

# United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)

**PETER Q. KNOWLTON**  
General President

**ANDREW C. DINKELAKER**  
General Secretary-Treasurer

**EUGENE ELK**  
Director of Organization



July 10, 2018

Bruce Harreld, President  
University of Iowa  
101 Jessup Hall  
Iowa City IA 52242-1316

Dear President Harreld,

It has come to my attention that the University of Iowa is intending to shut down the Labor Center. As you know since 1951 the Labor Center has been the only organization in the Iowa Regents system devoted to education about and for Iowa workers. Its programs have been largely due to the Iowa labor movement's investment of ideas and time, including direct funding from unions, payment of program fees, and active support for state investment in public higher education.

The Center has been built by generations of Iowans and their unions and we believe it would irresponsible for the University to make any decision to "close" the Center without a robust and inclusive process and discussions involving the Labor Center's advisory board and other stakeholders. UE represents thousands of Iowa public sector workers and we know the valuable work the Center has done and what its programs mean to our members and their local unions.

As someone who has sat on the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth Labor Education Center steering committee for over 20 years I understand intuitively the pressures both financially and politically on administrations to cut budgets and eliminate programs. Over these two decades there have been a number of attempts to shutter the UMass Dartmouth Center and each time we were able to work with the administration to figure out a way to realign the budget while maintaining the purpose and mission of our Labor Education Center. However, it is my understanding that the Labor Center's annual General Education Fund (GEF) allocation from the University is relatively insignificant, has already been cut multiple times, and that is now less than one-thousandth of one percent (0.00075) of the University's total GEF budget which, as I understand it, is less than your salary.

Any financial savings to the University by closing the Labor Center will be minuscule but the residual and long term effects on workers, unions, and Iowa communities will be immeasurable and quite severe. Shutting the Center would put an end to the tens of thousands of dollars the UI takes in from union and community program fees and sponsorships each year. It would eliminate UI from consideration for federal grants in areas of Labor Center expertise (such as the \$950,000 in competitive federal funding the Labor Center has secured since 2002). The fate of crown jewels like the Iowa Labor History Oral History Project, the Center's entire repertoire of high-quality educational manuals and curriculum, or continually in-demand resources created by initiatives like the Iowa Worker Rights Project or the Child Labor Public Education Project, would all be thrown into question. My greatest concern, however, are the thousands of Iowans that would no longer have access to leadership development programs and critical education about their rights at work and responsibilities as union leaders and members of their communities.

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I urge you to reconsider your intentions and to meet with the advisory committee of the Labor Center in order that a more comprehensive and informed discussion and decision can be made. This would insure that the mission and purpose of the Labor Center can be fulfilled and that the valuable service and programs the Labor Center provides to the University and Iowa communities can continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Knowlton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Knowlton  
UE General President

cc: Greg Cross, UE International Representative  
Jennifer Sherer, Director Univ. of Iowa Labor Center