

The UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment and Labor Center: Contributing to UCLA's mission

UCLA's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) and its counterpart at Berkeley were founded in 1946 to promote research, teaching, and outreach on labor and employment issues—a mission IRLE continues to pursue today. The UCLA IRLE includes the core academic unit, the Labor Center, the Human Resource Round Table, and the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (also affiliated with the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health). IRLE and its units receive funds from UC, and also raise funds from external sources (\$3.3 million over the fiscal years spanning 2005-08). This document summarizes some of the ways that IRLE helps UCLA meet its goals of academic excellence, civic engagement, and diversity. Please visit our website, <http://irle.ucla.edu>, for more information.

Academic Excellence

- *Governance*
 - IRLE's Faculty Advisory Committee includes professors from the Anderson School, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, History, Law, Medicine, Political Science, Public Health, Public Policy, Sociology, and Urban Planning.
 - Advisory Committee members include recent recipients of a variety of academic fellowships, including Russell Sage (4), Guggenheim (3), Fulbright (2), Abe-Social Science Research Council (1), and Princeton's Law & Public Affairs and Shelby Collum Davis Center Fellowships.
- *Teaching and education*
 - Labor and Workplace Studies (LWS) Minor. IRLE houses this interdisciplinary undergraduate minor, which currently enrolls about 70 students. Courses are joint- or cross-listed with 12 other departments, providing electives to a wide range of other students. Many LWS courses involve field research, which can serve as a building block for undergrad capstones.
 - IRLE postdocs (2 annually) each teach an undergraduate course in their home discipline (in 08-09, Anthropology and Political Science).
 - Beyond credit courses, IRLE hosts a lively interdisciplinary Research Colloquium (18 seminars during 08-09) and has just organized a graduate study group on labor and work (20+ students from half a dozen departments taking part). The Labor Center hosts about 20 topical talks and panel discussions annually for the general public.
- *Research*
 - IRLE staff and research affiliates carry out and facilitate research directly. Former director Ruth Milkman just co-edited *Low Wage Worker Organizing and Advocacy: The L.A. Model* (Cornell, 2010), a collection of UCLA faculty and grad student research; current director Chris Tilly co-edited *The Gloves-Off Economy: Labor Standards at the Bottom of America's Labor Market* (Cornell, 2008), which includes contributions by UCLA Chicano Studies, Law, and Sociology faculty. IRLE publishes a working paper series and has a group of Research Affiliates (mostly UCLA-based, but reaching beyond) who form the core of a research community on labor and employment issues.
 - IRLE also funds other UCLA research. In 08-09, IRLE distributed \$223,000 in small faculty research grants in a wide variety of disciplines, mostly to support GSRs, and \$48,000 in direct graduate student grants. In many cases, IRLE has funded pilot studies that have leveraged larger grants.
 - Finally, IRLE organizes research conferences. IRLE co-sponsored "The American Right and U.S. Labor: Politics, Ideology, and Imagination" with UC Santa Barbara, and will be co-sponsoring

with UC Irvine a summer conference of graduate student research. In October 2009, IRLE will be hosting “Work and Inequality in the Global Economy: China, Mexico, and the US,” co-sponsored with the UCLA Centers for Chinese and Mexican Studies.

Civic Engagement

- IRLE is one of a handful of leading institutions around the country linking academic and outreach activities on work and employment—an especially critical topic in the current severe economic downturn.
- The Human Resource Round Table (HARRT) brings together a network of top human resource executives from leading Southern California businesses for in-depth seminars by leading researchers from UCLA and around the region (recent topics include skill-centered organizations and the dynamics of corporate culture), plus an annual retreat on human resource trends.
- The Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program conducts trainings and produces educational materials for workers, employers, government officials, unions, and community constituencies on worker safety and health topics, as well as conducting policy-relevant research. One example: Youth Leadership Academies on workplace safety and health issues.
- The Labor Center conducts large-scale outreach to labor and community organizations and government officials, including training, policy reports, conferences, and forums, such as recent panel discussions on immigration reform and the situation of black workers. It is the face of UCLA in communities that the University often does not reach, and provides research-based services to working people in Southern California and nationally.
- IRLE research is connected to current policy issues (for instance, a survey designed to determine the incidence of labor law violations in the LA area). IRLE speaker series and conferences frequently attract practitioners as well as academics (for example, the annual Ben Aaron Lecture brings together UCLA scholars with the LA County Bar Association). IRLE and its affiliates often create research products accessible to broader public and policy audiences, as well as scholarly ones.
- Community Scholars class. Since 1991, IRLE has co-sponsored the Department of Urban Planning’s Community Scholars class, which brings together graduate students with community- and labor-based practitioners for a two-quarter course generating focused policy recommendations on a selected topic. The 2008-09 class focuses on jobs in green building.
- Other IRLE activities involve students in civic activities. Courses often involve evaluating and formulating recommendations on real-life policy issues with community clients. The Labor Internship Program places hundreds of undergrads in hands-on internships. IRLE and its affiliates work with a variety of student organizations active around workplace and immigration issues.

Diversity

- Labor and Workplace Studies classes expose UCLA students to a diverse group of African American, Latino, Asian, and Anglo instructors, including African American Civil Rights veteran James Lawson. IRLE and Labor Center talks, panels, and conferences similarly bring a diverse group of scholars and practitioners into contact with the UCLA community.
- LWS classes draw on the diversity of the student body to examine issues of class stratification, race and ethnicity, gender, and immigration status.
- The presence at UCLA of IRLE and the Labor Center and their public identification with issues of low-wage work, immigration, communities of color, and social movements help attract a diverse group of graduate students to a variety of programs.
- The Labor Center’s direct connections to diverse LA communities have facilitated cutting-edge research like that compiled in the *Low-Wage Worker Organizing* volume mentioned above.