



REPORT ON PUBLIC HEARINGS

Summary comments from 2018
Public Hearings on the future of the
University of Iowa Labor Center

Presented to Iowa Board of Regents,
September 13, 2018

Organizational members of the Save Our Labor Center coalition include the Iowa Federation of Labor AFL-CIO; Iowa State Education Association; UI and UNI chapters of the American Association of University Professors; Iowans for Public Education; Iowa State Building and Construction Trades Council; Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa; Iowa Professional Firefighters; Teamsters Local 238; Iowa League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Davenport Diocese Office of Social Action and Catholic Charities; Iowa Interfaith Alliance; along with thousands of concerned Iowans.

Introduction

Between August 14, 2018 and September 10, 2018, the Save Our Labor Center coalition held hearings in seven locations across the state of Iowa in order to gather public input following the University of Iowa's July 10, 2018 announcement of its intent to close the Labor Center. Over 600 Iowans attended these hearings, and over 150 speakers or panelists shared information on their direct experiences with the Labor Center or their assessment of its impact. The one-hour hearings were open to the public, and speakers were invited to sign up in advance or at the hearings to make statements limited to three minutes in length. In each location, a panel of state and local elected officials, labor, campus, community, and faith leaders assembled to gather and comment on the public input. This report is a summary snapshot of findings of the hearings and the overall assessments of the panelists. The report captures the inherent worth and value of the Labor Center as a program that not only contributes directly to the University's strategic goals, but extends the mission of the University across the state in ways that markedly improve the lives of Iowans and the state's economy.

Save Our Labor Center: Public Hearing Locations and Panelists

Des Moines: August 14, 2018

Joe Bolkcom, Iowa State Senator
 Mark Cooper, President, South Central Iowa Area Labor Federation
 Joe Henry, Iowa LULAC Council 307 and National LULAC Vice President, Midwest Region
 Rick Moore, Mid-Iowa Uniserv Director, Iowa State Education Association
 Mark Smith, Iowa State Representative and Iowa House Democratic Leader
 Connie Ryan, Executive Director, Iowa Interfaith Alliance
 Tom Hockensmith, Supervisor, Polk County

Cedar Rapids: August 16, 2018

Liz Bennett, Iowa State Representative
 Rob Hogg, Iowa State Senator
 Sofia Mehaffey, Director of Community Health and Nutrition, Horizons Family Alliance
 Rick Moyle, Executive Director, Hawkeye Area Labor Council
 Tony Smith, Chair, Johnson County Interfaith Cluster
 Dale Todd, City Councilor, Cedar Rapids
 Stacey Walker, Supervisor, Linn County

Bettendorf: August 20, 2018

Diana Broderson, Mayor, Muscatine
 Brad Greve, President, Great River Area Labor Federation
 Loxi Hopkins, Catholic Campaign for Community Development Director, Diocese of Davenport and Board Member, Teamsters Community Action Network

Coy Marquardt, Associate Executive Director, Iowa State Education Association
Phyllis Thede, Iowa State Representative

Sioux City: August 28, 2018

Ryan Dowell Baum, Pastor, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Sioux City and
Member, Iowa Interfaith Alliance
Ernie Colt, President, Western Iowa Labor Federation
Tim Kacena, Iowa State Representative
Dennis McElwain, Attorney at Law, Smith and McElwain Law Office
Brenda Zahner, Siouxland Uniserv Director, Iowa State Education Association

Burlington: August 30, 2018

Jerry Kearns, Iowa State Representative
Tom Courtney, Board Member, Burlington Community School District
Dennis Cohoon, Iowa State Representative
Penny Logsdon, President, Lee County Labor Chapter
Ryan Drew, President, Des Moines-Henry County Labor Alliance
Laura Blanchard, Chair, Iowans for Public Education-Burlington Chapter

Cedar Falls: September 6, 2018

Bill Dotzler, Iowa State Senator
Cal Eckhoff, President, Black Hawk Labor Assembly
Becky Hawbaker, President, UNI United Faculty-AAUP
Chris Schwartz, Supervisor, Black Hawk County
Ras Smith, Iowa State Representative
Shelly Staker, Director, Northeast Iowa Uniserv, Iowa State Education Association

Iowa City: September 10, 2018

Bob Dvorsky, Iowa State Senator
Greg Hearn, President, Iowa City Federation of Labor
Karen Nichols, Director, Iowans for Public Education
Amy Nielsen, Iowa State Representative
Mazahir Salih, Iowa City City Councilor
Katherine Tachau, President, UI AAUP and UI Faculty Senator
Austin Wu, UI Student Government Deputy City Liaison

Panelist Survey Responses

Following the hearings, all panelists received a three-question survey via email. Responses received to date from hearing panelists are included verbatim below.

Q1: What one or two themes seemed most important to you based on what you heard at the hearing where you served as a panelist?

- Lack of input from stakeholders/university students & faculty.
- Questions about why decision was made to choose a labor-friendly center to close as opposed to other cuts.
- Importance of access to educational opportunities for workers.
- I heard over and over how valuable the trainings that the Labor Center provides are, and how disrespectful the decision to close The Center was.
- The quality of education for working lowans. The ability of the staff to take complicated laws concerning working lowans and put together documentation that allows the average person to read and understand the law. The ability and follow through of the staff to write and obtain grant funding to support their research and work.
- Importance of keeping the Center open.
- Many people feel it is not really a funding issue but an issue of priorities.
- The amount of folks that have been educated at the University of Iowa Labor Center and the importance of what they learned.
- The education provided to Iowa's workforce was not confined to the attendees at scheduled trainings. It has been shared far and wide across the state with the co-workers of those who attended to benefit the workforce. That education has helped with the safety and well-being of workers.
- The Labor Center is the only one in Iowa geared to educate and inform laborers.
- Perhaps most significant was the testimony from several people that the Labor Center trainings had actually saved lives based on the information provided. Along with that, I also noted the number of people who credited Labor Center training for improving their communication skills, resulting in improved work performance as well.
- The lack of transparency in the process.
- Importance of educating employees who are new to the workforce.
- Labor Center is an important part of the University. It has been very important and helpful to workers in the state.
- It is hard for full-time workers to do full-time post high school education. The Labor Center fills the void in some areas and provides needed knowledge.
- (1) that the UI's message of cutting the Labor Center's funding in the interests of students is disingenuous at best, and (2) the closure of the Labor Center sends a signal of the University essentially abandoning thousands of lowans.
- How many people that the Labor Center helps, in so many different areas.

- Student pleas to keep center open because they are workers too, who need to know their rights; the difference that the Labor Center has made to individuals' lives.

Q2: Was there a particular example or story shared by one of the speakers that you found to be especially memorable?

- Sandy Conway from the Steelworkers who stressed the importance of education for women and minorities about their rights in a very large factory.
- Yes - improving the comprehension of laws pertaining to workplace conditions and safety for populations with barriers to access (immigrants, people of color, etc.)
- I identified with the woman who shared her story about the knowledge and confidence the Labor Center gave her. She is the first female union president in her mostly male workplace. She attributes the skills needed for that leadership position to the Labor Center.
- I found the gentleman who grew up in Louisiana to be particularly interesting. He compared the lack of education and worker safety in Louisiana to what we have had in Iowa. Stated what we all know - that Iowa is going in the wrong direction if we eliminate education.
- Attorneys who went to U of I law school and who have chosen to spend their careers defending workers do not feel supported by their alma mater based on this decision.
- The postal worker who not only learned of rules to avoid safety hazards for weekend employees, but through the Labor Center's training, found an avenue for continuing education that was not common for women at that time. That she spoke as she did last night with confident words and passion stems from the training she received at the Labor Center.
- The speaker who described the difference between Iowa's history of strong worker rights and education compared to other states.
- The references to the many years the Labor Center has operated and the stories of those who received an education (in some cases decades ago in their career) and how it stuck with them.
- A Department of Labor retiree that attested to the quality training and that the training feedback he received was not only from workers but also from employers who received information and clarification on employment laws from the Labor Center.
- Jan Laue who pointed out how there is no equivalent. Nowhere else to go to learn the skills and gain knowledge like the Labor Center provides.
- Stories about how learning skills at the Labor Center also helps Iowans be better citizens, community members, leaders, parents, etc. The story about how far-reaching the impact of the Labor Center is for Iowans.
- I was proud to hear so many teachers and future teachers speaking up for all kinds of education. We want to attract and keep the best and brightest people in education. The Labor Center has been invaluable in helping educators understand the collective bargaining law from a neutral, unbiased perspective.

- Joe Feldmann's testimony of being a 5th generation Iowan, who has had the opportunity to attend the UI through the financial support made possible by his parent's union membership - and education through the Labor Center - was particularly touching.
- Examples of how an educated work force is more safe and effective at work and the community.
- The woman steelworker who had learned from the Labor Center how to be a shop steward, and her upward rise in union responsibility to now being an international rep!

Q3: Per the University of Iowa's web site, the UI's current mission encompasses "teaching, research, and service," and "the University seeks to advance scholarly and creative endeavor through leading-edge research and artistic production; to use this research and creativity to enhance undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, health care, and other services provided to the people of Iowa, the nation, and the world; and to educate students for success and personal fulfillment in a diverse world." Based on what you heard from speakers at the hearing you attended, in what ways does the Labor Center contribute to the university's missions of "teaching, research, and service"?

- The Labor Center provides countless examples of direct teaching to the people of Iowa on labor issues. Additionally, the Labor Center provides research to employees and employers across the state on topics related to labor law and other work-related issues. It is the only organization to provide such a service.
- The Labor Center extends the reach of this mission to those who may not be granted access to a full formal education within the lecture halls of the University itself. Even further, the knowledge and research made available by the labor center benefits those impacted by the individual who received it firsthand; thereby extending the benefits of the mission exponentially through the population.
- As a former educator, several of my former co-workers were U of I grads and also ISEA members. I learned at the hearing that the U of I doesn't believe the Labor Center enhances or contributes to current students or alumni. That isn't true and is a disrespectful statement.
- I believe everything I heard embodies the university's missions. Many stories were about the quality of education received when attending Labor Center classes. Within the classes the quality data used that is provided by the Labor Center research and that data is available at any time it is needed just by calling or emailing the Labor Center staff. Service was attested to by many. The staff will teach anywhere in the state. They will come to you at a reasonable cost. The Labor Center also raised funds to help them go out into the community to teach low wage earners about their rights in the workplace.
- The Labor Center provides the only forum for labor to receive education.
- The Labor Center is the epitome of teaching, research and service to the people who attended the hearing. Over and over it was stated that there is no other resource like

the Labor Center that provides the education necessary for Iowa's workforce to be informed. This is a benefit for employees and employers alike.

- It provides a tremendous service to me as an advocate. They are an invaluable resource on issues like FMLA and workers comp.
- I was not as familiar with the Labor Center before, but this hearing made it abundantly clear to me that the high quality of the Labor Center's teaching provides a clear service to workers that goes beyond simply information. Likewise, the research provides invaluable information to those same workers.
- It educates workers and employers.
- The Labor Center provides very high-level teaching, including tailor-made courses for particular situations. This is a very direct service to Iowans.
- ALL areas of this mission ... great classes based on great research and delivered with great professionalism!!
- The Labor Center meets these goals for educating its participants as well as any college or department in the University.
- Teaching and service through education on workers' rights all around the state, and research through projects such as the Iowa Labor History Oral Project.
- Serving the people of Iowa with a wide range of classes to educate, and empowerment to achieve more in life.
- Teaches students who go on to become educators, lawyers, etc.; teaches workers all over the state; prepares law students to be successful in their law school studies; provides the materials for undergrad, grad, & faculty research; teaches laborers their rights & how to make workplaces safe, etc, so that the laborers rise into the middle class, thereby being able to send their children to the UI to study: in short, a "virtuous circle."

Speaker Comments

Over 150 speakers and panelists commented at the seven different hearings, generating over ten total hours of testimony.

Speakers shared a wide range of personal stories, described numerous experiences with Labor Center education, research, resources, and outreach, gave examples of the impact of Labor Center research and education, and provided comments on The University of Iowa's proposal to eliminate funding for the center.

Samples of testimony included in the following pages are organized in relation to their relevance to the goals set forward in The University of Iowa's 2016-2021 Strategic Plan,¹ and the UI Cultural Values of Diversity, Collaboration, and Innovation.

¹ Available at: <https://provost.uiowa.edu/strategic-plan-2016-2021>

UI Strategic Goal I:

STUDENT SUCCESS: Provide a transformative educational experience that educates all UI students to be engaged citizens.

Speakers at each hearing included workers from a wide range of industrial, transportation, construction, and service occupations who shared stories of Labor Center continuing education classes on their lives, their careers, their development as leaders, and their own engagement as citizens of their communities. Speakers at several hearings included UI graduates currently working in various professions ranging from law and education to nursing and social work, who spoke of access to the Labor Center as an important part of their continuing professional development. Currently enrolled UI students who participated in hearings in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Iowa City spoke to the value they placed on access to coursework and research materials about workplace issues and labor history, as well as the inseparable identities they and their family members carried as students and employees at different times in their lives.

Excerpts from hearing speaker statements touching on student success and the impact of transformative educational experience

We use the knowledge we gain through those classes to educate and build better leadership for our local job sites and the community around us. — Tom Hayes, Des Moines

Over a decade ago, when I experienced my first Labor Center class, I never thought I would be speaking out to help save it, not during my time anyway. I am speaking today on behalf of over 9000 electrical workers and their families across the state. Each one of those electrical workers has been affected, whether directly or indirectly, by the work of the Labor Center.

The training that I received from the Labor Center has been critical to my own professional development and has greatly advanced my own ability to provide a higher standard of living for my members. The Labor Center has educated me on a wide range of issues, from labor law, collective bargaining, grievance arbitration, to diversity, inclusion, discrimination and wage theft, all subjects critical to protect the welfare of hard working Iowans. — Patrick Wells, Des Moines

I am here because I am in a particularly unique position to speak to the way that the Labor Center contributes to the education of law students. And I'm in that position because for almost 40 years, I have taught work law, employment law, and labor law. And I can tell you that the students I've had in my classes who've had the additional experience of working at the Labor Center, or doing internships at the Labor Center, have been some of the most focused, enthusiastic, and devoted students that I've ever seen. There's a false dichotomy that's been presented to us, between funding for students and funding for the Labor Center. And it is a false dichotomy, because the Labor Center helps my students. My students are the better for it. The state is pitting students against the Labor Center, when it is in fact backing away from its obligation to both students and the Labor Center. — Lea Vandervelde, UI faculty member, College of Law

I remember the first training I ever went to at the Labor Center. It was the most exciting thing for me, to go to these trainings. It made me feel very important. And, then, over the years later, when I would recruit people to come to learn how to be officers or stewards or [to] just learn more about your rights, I always had a lot of fun watching them have those same feelings when they walked into a class. And you could see how they felt, and how important it made them feel, and how excited they were to get the knowledge that they had, and watching them rush out the door cause they were so excited to get back to work and apply that knowledge in the workplace. — Devin Mehaffey, Cedar Rapids

It is irresponsible to expect students of the University of Iowa to graduate and enter the workforce without understanding the conditions, rights and experiences of the majority of the population. The UI Labor Center is the only resource of its kind on campus and in the state of Iowa that provides the necessary education and empowerment of workers that is essential to the wellbeing of all Iowans and all University of Iowa students like me. — Anna Clowser, UI undergraduate student

I'm a staff rep for the United Steel Workers. But that's not who I was 21 years ago. Twenty-one years ago, I was a single mother of two children, and I needed a job that paid more than minimum wage, so I went to work in a steel foundry in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Anyone who knows about a steel foundry knows it's dirty, it's hot, you deal with hot molten metal, silica sand. So it can be a very dangerous environment. When I walked into the foundry I was one of three women. So that had challenges in itself. There were people in that plant who thought I should not be there. So it was 20 years ago that I was introduced to The University of Iowa Labor Center. Working with the Labor Center gave me the tools and confidence to go back into my workplace and negotiate, form safety committees, gain courage, and confidence, and further my career. And today I'm an international representative. And it's because of the education from the Labor Center. Which has enabled to send my kids to college. One of them just graduated from this college. He just took the LSAT on Saturday. And soon he might be going to law school here. I would not have been able to do that without the education. — Stacey Andersen, Cedar Rapids

For me, this education is about dignity and respect. I know a lot of employees who don't know how to speak up for themselves. Through the programs provided by The University of Iowa Labor Center, they find their voice, to protect themselves, or to get dignity and respect. And I think that's important. Without education, we aren't able to have a voice. I want my children and my grandchildren to pick jobs wherever they want where they will be treated with dignity and respect, and they will feel as though they are contributing. And so that's why I think it's important that we maintain the Labor Center and their educational programs for the working public. — Kimberly Karol, Waterloo

The Labor Center has given my members skills to become leaders of our organization from any type of communication skills like writing and speaking, knowing policies and legislation affecting their jobs and how to react when those items are threatened, whether it is our job or our

employers that are threatened. Not only do they build leaders in our organization, but it also carries over into our communities. These people are better able to be leaders of their homeowner's associations, school boards, you name it. . . . I have associates from Washington, D.C. that represent all areas of the country and every time they show up to one of our Labor Center trainings, which is every year, they have nothing but good to say about the Labor Center and the asset that we have right here in Iowa. — Herb Copley, Clear Lake

Tens of thousands of workers in Iowa have been educated by the University of Iowa Labor Center and I am one of them. . . . When I was at the Labor Center as a University of Iowa graduate student, I had no idea I would later become the first woman state-wide elected officer of the Iowa Federation of Labor. As Executive Vice President, and then Secretary-Treasurer, my job was to lobby when the legislature was in session, so that training that I had at the Labor Center helped me to analyze issues, and as part of lobbying efforts, of course, the Iowa Federation of Labor supported funding education, including higher education and the University of Iowa. . . . I have no idea where else Iowa workers would be able to go to get the kind of education that the Labor Center gives. There is no equivalent in Iowa. There is none. There is nothing else in Iowa that's going to give you the relevant hands-on type of information that you need to have to represent your co-workers. There is no good reason to renege on this seventy-year commitment to Iowa workers. — Jan Laue, Urbandale

I have spent the past few years here studying human rights and what it means to respect and promote them. I learned here at the University of Iowa that while I study human rights, and while lawyers and legislators and politicians advocate for those rights, the most important piece of this is for people to know about those rights. Otherwise, what is the point of having rules and laws and debates about the rights of people such as the workers in Iowa? — Cate Chenus, UI undergraduate student

The vast majority of students that graduate from this institution will join the workforce, if they have not already done so. I plan to graduate from the College of Education in 2019. Several of my professors have recommended that I join a Teachers Union once I become employed. This is why the Labor Center is important. The Labor Center holds courses and seminars on campus dealing with core issues facing workers and their unions. They provide critical information to workers about their rights in the workplace. It's clear that no matter what your profession, from doctors to laborers to teachers, every individual should be informed on public policy issues that will affect their futures as well as what can be done to ensure that every employee is being treated justly at work. Closing the Labor Center would purposely keep student-workers and citizens uninformed. — Margot Allscheid, UI undergraduate student

As a UI law student, I worked as a research assistant at the Labor Center, and I have now worked in the field of labor and employment law for over a decade. I was taught in law school classes and in my Labor Center research to think critically and creatively. What the UI needs to do is think critically and creatively, and find the money to do what you should do as a Regents institution. — Jay Smith, Des Moines

I'm a registered nurse, also a graduate of the University of Iowa nursing school, and the president of AFGE Local 2547 representing employees at the Iowa City VA hospital. I was thinking on my way here that it was roughly twenty years ago that I took my first classes at the UI Labor Center. From that time to now, the Labor Center has provided us with invaluable tools, and tools that aren't available any place else in the state. I'd like to talk about the employees at the VA. There's about 1800 people that work there. All of those people have benefited from the education that myself, my officers, and my stewards have had. They paid for that education too. The payroll at the VA is \$7 million every two weeks. All of those 1800 employees pay taxes. We aren't asking for a handout, we paid for that public service. Every employee benefits from those services. And it shows in the work that we do. We have a safer workplace. They are better informed about their rights. And not only do employees benefit, but our patients benefit. Because our employees know their rights, and they know when they can stand up and advocate for patients, they know when they can be a whistleblower, they know if they stand up, they'll be protected. Those are the skills the UI Labor Center brings to all of us. — Patrick Kearns, Iowa City

We wanted to train our members ourselves, and we wanted to be more involved in the training and they sat down and made curriculum with us to help us train our own members, that's how dedicated they are to training workers. This is the only place in Iowa where we can get this kind of training. — Mike Sawyer, Des Moines

I got involved early in my career and started taking classes. Actually right now with the Iowa Professional Fire Fighters, we put on an education seminar with the Labor Center every fall. On behalf of the 1600 members, we really value the Labor Center, the input from the staff, the fact that we can call them with a question. — Ky Duttlinger, Burlington

UI Strategic Goal II:**RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY: High-impact research**

Speakers at each hearing gave examples of how, via the Labor Center’s dissemination of research findings in outreach programs and off-campus classes, the University has come to have a direct impact on them and their communities. Many speakers mentioned the importance of the Labor Center’s longest-running research project, the Iowa Labor History Oral Project. Several current and former UI students spoke to how learning to research labor and employment issues at the Labor Center had shaped their scholarship or professional careers.

Excerpts from hearing speaker statements touching on research and discovery

I have two degrees from the University of Iowa, including a Masters degree from the College of Education. As a UI student, I took classes taught by the Labor Center on child labor that not only inspired me, but dozens of my colleagues as well. The classes were part of a large Department of Labor research grant secured through interdisciplinary collaboration of the Labor Center, the UI Center for Human Rights, and the UI College of Education. The same grant gave me the opportunity to deepen my professional skills and knowledge of this important global issue by being part of a curriculum writing team. These projects have had immeasurable impact both locally and globally. Ultimately a UI student produced an important documentary, “CHILD,” about this important topic. As a teacher, dozens of my students over the years have chosen to advocate for an end to child labor as a service project. — Alissa Meggitt, Iowa City

The Labor Center offers a valuable resource that is often overlooked, and that is their collection of Iowa labor history resources. These resources, including the Labor Oral History Project, are invaluable to teachers and students across the state. There is no better learning material for students than primary source documents like those held in the collection. As a former social studies teacher who had over 20 students qualify for the finals of National History Day, I can vouch for the value of these resources. — Randy Richardson, Des Moines

The Labor Center has contributed to my education as a graduate student through published research, creation and maintenance of archival material, courses in the history department, mentorship, and professional opportunities and connections. The staff of the Labor Center and the archival collections they create and maintain have yielded books and essays that I use in research and teaching – particularly the Iowa Labor History Oral Project, affectionately known as ILHOP. ILHOP is one of the many projects and collections at the Labor Center and has over a thousand interviews (and counting!) that cover over 75 occupational groups. ILHOP is one of the most comprehensive state-level collections in the world, it is recognized as a model for its methods, contents, and sustained engagement with researchers and the community. ILHOP is important to me both as a scholar and as an instructor. The collection of interviews is a necessary archival source for conducting research. The digitized interviews are accessible and a

powerful tool in the classroom that students respond to enthusiastically. — Ashley Dorn, UI graduate student

The Labor Center keeps up on labor laws and all the changes in laws. But they also have this history project that documented the history of Iowans, and stories of teachers in Iowa. I remember first hearing the story of how teachers in Keokuk were put in jail trying to get a contract. This research is one of the only ways we know our state's history. The taxpayers support the public university so we can have this kind of community engagement. — Kris Snavely, Sioux City

The claim that students should not have to pay to keep the labor center open invites the inference that students, who are also workers, do not immensely benefit from the labor center. But we have, and we do. Beyond the fact that the labor center directly benefits students because they are workers, the labor center informs and educates workers across Iowa—workers who work at and around the university and in the community. I love Iowa City. I am proud that our university, in the past, has funded the labor center as a promise to Iowa's workers. But the promise of fair employment, adequate research, and proper and timely information about rights in the workplace and changing laws and policies is in jeopardy. I would feel ashamed if my university let this amazing organization go. The labor center is the only place in Iowa where workers can receive updates on the changes in the law. Having rights and protections means nothing if you don't know what those rights are. I am a member of a club on campus called Best Buddies. One of the focuses of our club is the empowerment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The labor center has information we can use for these populations about their rights in the workplace, and provides them with tools and empowerment to prevent employer discrimination and exploitation. Taking away the labor center would take away the only resource for these populations to know their rights in the workplace, and would allow discrimination and exploitation to continue in the future. — Lauryn Schnack, UI undergraduate student

Toward the end of my apprenticeship, I started taking more of an interest in my personal family connection to the Ironworkers and to the labor movement in general. So I asked my dad about my grandfather, who would have been an Ironworker also. I asked him if he any funny stories, anecdotes, any sort of information about him. He said, "I can do you one better," and produced a stack of CDs and transcripts with those that were part of the Iowa Labor History Oral Project, which I hadn't heard of, but it's a phenomenal project that's been going on for forty-five years, documenting and recording interviews, any sort of stories about working conditions and big projects here in the state of Iowa. As I was listening to [the CDs], he spoke about things like mistreatment of workers, exploitation of workers, through not letting them know their rights, and safety conditions on job sites. As I was listening to that from forty-five years ago, I realized we're still fighting for the same things today. The Labor Center is instrumental in doing this research and keeping workers educated about worker justice around the state. — Joey Zahorik, Cedar Rapids

I attended law school at the University of Iowa. Typically, for a lot of law students, in your second year of law school, you get a ten-hour a week job as an RA, a research assistant. I covered laws and issues I hadn't learned about in class. And then I had to explain what I learned at some of the programs the Labor Center holds on campus. Now it is one thing for a law professor to use the Socratic method, teaching law students; it is a different thing for labor educators to use the Socratic method, teaching regular, blue-collar Iowa workers something about the Family Medical Leave Act or workers' compensation. And it was frightening, but it was great experience. It was preparation for my career. It may not be a big surprise that, whatever the issue may be, as an attorney, the folks who I represent mostly have high-school educations. They do not have a great deal of background in the area of law that's impacting their life at that particular moment. This probably isn't a surprise because I'm not aware of many high schools that do a lot of teaching of workers' compensation issues or the FMLA or overtime laws or the Americans with Disabilities Act. It just doesn't happen. However, when one of those issues comes at you in the workplace, something that you've got to face at your job, you rest assured that your employer has managers, human resource professionals, attorneys, who do know that law, and know it very well. And, the thing is, many of those human resources professionals, many of those managers, got an education at the University of Iowa, maybe at the College of Business. On the other side of that ledger, we have the Labor Center. We have four labor educators whose job it is to provide research and education to law students like me, and to regular workers across the state of Iowa. That "balance" has never been a balance—it's never been fair or equitable—and it never will be. But to simply shutter and take away all state support for the Labor Center is unconscionable. — Nate Willems, Mount Vernon

UI Strategic Goal III

ENGAGEMENT: Engage with Iowa and the world to broaden education, improve health, and enhance economic development

Numerous speakers expressed placing a high value on the lifelong learning opportunities offered by the Labor Center, and the Labor Center's ability to bring high-quality university expertise into their workplaces and communities in all parts of the state. The impact of Labor Center education on improved workplace health and safety was a recurring theme in speaker comments, as were the Labor Center's contributions to economic development, the creation of high quality jobs, and the return on investment to the state from the Center's activities.

Excerpts from hearing speaker statements touching on broadening education, improving health, and enhancing economic development

I contend that the classes we [railroad workers] started with the Labor Center in 2011 have actually saved lives. And they've also saved money in preventing major accidents. In fact, the enormous savings from preventing just one rail accident would keep the Labor Center going for about 500 years. I have asked this question before, and I'll ask it again: if what we do at the Labor Center with the railroads is not part of the core mission of the university, then why isn't it? – Jeff Kurtz, Fort Madison

Public education is essential to the promotion of justice. – Maria Bribresco, Davenport

If Iowa wants to be a state that is a beacon of education, then we should want to educate everybody on all issues and improve life for every citizen and that includes labor issues. — Kelly McMahon, Cedar Rapids

I'm a Professor of History at the University of Iowa. I've collaborated with the Labor Center for over 24 years. I really think this is quite simple. This is a public institution. This is a public university. And as such it has an obligation, and an opportunity, to provide services to the public. And that's not confined to the students and faculty and staff of the university, it's the entire state of Iowa. The UI strategic plan has three pillars. One of those pillars is outreach and engagement. And for the 24 years that I've been here, the Labor Center has almost single-handedly upheld the pillar of outreach and engagement to the rest of the state. So I think it's really quite simple. On the letterhead of the university, it says "The University of Iowa." Increasingly, we're behaving like a university in Iowa. We should be the university *for* Iowa. — Colin Gordon, UI faculty member, Department of History

It is also often a concern if your average Iowan sees the University system as an "ivory tower" of elitists removed from the concerns of their lives and not worthy of the state's financial

support. Here too the Labor Center has provided a vital link between the University community and many thousands of working people all over the state and leaving them with this strong positive bond to a University Center. As a life-long Iowan, I have always in the past, believed that Iowa was committed to education both through its public K-12 schools but also through the Regents institutions. Certainly the influence of that education, one hopes, extends well beyond the confines of the three state campuses and reaches into every corner of the state. The Labor Center is the only part of the great network of ideas that concentrates on the education of working class people both on and off campus. Most students in fact hail from these families and bring with them any understanding gained from their parents about the world and it is the ability of working people to collectively advance that is the only reason many of these students are even able to attend the University. This decision, if it is not reversed, will do irreparable harm to the reputation of the University across the state and indeed nationally.

— Bruce Clark, Des Moines

In the Communications Workers, we send people from 14 states to Iowa City for a week for leadership school. I have been there a couple times myself. So my members from across the country, from 14 states, have been getting an education from the Labor Center for years.”

— Mark Rocha, Des Moines

Every year the Labor Center leverages money to help perform its mission, to help do what it’s trying to do throughout our communities. In fact, it’s been involved in 70 counties last year, which is really, really a big deal. Our Regents Universities have three colleges of business, three large colleges of business, yet they have one very, very small Labor Center and we need to protect that, and we need to keep it. Is one penny of the \$500,000 that’s cut and causes the closing of the Labor Center going to reduce the tuition of University of Iowa students? Not one penny, the money that’s been cut would be reabsorbed by the University, the College of Law where the Labor Center is now housed, so it’s not lowering tuition, but it is affecting the lives of thousands of Iowa workers. — Monica Kurth, Davenport

The Labor Center brings education about workplace issues and trends directly to Iowa communities at times and locations convenient for community members. Right here in the Quad Cities, members of our group have gained ideas and skills from Labor Center classes on labor history, how to identify and respond to violations of workers’ rights, and how law and policy changes are affecting workplaces in our country today. These classes have allowed us to be part of community discussions, form new coalitions, and pursue policy changes to help working families here in the Quad Cities, both those in unions as well as those who have not had an opportunity to join a union. — Dr. Alta Price, Bettendorf

By incorporating OSHA laws into grievances, we have been able to prevent heat illnesses for letter carriers. — Traci Van Hying, Fort Madison

The health and safety classes that are offered by the Labor Center are second to none. I know they’ve saved lives. They’ve saved limbs. They’ve sent people home after a hard day’s work, safely, and in the same condition they showed up in. — Jeff Cooling, Cedar Rapids

Good jobs are not an accident. Generations of workers built skills from Labor Center education. Thousands of workers in Iowa rely on the Labor Center for a safe workplace. Unlike many other departments at the University that are dedicated solely to business, the Labor Center's vision is good jobs, good employers, and good relationships. I know my union is stronger, my plant is stronger, and my community is stronger because of the Labor Center. Because of knowledge members have gained on how to recognize and correct hazards, lives have arguably been saved by the Labor Center's work. Education helps workers improve the safety and quality of their jobs. In turn, safer workplaces, less injuries for Iowa's workforce, lower workers' compensation rates equal a better climate for workers and for business. — Robert Cale, Fort Madison

As a state legislator with the district here in Cedar Rapids, I look at the statewide impact of decisions like these. But I also look at them through the local lens of my constituents, and many in my district have tapped the Labor Center's resources, and I too have personally benefitted from the trainings given here in Cedar Rapids that they've provided. So I come here not just speaking for myself but for my constituents as well and all the workers and employers who have used those services. Labor education provides insight, ideas, information that's critical—critical knowledge and skills that make employers and employees better and makes our workplaces safer. This is a critical part of Iowa's continuing efforts to develop and maintain a highly skilled and stable workforce. — Art Staed, Cedar Rapids

We know in the construction industry we have a problem with tax fraud and misclassification in the construction industry in Iowa. This harms businesses that follow the rules and face unfair competition from those who don't, it harms the state through loss of revenue, and it harms our economy. But these laws can't be enforced without worker education and worker awareness. — Kevin Hilton, Des Moines

I work with over 1,000 line workers, tree trimmers, and DirecTV installers, and many other classifications throughout 92 counties in the State of Iowa. When I first went to the Labor Short Course my eyes were opened to a whole world of information that I did not even know existed. The Labor Center has given me and workers across the state in my industry information and education we need to improve the safety and quality of our jobs. Most of us don't have the luxury of leaving our jobs to become full-time in Iowa City. We count on the Labor Center to be the bridge that connects us with research and information that matters to us. By dissolving the Labor Center you would be telling thousands of workers across the state that their access to education on safety and workplace issues doesn't matter. — Rusty McCuen, Des Moines

There are thousands of people in the state of Iowa who work round the clock just like I do, to make sure that jobs are something that become a career, that you can not only thrive in, but retire from. The U of I has put out the information that the reason they've chosen to close the Labor Center is they can't justify funding programs that "don't benefit their students." I don't know if this is disingenuous or a display of ignorance on their part. Because who do they think their students are? Their young adult students were raised by parents who grew up in working

class jobs that the U of Iowa's Labor Center has helped improve over the last 70 years. Their adult students are people who worked up until the point they decided, "Hey, this job has allowed me to afford to go to the U of Iowa." There is an employee who recently came to our plant because her son decided to attend the U of I, and because she has a union job to come to in this area, she's going to be able to afford to finance his tuition, pay for his books, pay for his dorm. The U of Iowa is cutting off their own head here, and apparently they need pointed out to them why they can't afford to cut the Labor Center. — Gunther Anderson, Fort Madison

Through community engagement, education, and advocacy, the Labor Center helped bring employers and workers to the table on this question of how to address substandard wages in our economy. What better could you ask of the University of Iowa, by means of the Labor Center, then for it to be involved in the enhancement of the quality of life for working families, students, workers, and the general public in our community? As a board member of the Center for Worker Justice, and as a religious leader who has worked with low-wage workers and people on the margins of society, I consider the Labor Center a true ally. Their expertise and experience has been instrumental in trying to level the playing field for all Iowans, especially the working poor and underserved laborers of our community. — Fr. Rudy Juarez, Iowa City

No one is saying that all the services the University provides are without cost. What we are saying is that these costs are worthwhile. As son of an ISEA teacher, I receive direct benefit from the courses that the Labor Center provides. I am able to be a student because of the stability of my family's income. This stability is compromised if there are no resources for my father to be informed of safety procedures and workers' rights which the Labor Center provides. Students and workers are not enemies. They are families working together to benefit their community. To say that students are at odds with workers unjustly pits father and son against each other. To say that my father is receiving benefit on my back defames my family's integrity. My father has sacrificed so much for me to receive a world class education. Supporting facilities that provide stability to our community is the bare minimum the University can do. It would make sense as a community institution, which means an institution owned by the great people of Iowa, that the University continue providing resources that directly benefit the community. — Joseph Feldmann, UI undergraduate student

In a state with skilled labor shortages, we need more not less education for workers. These classes provide skills that allow workers to become leaders. Taxpayers support the university, and I hope they can hear western Iowa voices. — Amy DeGroot Hammer, Sioux City

We've actually had the Labor Center come to our facility to not only educate our members but we've had joint classes with management, where the Labor Center has come and facilitated classes with us to educate us on, not just on unions and history, but how to interact with each other, how to relate with each other, how to communicate. — Bob Dixon, Cedar Rapids

What impact does this education have on workers and employers in Cedar Rapids and across our state? It helps lower injury rates, prevent deaths, decrease instances of discrimination, prevent wage theft, and resolve a host of different workplace problems before they turn into expensive arbitrations or lawsuits. The small amount that goes to the Labor Center returns an enormous value to Iowa workers and employers across the state. — Kelli Harrison, Marion

I recently retired with the US Department of Labor after 42 years, the last 36 years were here in the Quad Cities. When I retired last year the US Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division under the current administration also closed the last Wage and Hour office in the Quad Cities. We need the Labor Center even more because we do not have access to a Wage and Hour office in the Quad Cities. Over the years, I frequently would have referrals from the Labor Center, or I'd have business owners that I was reviewing that would be doing things right because of the Labor Center. So, every dealing that I have had over the last 36 years with the Labor Center, both from the workers' stand point and from the employer's standpoint, were positive. They always provide good information both to the workers and the employers because oftentimes the employers that I was going to investigate wouldn't have any violations because they already talked to the Labor Center. It has always been a non-partisan center promoting fairness both with labor and business. — Kevin O'Brien, Davenport

The Labor Center web site states that it's a bridge between the University and the labor community. To me that's exactly what the Labor Center does each and every day; they uphold the U of I's outreach mission. — Cody Graham, Burlington

This program costs a small amount of money compared to how much good it does. Helping the working class helps the state of Iowa. The economic benefit is tremendous. — John Hamm, Sioux City

Hundreds or thousands of costly disputes are avoided when worker representatives know how to do jobs correctly and professionally. — Jon Thomas, Des Moines

I teach at UNI in the Department of Communication Studies, and I'm a member of the United Faculty union here. And I've been an instructor for the Labor Center this spring, and it was a great experience working with 30-40 workers from the Quad Cities. I hope to do it again. I've been thinking about the way the Labor Center fulfills the Board of Regents' mission. For one thing, the Labor Center is highly efficient and effective, serving the state at very little cost to the Regents system. And it's also not redundant. We only have one Labor Center. If we don't have this Labor Center, then we don't have one at all, and that's not very effective. The Board's mission also includes providing world-class outreach. If this doesn't exist, then the Regents' outreach can no longer be called world class. — Chris Martin, faculty member, UNI Department of Communication Studies

UI CULTURAL VALUES: Diversity, collaboration, innovation
--

Many speakers mentioned the particular importance of education and leadership development programs for women workers, workers of color, immigrant workers, and other marginalized groups. Several spoke of the impact on their lives of having attended classes designed to promote workplace diversity and tools to combat discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Delivering education and research in accessible formats, at times and places convenient for working people, and designing educational materials suitable for English language learners or workers with limited literacy skills, was identified as a highly valued service provided by the Labor Center.

Excerpts from hearing speaker statements touching on diversity, collaboration, innovation

Having a Labor Center that educates women workers to be leaders is important at a time when women still face barriers at work and pay inequality is still widespread. I have a contract that guarantees equal pay at my job, but most women don't. This spring, I helped bring a Labor Center class to Des Moines that focused on combating gender-based harassment. I'm not the only woman in my workplace who's attended the Labor Center's women's school – and as a result, we have had more women step up into leadership roles, helping co-workers, and helping to make important decisions. We should be laying groundwork for our daughters to be even more involved than we are, and the Labor Center helps facilitate that. – Robin Arnold, Des Moines

I have known the Labor Center through the Center for Worker Justice, five years ago, since I moved to the United States. I have experienced a lot of injustice going on in the workplace, discrimination, harassment, wage theft. The Labor Center has helped us [by] educating us [on] how to identify those issues in our workplace. Many immigrant workers in Iowa have suffered a lot of injustice. I'm going to take a case of a lady from Togo who worked almost forty-five days without getting paid. With the help of the Labor Center, we fought and, finally, she got paid for all her wages. — Bradarie Djeugang, UI undergraduate student

I spent 44 years at the phone company, splicing telephone cable, working with all men. I went to all these schools at the Labor Center over the years, and they gave me the tools to become the woman I am today. Without the Labor Center, I wouldn't have ended up working in a U.S. Congressman's office. Without the Labor Center, I couldn't have talked to the men that discriminated against me at the phone company. That was even harder than working in a Congressional office. The Labor Center gave me the tools to do that. Without the Labor Center I wouldn't have been able to do it, so I thank the Labor Center for making the woman that I am today, I don't know what I would have done without you. – Kerry Bowen, Windsor Heights

I have had the opportunity to observe firsthand many of the activities of the Labor Center. Because of my work as a school psychologist I'm very passionate about immigration rights. I have seen the role that the Labor Center plays in helping workers know their rights. In the schools, many times I notice that families are stressed because of work. The parents are working several jobs and the children feel that stress, and, of course, aren't doing as well in school. The Labor Center then works with the community and these immigrants to supply different types of educational opportunities. These are offered in Spanish and other languages, they are at times when people can participate, and in places that are convenient. I've also seen organizational development activities from the Labor Center. Also there's an educational opportunity that the Labor Center provides on campus, and I've taken advantage of that. As a result, I am able, when I teach my students in school psychology at the university, I can help them better understand labor issues and the rights of workers and the parents they will interact with. — Sally Hartman, Iowa City

I never thought that I would be the first female president of a union in a workplace that is predominantly male, I never thought I could have a voice to help represent people when they are needing help. These thoughts never would have happened if not for great mentors, and the education that was afforded to me through the U of I Labor Center. They have taught me about labor history, labor law, FMLA laws, workers comp laws and that is just the tip of the iceberg. The biggest thing the Labor Center has given me is the confidence to stand in front of a group of people and speak from my heart and mind. The University of Iowa has this all wrong. They need to upright this decision to close the Labor Center. — Lorri Walker, Keokuk

I don't know if you're all aware that there is something called the Midwest School for Women Workers. It travels around the Midwest, and we're fortunate to get it at the Labor Center every seven, eight years. I attended in 2007. Some of the skills that they teach at that school for women are leadership skills, communication skills. We speak about sexual harassment; we speak about pay equity. I learned a tremendous amount from that school. It led me to run for treasurer of my local, for president of the Hawkeye Labor Council, for state senate, and, finally, for business manager of IBEW Local 1362 at Rockwell Collins. — Shelley Parbs, Cedar Rapids

The Labor Center provides numerous classes for the UAW regional and national civil rights committee conference. In our union, our civil rights committees are tasked with preventing workplace discrimination. The Labor Center classes at these conferences reach civil rights committee members from hundreds of the largest employers in the Midwest and, in some cases, across this country. — Kelli Harrison, Marion

For minority workers, it's a fundamental civil rights issue. Discrimination is very much alive in Iowa workplaces and a serious issue holding back talent and progress. Many minority workers I know are unfamiliar with discrimination laws, or even how to file a claim when they feel they have been discriminated against. The information I have learned in class has given me essential

tools in the struggle for equality and economic progress for all Iowans. Closing the Labor Center would be a disaster with serious repercussions for our state, our citizens and the university. — Rodney Blackwell, Davenport

We've had potential Americans with Disabilities Act problems. But when stewards understand the law, they can get in there, and save management from mistakes and grief. This is the kind of thing we talk about when we say knowledge is power. It's the power to help people, and solve problems, and the Labor Center has just been a great partner in helping us to do that. — Tom Kinn, Waterloo