

**AN EVALUATION OF  
THE CENTER FOR LABOR EDUCATION AND  
RESEARCH**

**University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu**

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Submitted

July 1, 2002

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**Executive Summary**

The Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR) is a tremendous asset to the University of Hawaii. Given the changing economy and the changing nature of work, its mission of bringing the resources of the University to workers and their unions on the Hawaiian Islands is as relevant today as when the Center was established in 1976. Educating workers is imperative in creating a strong economy in Hawaii, and providing unionists with a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities is vital to ensure that collective bargaining proceeds in the most efficient manner.

The energetic faculty, with diverse areas of expertise, delivers a wide range of high-quality programs and initiatives, ranging from non-credit classes to technical assistance to unions and video productions. The scope and scale of their activities is impressive given the Center's modest size and budget. The Center and its faculty have built a strong reputation among workers, union officials, and policymakers alike.

Given its five-part mission, CLEAR is currently under-resourced. Additional resources will be necessary for it to move toward offering a degree program, one of its original missions. CLEAR's location at the University of Hawaii's West Oahu campus, with its marginal facilities, has also hindered CLEAR's ability to pursue external funding and to collaborate in research with faculty from a variety of relevant departments at the Manoa campus.

**Recommendations include:**

Continue efforts to expand the non-credit curriculum into new areas and efforts to reach a diversity of Hawaiian workers and unions

Continue working toward offering a labor studies degree using a variety of delivery mechanisms

Expand CLEAR's mission as a resource center to include research for workers, unions, and policymakers by adding a new faculty position

Establish a research presence on the Manoa campus

Add a new faculty position to spearhead research focused on labor and work in Asia and the Pacific Rim

## The Review Process

At the request of Dr. William Puette, on behalf of the University of Hawaii and President Dobelle, I was asked to review the Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR) at the University of Hawaii. I hold a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts; have been active in and have served as an officer in our professional association, the United Association for Labor Education (UALE); and am the director of a similar-sized Labor Studies program at the University of Massachusetts. I am the author of Chaos on the Shop Floor: A Workers' View of Quality, Productivity and Management, Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions, and Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor, as well as numerous publications about work and labor.

As a framework for this review, I relied on the University of Hawaii's "Guidelines for Assessment of Provisional and Established Programs." Because this template appears to have been designed largely for credit programs, I have adapted the framework somewhat to address the non-credit mission and activities of CLEAR.

To gather information first-hand, I visited Hawaii from March 17-23, 2002, and met with CLEAR faculty and staff, University officials, and a number of union stakeholders. I met with CLEAR Director William Puette and CLEAR faculty members Lawrence Boyd, Teresa Bill, Chris Conybeare, and Adrienne Valdez, both individually and as a group. I also had the opportunity to meet with West Oahu Chancellor William Pearman individually and as part of a meeting of the CLEAR Labor Education Advisory Council. In addition to the trade unionists available at that meeting, I met individually with James Rothschild of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); Clyde Hayashi from the Hawaii AFL-CIO; J.N. Musto from the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA); and Eric Gill of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE). I also met with Joyce Chinen of the Sociology Department in West Oahu, and I spoke with Joyce Najita of the Industrial Relations Center (IRC) at the Manoa campus by telephone.

As part of this process I also reviewed a number of documents, including the original legislation establishing CLEAR, program materials from CLEAR, the results of a recent survey of students, and related materials. My report follows.

## Findings of the Review

### CLEAR's Mission and Its Ongoing Importance

Based on my interviews and review of documents, the Center for Labor Education and Research has a clear and well defined mission providing education, training, and technical assistance to workers and their unions. This mission was originally defined in the enabling legislation for CLEAR, specifying activity in five areas:

- (1) Provide credit and non-credit labor studies, and labor related research and educational services for workers and their organizations;
- (2) Provide labor-related education to the public;
- (3) Advise and assist in the development and implementation of labor-related instructional programs, courses, and activities for use with the Department of Education, including teachers preparation thereof;
- (4) Develop and implement a labor studies degree program or programs at the University of Hawaii; and
- (5) Serve as a clearinghouse for labor education matters in the state.[1]

Although this mission was articulated more than twenty-five years ago, it clearly remains relevant for the University, the State, and its citizens. Educating workers is imperative in creating a strong economy in Hawaii, no less today than in 1976. Hawaii continues to be the mostly highly organized state in the United States, and providing unionists with a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities is vital to ensure that collective bargaining proceeds in the most efficient manner. While the University allocates a great deal of resources to the business community, CLEAR provides an important counterweight in reaching out to workers and their unions and should receive the resources to do so.

Furthermore, given the dramatic changes that have taken place over the past two and one-half decades, I would suggest that this mission is even more relevant today. We have witnessed tremendous changes in the nature of work, ranging from the increasing use of computer-based technology to the growing participation of women in the workforce. Employers are changing no less rapidly, with a growing concentration of ownership and the globalization of production. Labor organizations, too, have been called upon to change, in part in response to these changes in work and employers, but also as they organize and serve a new generation of Hawaiian workers. More than ever it is a time for the University's resources to be brought to bear on these issues, through a center such as CLEAR.

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<sup>1</sup>Act 292, Section 1. Regular Session of 1976 [H. B. No 2691]. A Bill for an Act Relating to Labor Education at the University of Hawaii, as amended.

### Quality of CLEAR's Programs and Initiatives

From my meetings with trade union leaders and CLEAR's advisory board, and from my review of course outlines and materials, the high quality of the Center's programming is obvious. The non-credit offerings are extensive and I was very impressed overall by the depth and rigor of their non-credit work. In non-credit settings instructors and programs sometimes end up reducing course content and scope. My review of a selection of course offerings at CLEAR suggests the opposite, however. Courses offered by CLEAR are solid and thorough and are among the most rigorous offered in our field.

The trade unionists I spoke with praised the quality of CLEAR's non-credit courses. James Rothschild, union representative for the electrical workers (IBEW) Local 1260, praised the quality of the non-credit programs his members enrolled in. He suggests, "CLEAR is an absolute necessity for labor on the Islands." Eric Gill from the hotel workers (HERE) reports, "Our union is very well served by the stewards' training courses offered by CLEAR."

The faculty of CLEAR also has a strong record of accomplishment. CLEAR Director, Dr. William Puette is a recognized scholar in the field. His Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor (Ithaca, NY: ILR/Cornell Press) is a well respected volume. Dr. Puette has also worked tirelessly in building CLEAR and his efforts and enthusiasm have built a solid and stable program. J.N. Musto, Executive Director of the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), suggests, "CLEAR would not be anything without Bill Puette's enthusiasm."

Professor Adrienne Valdez is highly recognized at the University and among trade unionists for her teaching on women's issues in the workplace, including the areas of discrimination law, sexual harassment, and workplace diversity. She currently also serves as the EEO officer for the West Oahu campus. Professor Valdez, along with Center historian and archivist Teresa Bill, coordinated a national gathering of union women in Hawaii recently and have begun an innovative "Union Women's Network." Joyce Najita from the IRC praises this programming with women, suggesting, "Working women in the Hawaiian workforce are a sleeping giant about to awaken." In her capacity as a historian, Ms. Bill served a consultant to Hawaii's Plantation Village and the feature film "Picture Bride."

Professor Chris Conybeare is the longtime producer of CLEAR's public television program, Rice & Roses. His own productions are highly respected and he is frequently called upon to act as consultant on other documentaries. In recognition of his work, he was recently named the vice-president for the executive board of the World Association of Press Councils (WAPC).

Dr. Lawrence W. Boyd is an expert on the Hawaiian economy, studying the tourism industry and analyzing the growth and development of the Hawaiian economy. He is a frequent consultant to the State legislature on economic issues.

### Efficiency and Organization of CLEAR in Meeting Its Mission

While the faculty and staff all contribute to the Center's overall mission, each has carved out an area of expertise that creates a breadth for CLEAR that one would not expect given its fairly small staff. The complementary nature of the faculty and staff expertise has resulted in an efficient use of University resources and the building of a strong reputation among workers, their unions, and policymakers across the Hawaiian Islands.

As an example of the high level of activity, during calendar year 2001, CLEAR offered twelve educational programs, eight specialized training workshops, and three conferences, serving almost one thousand clients. Additionally, they provided technical assistance in 187 consultations and gave eleven guest lectures, as well as teaching a number of credit classes. Their website, a major resource for workers, unionists, and policymakers, was visited more than twelve thousand times in 2001. A review of current activity indicates as much, if not more, activity in the current year.

However, one of the obstacles the Center for Labor Education and Research faces in meeting their mission is their location on the West Oahu campus. On the temporary campus, facilities are marginal and the campus infrastructure modest. This makes fulfilling the core mission of the Center difficult at times.

During my visit to the Manoa campus, I was very impressed by the Hawaiian Studies Center. It not only provided office space for faculty and staff of the Center, but I got the sense that it was a gathering place for people, students, and ideas associated with Hawaiian studies. This facility could serve as a model facility for CLEAR and the labor movement in Hawaii. Given the labor movement's support of CLEAR, I believe they could be mobilized to support the construction of a similar Center for Labor Studies.

In addition to the limitations of the physical facilities, the West Oahu campus has little infrastructure to process external funding, which I believe will be important as the Center grows. The campus would need to develop a track record and reputation with funding agencies to support growth. At the same time, I believe it is accurate to suggest that, until the new campus is built, within the University programs housed at West Oahu will be viewed as lower quality and, in some cases, marginal.

I understand the reasons for being located at this yet-to-be-built campus, which is geographically closer to the workers and unionists who are likely to use the Center and its services. The problem is that the future of the Center is inextricably linked to the building of a new major campus at West Oahu. Even if construction begins sooner rather than later, I don't believe the University should put the mission of CLEAR on hold, or hamper it significantly, while it awaits campus construction.

The one area in which the Center is not fulfilling its mission is in terms of providing a degree program. Although part of its original mission, CLEAR has made only modest progress toward offering a degree program. As I suggest below, this is primarily a resource issue.

### Resource Issues

As I have indicated above, CLEAR has been very efficient in its use of the budget provided to them and in many ways they have far exceeded expectations. It should also be noted here that in 1999 CLEAR established the "Arthur A. Rutledge Endowment in Labor Studies." This endowment of \$1 million, establishing the "Arthur A. Rutledge Lectureship," is a major accomplishment for a Center this small.

Still, given the changing needs of workers and their unions in Hawaii, I believe the Center to be under-resourced. Given the five-part mission as laid out in the original legislation, CLEAR simply does not have enough faculty and staff, nor an adequate support budget. Given all their activity in the non-credit arena, it is no surprise that they have made only modest progress toward offering a degree in Labor Studies - one of their original mandates - under these fiscal constraints.

As I suggest below, the addition of two new faculty lines, as well as additional clerical and research support, would build on the strong foundation that CLEAR has established and move it to the next level, both in serving the labor community in Hawaii and in garnering national attention for the Center and the University. These additional resources would allow CLEAR to fulfill its mandate through the establishment of a degree program and to expand in important new areas of study.

The endowment resources must not be used to offset State budget cuts. This was a pledge made to the founders of the endowment. Not to honor this pledge will seriously compromise the credibility of the Center and any future attempts to build or expand this or other such grants. Likewise, the University needs to stabilize the Center's general fund allocation, and must resist the temptation to pressure the labor movement to fund CLEAR's core programs. The reputation of the Center and the validity of its research will constantly be subject to challenge if it is perceived as dependent on direct labor union financial support.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Continue efforts to expand the non-credit curriculum into new areas and efforts to reach a diversity of Hawaiian workers and unions**

CLEAR has made steady progress over the past several years in developing and integrating new courses of study into their non-credit curriculum. These have included courses on the changing economic system, preventing sexual harassment, and diverse programming designed for working women. Given the changing nature of work and labor, I would encourage the faculty of CLEAR to continue with these innovations, and to continue to add new courses of study to their regularly-offered classes.

### **Continue working toward offering a labor studies degree using a variety of delivery mechanisms**

As I have indicated above, CLEAR has not had adequate resources to fulfill their mission of providing a degree program in Labor Studies. They have laid down important ground work and, with additional resources, are ready to make significant progress toward offering a degree in Labor Studies. I concur with the thinking that faculty in the Center have already done in terms of exploring a multi-faceted delivery system for courses leading to the degree. These ideas include converting some of the non-credit work that is already offered through the Center; an assessment process already in place at the West Oahu campus; providing credit for life experience; additional courses offered at both the West Oahu and Manoa campuses; and reaching out through internet based courses to citizens who may not have access to either campus. I would encourage the CLEAR staff to take a number of intermediate approaches to assess both the demand for and the efficiency of various delivery systems. I would also encourage the faculty of CLEAR to reach out to colleagues in other departments and to explore the possibility of a joint degree program.

### **Expand CLEAR's mission as a resource center to include research for workers, unions, and policy makers by adding a new faculty position**

Given the changing nature of work and labor in a global economy, unions depend on new research in their decision-making. In addition to offering non-credit classes and technical assistance to unions, the mission of CLEAR should be expanded to include offering more research services to workers, unions, and public agencies in Hawaii. Many labor studies programs on the mainland have pursued this trend with good success. While the Center has some capacity in the area of research, the addition of a new faculty member with research expertise would enhance the CLEAR faculty greatly.

### **Establish a research presence on the Manoa campus**

The Center's recent move to the West Oahu campus was a good one for the delivery of its non-credit curriculum. Especially given the delays in completing the new West Oahu campus, it is important that CLEAR establish a research presence on the Manoa campus. A presence on the Manoa campus would place the Center in a better position to secure external funding, as well as to collaborate with faculty in a variety of departments across the Manoa campus. Many Labor Studies programs on the mainland have offices on multiple campuses in order to be close to their constituency while maintaining a presence on the main campus. The addition of a faculty member specializing in union research located on the Manoa campus could jump-start this operation. The addition of an additional faculty member with expertise in work and labor in Asia and the Pacific Rim (see below) would also contribute greatly to the viability of such a research operation. In addition to the two faculty lines, office space and funds for clerical and research assistance would need to be provided.

The Industrial Relations Center (IRC) under the direction of Professor Joyce Najita has been an important part of the Manoa campus for a number of years. However, given the change in business school education away from Industrial Relations toward Human Resources, upon Professor Najita's retirement there may be an opportunity to reallocate some IRC funds to CLEAR. While Professor Najita maintains an impressive historical collection of materials in the area of industrial relations, the union community on the Island would be better served with the development of a research arm within CLEAR that would provide them with ongoing research about work and labor.

### **Add a new faculty position to spearhead research focused on labor and work in Asia and the Pacific Rim**

Given the location of the University of Hawaii and its growing emphasis on research and scholarship about Asia and the Pacific Rim, a tremendous opportunity exists for CLEAR to develop a focus on work and labor in these areas. While individual scholars specialize in work and labor in Japan, China, or other Asian countries, no labor center has yet developed this as an area of focus. The addition of a faculty member with expertise in labor and work in Asia and the Pacific Rim would enhance the standing of both the University and CLEAR.