

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PARTS BRACKETED AND IN BOLD TYPE ARE FROM VERONICA MAKOWSKY AND INDICATE ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE THE PROVOST RECEIVED PROFESSOR WILSON'S MEMO OF DECEMBER 19TH.

December 19, 2005.

To: Peter J. Nicholls, Provost

From: Richard A. Wilson, Director, Human Rights Institute

Re: Labor Rights and Curriculum

Before addressing the specific questions you have raised in your memo of Nov. 2, I would like to review what has already taken place at UConn this year, so you are aware of the context of the Human Rights Institute's research and teaching efforts on economic and labor rights.

First, the Human Rights Institute and Thomas J Dodd Center hosted an international conference on Economic Rights from October 27-29, 2005. The conference drew in speakers from all over the world to address questions of human rights, economic rights and poverty and 175 individuals registered over the three days, most of them UConn faculty and students. A number of the speakers directly addressed questions of labor rights such as the right to work and the right to work in a safe environment.

Accompanying the conference were a number of related Economic Rights Outreach Activities: http://www.humanrights.uconn.edu/rese_outreach.htm

A student essay competition on economic rights was held and attracted a number of high level papers from undergraduates and graduates on economic and labor rights themes. During the course of the Fall 05 semester, seven films were shown on economic and labor rights and these were attended by over 500 students and faculty. At the last film titled 'The Take', the filmmaker Avi Lewis attended and spoke about the successes of groups of Argentine workers in buying back their factories after they had declared bankruptcy. On October 28, 2005, a day-long Fair Trade Fair was held on the library plaza including eight companies and organizations campaigning on labor rights for workers around the world.

Earlier in 2005, the Human Rights Institute designated Professor Lanse Minkler of the Economics Department the first Socio-Economic Rights Director. One of Professor Minkler's key responsibilities is to co-direct [along with Hertel, POLS] the Economic Rights Research and Reading Group. This is comprised of approximately 14 faculty which meets bi-weekly during term-time to discuss readings in this field and to present their own work. Graduate students will be invited to key sessions in 2006-07. For the first time, in Spring 2006, the Human Rights Institute is holding a research funding competition in the area of economic rights open to faculty.

\$5000 in resources is being allocated for research in this field. Small research grants are also available for graduate students in the field of human rights and labor rights.

Turning to the specific items raised in your letter of Nov. 2, 2005,

1.1 Courses for undergraduates that pertain to the topic of labor and economic rights:

I will deal firstly with the labor rights-related courses presently available on the Human rights Minor. The Human Rights Minor was established in 2001 and presently has approximately 42 students registered on it. The following courses are already included in the course catalog and available to undergraduates on the Human Rights Minor and beyond.

ECON 206: Philosophy and Economics
ECON 207: Beyond Self Interest
ECON 247: Economic Development
ECON 223: Economics of Poverty
POLS 225/ HRTS 225: International Organizations and Law
POLS 256/ HRTS 256: Constitutional Rights and Liberties
POLS 296W: Advanced Topics in Human Rights Theory and Practice
POLS 212W: Globalization and Political Change
POLS 336: Comparative Political Development
SOC 215/ HRTS 215: Human Rights in the United States
SOC 249/ HRTS 249: Sociological Perspectives on Poverty
SOC 258: The Developing World
SOC 268/ HRTS 268: Class, Power and Inequality
HRTS 245: Human Rights Internship and Portfolio

From existing Economics and Political Science faculty, there is interest in developing new courses related to labor rights issues, including two courses in Economics ‘Gender and Development’ and ‘Economic Rights’, as well as a joint POLS/ECON course titled ‘Sweatshop Labor’. However, the faculty members have made clear that encouragement and resources may be needed for the departments to release them from their regular teaching obligations and enable them to make these courses available. **[The Provost is willing to allocate some course development funds for specific proposals. VM]**

Second, there are a number of courses offered at regional campuses by the College of Continuing Studies specifically in the area of ‘Labor Studies and Employment Relations’. These are moving online and have been targeted primarily at attorneys and trade unionists, rather than UConn undergraduates. **[Vice Provost Makowsky is discussing this with Continuing Studies. VM]**

Finally, there is an important point worth mentioning when considering the development of an interdisciplinary program or new courses at the undergraduate level at UConn. While interdisciplinarity is a key component of the existing University Academic Plan, as well as forthcoming CLAS Academic Plan proposals, we have found that in practice there are a number of obstacles to interdisciplinary curricular development. Departments are occasionally suspicious that credits might be bleeding out of their department and require regular assurances that this will not be the case. There is no proper system to properly recognize and remunerate co-teaching of courses by faculty. The CLAS C&C Committee often greets interdisciplinary courses and programs with a skeptical eye and gives the impression that they view them as not intellectually rigorous since they do not emanate from a single discipline or department. **[Issues of interdisciplinarity are being considered as part of the strategic planning process. VM]**

A clear and unequivocal message promoting interdisciplinarity from the Provost's Office might help those of us developing interdisciplinary programs at the undergraduate level to overcome some of these daily obstacles.

1.2 How best to make this list available for students

As a matter of course, the Human Rights Institute produces a brochure once per year publicizing courses on the Human rights Minor. HRI also posts details of human rights courses on its website under Curricula:

http://www.humanrights.uconn.edu/cur_courses.htm

If additional resources are available, we could produce an insert into our Human Rights Minor brochure which highlights existing courses that pertain particularly to labor rights. This could also serve as a publicity leaflet to be handed out at student and outreach events which address economic and labor rights. **[The Provost is providing funds for such an insert or brochure. VM]**

2. Suggest how the Human Rights Minor could address this topic, possibly in a track;

Significant steps would need to be taken to announce a 'track' or a 'concentration' in labor and economic rights and including in it in our Human Rights Minor. This would require bringing a proposal to the CLAS Curriculum and Course committee which would scrutinize any specific application and may well reject it if there are not enough courses on the books or available on a regular basis.

Distinct from the Human Rights Minor, the Individualized Major program would certainly be a place where a student could construct a program of study with a focus on labor rights, corporate responsibility and globalization. At present there are 3-4 students with a plan that overlaps with this theme. For further discussion in this area, the contact person is Dr. Margaret Lamb, Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies Program Margaret.lamb@uconn.edu. **[Vice Provost Makowsky is contacting Dr. Lamb. VM]**

3. Develop a list of internships for students that might be posted by Careers Services and elsewhere also involving the Law School etc.

Attached you will find a list of internships [APPENDIX A], which can be made available to Human Rights Minor students in their senior year and placed on the HRI website. The Human Rights Minor Director has \$2000 at his disposal to facilitate student involvement and defray travel costs for these internships. A point worth making here is that the kind of service learning which is integral to the Human Rights Minor is likely to be one of the main ways in which students identify economic and labor rights organizations they would like to join full-time. Their experience of an internship also makes them much more appealing to potential employers and provides the kind of contacts and references that are needed to gain entry into this field. [**The Provost is providing some internship funds. VM**]

At present, the Law School offers human rights-related summer internships for its students, including an internship at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Human Rights Institute provided \$3000 in 2005-6 to support students undertaking these internships. In November, I forwarded your letter to the Deans of the Law School and School of Social Work and asked for any further thoughts on the question of labor rights internships, but have not had any reply. [**Vice Provost Makowsky is contacting the Deans of Law and Social Work. VM**]

4. Suggest ways that students interested in related careers might find them, such as a career fair at UConn or elsewhere.

We have developed a list of job opportunities in the area of labor rights for undergraduate students [see APPENDIX B]. We have already communicated with Career Services regarding the inclusion of more human and labor rights organizations at their February 2006 Career Day for Non-Profit Organizations. They have our list and seem willing to cooperate on this fully.

In addition, the organization Idealist.org regularly organizes non-profit career fairs. On their website they provide the contact information for universities interested in hosting a non-profit career fair on their campus. We would suggest that the Careers Services contact them directly to coordinate student access to information about labor rights careers.

5. Suggest how graduate students might pursue this academic interest, such as a graduate certificate in human rights that would have a labor rights track.

At present, graduate students can work with the approximately 6-8 faculty in Anthropology, Economics, Political Science and Sociology who have an expressed expertise in the area of economic rights. Regarding the viability of a graduate certificate in Labor Rights, this would be desirable if it adopted the model of the Global Governance Certificate in Political Science and achieved the same kind of success in recruiting able students.

Having said that, such a development could well be precipitous at this point, since we do not even offer a graduate certificate in human rights at UConn. While this could well be desirable, it would likely take 2 years to set up the general human rights graduate certificate. Only at that

point would we be in a position to consider developing a labor rights track within the human rights graduate certificate.

Furthermore, our estimation on the basis of the existing expertise in this area and the present teaching commitments is that the latter step would be impossible within the present teaching capacity in the labor rights field at UConn. At present, there is only one full-time tenure track faculty member [Hertel, POLS] with a specific labor rights expertise and she has a number of existing commitments to general human rights and departmental political science teaching.

Therefore, it is likely that further development in the area of labor rights would only be possible through the addition of *at least* two new full-time faculty whose primary expertise is in the field of labor and economic rights. If there is interest in taking this matter forward, I would be happy to provide job descriptions for these positions, and consult with social science departments regarding their possible interest and participation. **[The needs of the human rights program will be considered in the context of the Provost's proposed New Faculty Initiative (hiring more faculty). VM]**

6. Ways to support the work of faculty research and study groups, with reference to library provision etc.

At present, library provision for human rights and labor rights can only be described as poor, despite the willingness and undoubted commitment of the Homer Babbidge Library and Thomas Dodd Archive to human rights teaching, research and programming.

Appendix C is a report produced by Librarian Tiffani Conner and Thomas Dodd Director Tom Wilsted which goes into library holdings and provision in a detailed and meticulous fashion and I would highlight here three main areas identified in their report:

1. Apart from the special collections at the Dodd Center, present holdings of scholarly journals and texts in human rights are meager and out of date and in no way adequate to the requirements of a university claiming to be a world class institution in human rights teaching and research. Appendices C.I-II review library provision in the field of labor rights specifically and demonstrate the paucity of existing holdings. We do not have the library resources to teach labor rights even if there were greater will to do so. However, to speak of labor rights provision when basic provision for human rights purchasing is not yet covered might be putting the cart before the horse.

2. The library has no allocated budget for human rights purchasing, which is a major obstacle to building a human rights research and teaching program at the university. The report recommends establishing a library budget for human rights collection materials and makes budgetary recommendations which I would strongly endorse. The report at Appendix C.III also makes suggestions for multimedia title acquisitions which I would support as an ever-growing aspect of the teaching and outreach activities at the University.

3. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is no designated Liaison/Curator of Human Rights in the university library system who could make human rights teaching and research support and acquisitions his/her main responsibility. With the rapid increase in human rights faculty [as of 2002, there were no joint hires, in 2006 there will be 5] and courses, demand for library support can only grow. **[The Dodd Center is doing some significant internal and external evaluation and these needs will be taken into consideration. VM]**

I hope this report is useful in helping you to consider ways in which you could fulfill your charge from President Austin.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss matters arising from this report at your convenience and will be available up until Dec. 24 and after January 3rd.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Richard A. Wilson
Gladstein Distinguished Chair of Human Rights
Director, Human Rights Institute