive board. The LEP director sees her key role in this process as supporting and mentoring the young women who have been hired as organizers for the CLC. The results of the discussions with the executive board are shared with council delegates for discussion and input. The results of these discussions serve in turn as final input back to the executive board, which formulates the final plan to be adopted by the full delegate body. The process usually takes two months. The implementation of the plan is reviewed periodically, ideally twice during the year. In the president's view, the process helps ensure that goals are not only thoroughly understood by the time they're adopted, but also that there is a significant commitment to carrying out the goals.

**Fostering collaborative decision making:** In addition to developing a strategic planning process, the LEP director has helped the NSLC incorporate small group discussions as well as short education sessions (at times with outside presenters) on matters such as charter schools, and immigration reform as periodic features of the regular monthly meetings. The practices have helped integrate education into the fabric of the CLC. They have also deepened the capacity and commitment to participatory processes and decision-making in the governance of the CLC.

**Ensuring a central role for education:** In addition to the role for the LEP director in strategic planning and supporting participatory processes within the CLC, the North Shore Labor Council provides the resources for an annual daylong education conference. This is a participatory effort as well, and planning is done by a committee in which the LEP director participates. Over the years, the conference has grown to encompass not only skills training and leadership development, but also political education aimed at helping people overcome divisions of race, nationality, and gender, as

well as sectoral divisions.

**Organizing around economic issues:** The LEP director has also been involved in education to support New Lynn, an organization the NSLC has fostered to organize around economic issues and build working class power in Lynn.

A steady loss of jobs at General Electric crystalized an understanding of the reality that a model of union organizing based around long-term, high paid, steady employment wouldn't be able to serve as the basis for a labor revival. On a personal level, the NSLC president was also haunted by the indelible image of a GE retiree using a food bank. In addition, since the 1970s the city of Lynn as a whole went through an extended economic downturn without a stable recovery at the end.

As a result, the NSLC president began to review strategies from other labor councils, such as the San Jose labor council, that had begun focusing more energy on local economic development. The NSLC re-examined its relationships with the labor and community organizations with which it had partnered to do electoral and other work over the years, partnerships that had regularly contacted up to 16,000 people for elections. The decision was made to refocus those relationships on creating a movement that could make a real difference in economic development for the working class areas of the city, as well as raise people's consciousness of the need for and possibility of collective economic power. The result was the founding of New Lynn in late 2010 by the NSLC and nine community and labor partners.

New Lynn's first effort was to challenge a plan by the city to revive its downtown waterfront that ignored the needs of the remainder of the city. In the process, New Lynn found that the median household income in the city was considerably below that of the state – and sinking, that Lynn had significantly higher levels of people living on ten thousand dollars a year or less, that almost one quarter of residents

25 years and older didn't have a high school education or a GED, and that this lack of education and skills in the workforce created a barrier to additional manufacturing or other jobs locating in Lynn.

These findings led to a successful campaign to open a local vocational and technical high school – Lynn Tech – to adults in the evenings. The campaign included public meetings around the city where people directly engaged their elected representatives on the issue, and distribution of research to potential allies. More recently the Coalition has received backing from the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Fund to find a private developer to build a 70 unit, mixed use project adjacent to the Waterfront. The developer has committed \$100,000 to the Lynn Tech night school.

Other activities by New Lynn have included community forums around revenue and public services, support work for contract negotiations at GE, and an investigation of worker owned cooperatives that included a trip by the NSLC president to the Mondragon, Spain. The coalition has also regularly sponsored educational films and speakers, such as Gold Fever about mining in Guatemala, and an appearance of author Jan Gonzales with the film Harvest of Empire. Political Education and Culture is one of the four areas of activity of the coalition.

According to the NSLC president and the LEP director, the biggest barrier to integrating education into the work of New Lynn is the high level of activity of the organization and competition at meetings for time. For this reason, both the LEP director and the NSLC president thus agree that education has been less successfully integrated into New Lynn than into the activities of the NSLC proper. Nevertheless, the LEP director has played a major role in helping to establish the coalition by supplying needed research, assisting in strategic planning, and doing mentoring, leadership development, and political education.-

Having its own research capacity was critical in enabling New Lynn to take on developers as it challenged the Lynn waterfront project. While the NSLC doesn't have the capacity that some larger CLCs have to support full-time researchers, the LEP director was able to provide the needed research by recruiting, mentoring, and supervising graduate students – many of whom had little to no labor background or progressive political perspective – to conduct it. Working in this way, the first report created for New Lynn was able to highlight both the low household income and low education levels of Lynn's workforce, and the problems these posed for broader-based economic development and the problems of attracting new industry. According the NSLC president, the report provided "a lot of the ammunition" that helped New Lynn achieve an initial level of recognition and a voice in the city planning process.-

For the past three years, the major work of the LEP director with New Lynn has been helping the leadership with strategic planning. Like the process she created for the NSLC, the process she has created in collaboration with the New Lynn organizer and leadership has been constructed to facilitate ongoing reviews of the implementation of plans. The LEP director's involvement in the strategic planning processes of both New Lynn and the NSLC also facilitates discussions of how to integrate the work of New Lynn and the NSLC as organizations, rather the two relating primarily through top leadership and key activists.

The LEP director has also played an important initial role in leadership development of the New Lynn steering committee members. Early conversations involved the role of education in New Lynn's work. For a period of time, the LEP director included 15-minute education sessions at each New Lynn meeting. According to the NSLC president, the LEP director also facilitated a series of important discussions on what is meant by power and how to build it. And she conducted sessions that helped New Lynn leadership concretely analyze the power structure of the city and school board during the



campaign to force the opening of the vocational high school to adults.

Finally, the LEP director has worked with organizers from the NSLC and New Lynn to integrate leadership from New Lynn into the planning process for the NSLC's annual education conference, as well as to support the inclusion of community-based issues that go beyond a traditional labor union focus. The annual educational conference now includes significant participation from the organizations that make up New Lynn, as well as individuals from the community that these groups bring with them.

The inclusion of the New Lynn coalition in the annual education conference has significantly extended the scope of the political education on which the president of the NSLC has put such emphasis. A recent example is a plenary that the LEP director co-led on economic instability and forces contributing to economic inequality. With a wide range of participants that included low wage and immigrant workers as well as public employees, the LEP director used small group discussions to have people respond to common narratives about the economy, such as immigrant bashing. The session was described as masterful by a New Lynn organizer, and helped create a common analysis that drew on the experience of participants. As the NSLC president stated, "You can't overcome the sectoral, racial, and gender divisions without some glue, and that glue is political education. It's part of what we have to do all the time. [The LEP director] is the key to that. She's the backbone of that. It's absolutely essential."

## University of Massachusetts at Boston

The Labor Resource Center (LRC) was co-created in the early 1980s by UMass Boston Professor James Green and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. The LRC was championed by the president of the state AFL-CIO for its two

decades. Over 140 local and regional labor and political leaders have attended the LRC's labor studies program and received degrees and certificates. These graduates became supporters of the center and its work; in turn, central labor councils and the state AFL-CIO greatly benefited from the increased activism of graduates.

The leadership of the labor movement has recently demonstrated the continued value it places on the LRC's degree programs by helping both to guarantee the program's existence and to expand its scope.

In contrast to the steady support from top labor leadership, inconsistent support from the University of Massachusetts has led to three closures of LRC's bachelors program in labor studies over the past eight years. During the latest closure, the LRC responded by strengthening its 18-credit certificate program in labor leadership. More recently, a review committee recommended that the BA in Labor Studies be reopened as an interdisciplinary degree in the College of Liberal Arts. With the help, among others, of a state senator who had graduated from the program and the president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, also a graduate, this change has now been finalized.

Just as the original degree program helped support the growth of a generation of labor leaders who were the first to face the onslaught of neoliberalism, the latest change will result in a student base that extends beyond the traditional population of working people on which unions based their membership for so long. The LRC views reaching out to young people who have little contact with or knowledge about the labor movement as a challenge as well as an opportunity to further expand labor's base.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The mission of the LRC—"to advance the interests of workers and their organizations through education and research"—has also been severely challenged by the university's refusal to fill a recent vacancy created by a retirement. Subsequently, the LRC had to limit its

In effect, the new degree program will be repeating its original innovative role in the development of labor leadership with a new generation in a new labor movement.

Most of the staff of the LRC comes directly out of the Massachusetts labor movement. The executive director of the LRC, who leads its academic and research programs, was a longtime local union activist and leader; in addition to current membership in her NEA local, she currently sits on the Greater Boston Labor Council's Executive Board and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO Executive Board as the representative of the local chapter of the constituency group Pride at Work. She also spent 12 years directing occupational health research on the Big Dig, a project that was done in collaboration with the building trades.<sup>10</sup> The LRC's administrative coordinator is also a longtime labor activist, having been a rank and file member in a human services and mental health local, a former union staffer in a manufacturing local, and a leader in Jobs With Justice. The labor extension coordinator was a field representative for a statewide SEIU Local, and is currently an officer of one of the locals representing UMass employees as well as a delegate to the Greater Boston Labor Council.

The LRC thus sees itself as an integral part of a growing progressive labor movement in Boston rather than as an adjunct or add-on to it, and it sees the sustained support of top labor leadership in the city and state as critical for the long-term work that LRC engages in at the base.

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research activities to the Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues (PGTI). However, LRC has recently begun to partner with the Brazilian Immigrant Center, which led the fight for the recent passage of the Massachusetts Domestic Worker Bill of Rights. The Director of the BIC has joined the LRC as a Resident Scholar and the LRC and BIC are jointly sponsoring a labor-community forum on domestic workers and the release of a new report, "Invisible No More: Domestic workers organizing in Massachusetts and Beyond." (Oct 2014).

Among its other priorities, LRC staff have worked to help the GBLC establish a Futures Committee of young workers, championed the adoption of structures to promote the affiliation of constituent groups such as Pride at Work, and supported the incorporation of labor-community alliances and coalitions through the GBLC partnership with, Community and Labor United. The close relationships that have been built over the years between the leadership of the GBLC, the staff of the LRC, and the leadership of other labor and community organization has enabled the GBLC – which must commit the vast majority of its own resources to political activity – to participate in and benefit from a much broader agenda and range of activities than would otherwise have been possible with its own resources.

In addition to its relationship with the GBLC, the LRC has direct working relationships with the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and the Metro Boston Building Trades Council. In addition to its degree program and labor extension program. The center is working with the state federation and others to launch Common Sense Economics in Massachusetts, and it staffs a Future of Work (FOW) Initiative that conducts and disseminates research on economic and workforce development.

The LRC's most innovative Future of Work project is the Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues (PGTI). The PGTI is exemplary of the synergy between the organic activism of the LRC within the Boston area labor movement and the support provided by a labor leadership oriented to expanding unions' existing membership base.

PGTI was started in 2008 by the LRC at the request of the Metro Building Trades Council and the New England Regional Council of Carpenters. The Big Dig, which should have propelled women and minorities into the construction industry, had instead had a weak effect on minority employment and had been a total failure in increasing the number of women in the trades. There was also 50 percent

unemployment in the union construction sector. The objective of PGTI was thus opening up good-paying union construction jobs to women, particularly women of color.

The background of the LRC's executive director in researching health and safety on the Big Dig<sup>11</sup>, as well as her history of health and safety activism in previous work as a school bus driver, gave her a critical role in convening the range of actors required to make the project effective. Together with her university position this background also aided her in structuring participatory research to support PGTI.

PGTI's initial activity was the "think and act tank," which provided space for tradeswomen to reflect on their experiences and their industry. The "think and act tank" has met bi-weekly since 2008 and has developed into a critical forum for dialog between the trades and community organizations on issue of race, culture, and expanding opportunities in the trades outside of traditional recruitment networks. Participants of the "think and act tank" now include around 150 tradeswomen, elected officials, union officials, contractors, and representatives of city, state, and federal agencies.

To date, PGTI's participatory research products include (1) "UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Building Equality for Women in the Construction Trades," a literature review of the role of gender discrimination in the exclusion of women from careers in construction; (2) "Finishing the Job: A Best Practices Manual for a Diverse Workforce in the Construction Industry," a hands-on guide that includes checklists for construction owners, developers, managers, contractors, subcontractors, building trade unions, and community-based organizations; and (3) the establishment of a

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<sup>11</sup> The Big Dig was the rerouting of the Central Artery, the main highway through the center of Boston, into a tunnel through the city. Construction took place between 1982 and 2002 under a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) negotiated by the Boston Building Trades Council

resource library on tradeswomen. In March of 2014, PGTI conducted a community forum, "Game Changers: New strategies for crushing the barriers for women entering the construction trades," that brought 130 leading stakeholders together on the UMass Boston campus to discuss best practices for recruiting and retaining women in the building trades.

The six years of PGTI's existence have resulted in what PGTI characterizes as modest but real advances in women's access to good-paying jobs in Boston area construction. Women's hours on projects subject to the Boston Residents Jobs Policy (BRJP)<sup>12</sup> have increased, while a UMass Boston Project Labor Agreement (PLA) is the first in the history of the BRJP to reach all targets for women, minorities, and residents. In addition, Martin Walsh, a Laborer who became head of the Boston Building Trades Council in 2010 and launched numerous additional initiatives to promote diversity in the trades, was elected mayor of Boston in 2014, largely on his reputation and commitment to diversity and a strong local economy for all working people. PGTI's Best Practices Manual, "Finishing the Job," is currently being used as a guide to diversity on approximately \$14 billion of construction in Massachusetts.

Nevertheless, during the life of PGTI, minorities in the trades have made greater progress than women. PGTI continues to examine ways to increase women's participation, and is reflecting on reasons for the apparent efficacy of focusing on women in the trades as a way of raising the hours worked by minorities.

The LRC and its work with PGTI also reinforce the work of Community and Labor United

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<sup>12</sup> The Boston Residents Jobs Policy was established by executive order in 1985 and sets the following employment goals by trade for projects funded or administered by the city, and for private projects for which a Development Impact Project Plan is required: fifty percent of hours worked for city residents, twenty five percent for minorities, and ten percent for women.

(CLU), an organization of local community and labor organizations that is chaired by the Vice President of the Greater Boston Labor Council.

CLU's goals include conducting campaigns that promote good quality jobs, secure healthcare, affordable housing, and other community interests for low- and middle-income families in the greater Boston area. While the GBLC focuses the majority of its resources on political campaigns and initiatives, because of its capacity for activism in the community, CLU is able to extend the work – including enforcing legislative victories – through community alliances and campaigns such as exposing wage theft and advocating for equitable and quality public transportation.

Both PGTI and CLU thus extend the ability of the GBLC and its affiliates to participate in or support community campaigns of longer duration and greater depth than would otherwise be possible. In this set of partnerships, PGTI primarily represents the synergy between LRC research and leadership of the Boston Building Trades, while CLU represents a new stage of alliance building between various parts of the Boston labor movement, and an emerging division of labor between the various parts that builds the whole.

At the same time, the networks and long-standing relationships among Boston unions and activists that have nourished PGTI and CLU are supporting the evolution of a deeper relationship between the two organizations. CLU is a local affiliate of the Partnership for Working Families, which in turn has a national Construction Careers campaign. The Construction Careers campaign is aimed at developing new recruitment and training standards, channeling billions of public dollars into high road employment, and supporting the growth of green infrastructure and construction careers. The two organizations have thus discussed allying with each other around the task of creating more opportunities and higher demand for women and minorities in the trades. In turn, LRC and PGTI have begun discussing ways to link CLU's community contacts to opportunities for programs and positions that PGTI has spent the last several years creating. Finally, PGTI's work in advancing good paying, high quality constructions jobs for women and minorities also contributes to a CLU initiative around poverty in female-headed households.