

The Miguel Contreras Labor Program Summary

The Miguel Contreras Labor Program (MCLP) is the only statewide research program within the University of California that specifically addresses the labor and employment issues affecting the state's diverse and changing workforce. It is a multi-campus program that houses research, education and service activities through its six affiliated components:

- The statewide Labor and Employment Research Fund (LERF) which supports faculty research and provides graduate student fellowships on all ten UC campuses
- The statewide Labor Studies Development Fund, which supports curriculum development throughout the UC system
- The UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment
- The UC Berkeley Institute for Research on Labor and Employment
- The UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education
- The UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education

A formal external review of UCLA's IRLE by a panel of five distinguished academic experts, chaired by Prof. Thomas Kochan of the MIT Sloan School of Management, described the IRLE on that campus as *“an exciting, vibrant and worthwhile education, research, and public service program... a model for how the field of industrial relations needs to adapt and broaden its focus to address contemporary work and employment issues.”* The review also pointed to the need for funding stabilization.

Research

The statewide Labor and Employment Research Fund supports cutting-edge faculty and graduate student research at all UC campuses on a wide variety of issues through a competitive grants and fellowships program. The program has funded hundreds of scholars over the years, and much of the resulting work has been published in leading peer-reviewed journals and attracted national and international acclaim. Recent examples of research supported by these funds include:

- a statewide employer survey of human resource and training practices;
- a study of California's paid family leave program;
- research on the impact of immigration and trade on the state's workforce;
- analyses of trends in job-based health care.

Researchers have a range of academic disciplines and viewpoints. In addition, these funds have nurtured a new generation of scholars through graduate student fellowships – more needed than ever as fees rise and other graduate funding sources are in jeopardy.

The programs at UC Berkeley and UCLA carry out research and provide technical assistance on timely issues impacting the California workforce. Recent examples include research on the employment impacts of proposed health care reforms and climate change actions, technical assistance to policy makers on health reforms at the state and county level, and research on workforce development and local hire programs in Los Angeles.

Education

MCLP conferences and colloquia have brought leading scholars from all over the world for intellectual exchanges with UC faculty and students. Postdoctoral scholars at UCLA and UC Berkeley have also contributed to building the intellectual community of labor and employment researchers. The graduate student fellowship program mentioned above has a strong educational component, and graduate students are often employed as research assistants on faculty LERF grants, affording extensive opportunities for one-on-one mentorship.

The statewide Labor Studies funding supports curriculum development initiatives throughout the UC system, including UCLA, UCR, UC Davis, UCSB, UCI and UCSD. UCLA has an undergraduate minor in Labor and Workplace Studies that mounts a variety of courses, including a popular year-long survey course for first-year undergraduates that enrolls 200 students annually and also employs graduate students as teaching fellows. These programs offer student internships in the labor and employment field on many UC campuses and in the community.

Service

As UC's business executive leadership and agricultural extension programs do with their constituencies, but with a much smaller budget, the Labor Centers at UC Berkeley and UCLA conduct trainings and workshops for union leaders. In addition, the Labor Centers offer specialized training programs like the Human Resource Roundtable, which helps corporate human resource officials keep up with workplace issues (at UCLA), the Asian Pacific American Union Leadership School (at UCLA), the C.L. Dellums African American Union Leadership School (at Berkeley) and the Colegio, a Spanish language program (at UCLA). Other training programs cover a range of topics, including conflict mediation and financial management.

Working with unions, employers and advocates, the UC Berkeley Labor Center facilitates partnerships in eldercare and services for people with developmental disabilities. This approach improves outcomes for consumers by creating better jobs, training and career opportunities for the direct service workers who work with them.

Over many decades now, this work has given UC a strong international reputation in the labor and employment field. The Institutes at Berkeley and UCLA were first established in 1945, and have a history of highly distinguished leadership. The first director of the UC Berkeley Institute was Clark Kerr, later UC's best-known President. The Centers for Labor Research and Education were added in 1964, and the statewide research and graduate fellowship programs began in 2000.