



Outstanding Unit Award Nomination Form

Nominated unit: Labor Education Service
Unit Head Administrator: Howard Kling

Nominator Information:

Name: Randy Croce
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Key Area 1 (maximum 1000 words):

The mission of the Labor Education Service (LES) is to provide workers with the resources to have a say in their jobs. We at LES try to practice this philosophy in our own workplace at the University, a unit within the Center for Human Resources and Labor Studies (CHRLS) in the Carlson School of Management. We recognize that every one of the ten of us - eight P&A, a professor and a civil service administrator - has unique talents and interests and each is encouraged to develop his or her skills and a unique career path. While everyone is expected to take a share of the department's common work - including teaching classes, coordinating conferences, producing videos and web sites and research, - each is free to fulfill these tasks in his or her own way and to pursue other avenues of interest.

The academic freedom P&A at LES enjoy is expressed and confirmed by the constitution and bylaws we wrote in 2003, based in part on the

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equivalent CAPA documents. Everyone of every classification in our unit has a vote, in the rare times when formal votes are taken, and each has a role in the consensus that decides most issues. We all meet monthly to decide immediate issues and deal with broader goals and policy at an annual retreat. Shortly after our constitution was confirmed by our college, we elected a P&A as director, after all previous directors had been faculty. The director is reviewed periodically by other staff and by union constituents. We participated in the rewriting of the constitution of the Center of which LES is a part, so that all P&A can vote for the Center director.

P&A are hired after a national search and review by a committee of LES members, union advisers and a faculty representative of the Center. All staff have the opportunity to interview the candidates, attend their sample classes and voice their preferences to the director, who makes the final selection. Performance criteria have been established in consultation with each staff member and annual evaluations are conducted with extensive input from each of us. LES P&A are not subject to arbitrary non-renewal for reasons other than budgetary necessity or clearly irresponsible or dishonest action. When we faced a major University budget cut, we met to consider options including rotating 75% appointments, basing a cut on seniority or other agreed upon criteria or delegating the decision to the director. During the current and previous University financial crises, three staff have taken a buy-out package or retired early, avoiding any non-renewals. If a non-renewal ever has to be considered, it will be decided openly.

P&A staff have extremely flexible hours, permitting them to pursue individual research projects, participate in governance or to balance family needs. While the unit work norm is usually well over 40 hours a week, involves travel and may sometimes entail all-nighters to meet deadlines, as long as the work gets done, staff can complete it at any time. Leaves to help out family members not covered by official

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FMLA requirements have been granted when requested. Staff can also work at home, when feasible, which has been especially helpful for parents.

Of eight LES P&A, three current staff and four former members have taken semester-long sabbaticals to do research or work on a personal project. Staff are also encouraged to get training to advance their skills and career, including out-of-town venues and taking University classes via Regents Scholarships. Two P&A completed Master's degrees and two others are currently given time to complete their MAs while working at LES. When staff accomplishments have been recognized by invitations to present papers or media productions, time is always allotted for attendance and the department pays for transportation and lodging, if the sponsoring organization does not cover the costs. Since the unit is so small, department awards don't seem practical. However, staff are allotted work time and travel expenses to receive both local and national awards. In 2007, LES sent four P&A to New Orleans to accept awards, teach, chair panels and create on-the-spot video and print reports on the city and three attended the International Labor Communications Association awards dinner in Washington, DC in 2008.

Participation in governance is encouraged and recognized as part of our performance evaluations. In 2007-09, two members served as CSOM CAPA Representative and Senator, two other P&A staff have previously served on CAPA committees and two have served on other University-wide committees. When Randy Croce considered running for CAPA Chair, the staff voted to approve devoting from a quarter to half time to this position. Every staff member has served in leadership positions of professional and community organizations outside of the University.

All LES P&A staff are committed to the goals of the labor movement and strive to put them into practice in our department. We aim to

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have roughly equal levels of pay for all P&A. Differences are based on criteria we understand and agree to: seniority, completion of a PhD or a leadership position involving extra time and responsibility. Transparency is maintained by circulating the salaries of everyone in the unit among us each year. Two P&A lagged considerably behind the pay levels of others in the department until 1999, when a senior staff member retired. The difference between his salary and the average LES salary was split between the two lower paid staff to bring them to rough parity with their LES colleagues.

We at LES have our disagreements and personality conflicts and feel the stress of frequently heavy workloads as we lose staff and have to earn a larger portion of our budget from sources outside the University. But we are united by our common commitment to economic justice in our society. Within our department, we support workplace fairness and our collective, as well as individual, professional fulfillment.

Key Area 2 (maximum 1000 words):

The Labor Education Service is an innovative leader in disseminating learning beyond campus. In addition to providing up-to-date teaching for the labor movement, we are national leaders in using video and the Internet to inform the public about critical issues and help advance progressive goals in the broader society. We also leverage our position at the University to bring together disparate groups and individuals to address labor and broader socioeconomic concerns.

LES provides P&A staff the infrastructure and freedom to be leaders in the fields of labor teaching and media creation. While all P&A unit staff teach some classes, instruction is the primary task of Mary Bellman, Larry Casey, Tony DeAngelis and Deborah Rosenstein plus Professor John Remington. Creating video and web sites is the primary job for Randy Croce, Howard Kling, Barb Kucera and John See. Annually, we reach about 3,000 students directly in classes. Some courses are taught through our Union Certificate Program on campus

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and many more classes, custom designed for particular unions and other organizations, are taught at locations throughout Minnesota and occasionally in other states, including the National Labor College in Maryland. We have also taught credit classes for the Human Resources and Labor Studies graduate and undergraduate programs. Most staff have authored manuals and/or articles in the field, and all staff write their own curricula, constantly developing new courses to meet the changing demands of the labor movement. LES provides time for this development and the uniformly positive student evaluations of P&A teaching are considered in their evaluations.

LES staff conduct applied research. Former LES P&A Lisa Jordan, PhD Economics, investigated the economic impact of prevailing wage laws on the construction industry. She, John Remington and Larry Casey have all testified before the Minnesota Legislature on building trade and other labor issues.

Workday Minnesota, founded in 2000, is the first and still only daily updated labor news web site in the country. It is edited by veteran journalist Barb Kucera, who won the 2007 annual JOBS NOW Working Class Hero award for her years of reporting. John See works on most of the technical aspects of the site, as well as creating and updating web sites for many labor organizations and advising them on the latest social networking Web tools. He was able to take a sabbatical and get the training he needed to make this career switch from video to computers and now provides invaluable knowledge and skill to LES and the state labor movement. The site, workdayminnesota.org receives about 10,000 unique hits a month (and many more when a major event takes place) and has won International Labor Communication Association (ILCA) awards for excellence and content every year since it began.

Minnesota at Work is the longest running labor cable TV series in the United States and the only one associated with a University-based

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labor education program. The program is shown over 14 cable systems in 28 cities across the state in addition to Metro Cable Network, which sends the show out to every cable system in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. The series has won top ILCA honors every year and two shows have been screened at the Walker Art Center. Even more important to us, the show has made a difference in some labor struggles by bringing them to the attention of the general public and decision makers. (See the magazine article on the show in the supporting materials.) The timeliness and impact of our reporting has been enhanced by moving to web-based video, so that we often have edited segments on our site and on *YouTube* within a day, sometimes within hours of events. These segments are used by the national AFL-CIO and other labor and progressive organizations all over the country.

LES director and video producer Howard Kling has been invited to produce programs nationally and internationally, including a trip with Senator Wellstone to Mexico, the FTAA protests in Miami and a delegation of America's foremost university labor education programs to Vietnam. Randy Croce was funded by the Jerome Foundation to produce an hour-long documentary, *If Stone Could Speak*, shot in Italy and Vermont. LES provided a sabbatical to allow him to do the major editing of the show. The program was broadcast by Twin Cities Public TV and is being reviewed by national PBS. It won the 2008 Hathaway Award from the Vermont Historical Society for a major contribution to the history of the state. Randy has been allowed time to present the show in five of its 12 out-of-state screenings, including New York, Milwaukee and Washington, DC.

Since a 2004 split in the AFL-CIO (which LES reported through *Workday* and daily streaming video segments from the convention in Chicago), our unit has served as a major agent in Minnesota to bring the two sides of the labor movement together to discuss issues of common concern. Our ties to unions in both camps and the independence, academic freedom and credibility of our base at the University has

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enabled us to convene a conference on immigration and an upcoming women's labor retreat. This convener role, together with expanding staff jobs into facilitating union executive board and bargaining committee meetings, has raised the prominence of LES. LES hosted national postal organizers and labor educators conferences in 2007. We have increasingly involved immigrant, people of color, environmental and other constituencies in our events and classes. On a national level, LES conceived the strategy and led a group of over 70 labor journalists from the USA and Canada to cover the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and post stories to the Internet (see additional materials) and is planning a similar activist convention in Pittsburgh for 2009.

The achievements of the LES staff have grown out of the willingness of individual staff to take risks and develop new projects - sometimes national firsts - and the unit's support for these innovations. Our individual entrepreneurship and collective governance have made the unit a national leader in the labor education field.

Supporting Examples (each accompanied by submitted materials, as listed):

1) **LES Your Place for Education** classes/services brochure

Overview of what LES does. Some basic classes, such as *Steward Training* and *Intro to the Labor Movement* are offered every year, but new courses are added every year, such as *Political Action and Union Power* and *YouTube, Unions & You*.

2) **LES Constitution and Bylaws**

Demonstrates the high level of P&A involvement in democratic decision making in our department.

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3) **Professional Associations/Services and Recognition**

This 2008 list illustrates the participation and leadership of LES P&A (plus Prof. John Remington) in University governance, professional associations and community groups, made possible by our flexible schedules and a department culture of high regard for such involvement. Mary Bellman has since taken Erik Peterson's place. She is a member of UALE, Resource Center of the Americas and a founding member of Hispanos Organizing Latino Americans (HOLA) working with immigrants in the building trades.

4) Sample: *Workday Minnesota* <www.workdayminnesota.org>,

The first and only labor website in the USA. Articles and video clips featured here are regularly picked up by other local and national progressive and mainstream media websites and newspapers. This sample also includes a notice for the showing of *The 11th Hour*, this month's screening in the LES labor film series. Many of these showings are co-sponsored with community groups (in this case, the Blue Green Alliance of environmental and labor activists), in order to stimulate dialogue among diverse elements of progressive movements. To encourage attendance by regular citizens as well as community groups, the showings are held off campus, usually in a St. Paul library, and draw 20-100 people monthly to watch and discuss the films and the issues they raise.

5) **Articles** from *Community Media Review* (CMR) and *Catering Industry Employee* (a union magazine)

- Exemplifies the tangible impact of LES videos in labor struggles and recognition of this work by fellow activist media makers and by the labor movement.

4) **Website:** International Labor Communications Association New Orleans Labor Media Project <www.neworleanslabormedia.org>

This site was created for an alternative way to hold a conference, conceived and planned by LES. Over 70 journalists from the USA and Canada came to New Orleans. Two days of lectures, a plenary and tour with local labor and political leaders oriented them

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to the history of the Katrina flood and current situation. Workshops by LES and ILCA professionals taught participants how to record and edit video and audio. Twelve groups spread out across the city, guided by local activists in transit, housing, education and other facets of the community to research and tape stories. They returned to an LES media room to write articles and edit video and radio clips and post them to the web site, informing the public of the still largely unaddressed problems of the city's poor and working class residents. This blend of education and activist reporting, an alternative to the usual hotel-bound conference, has become a national model, which will be repeated by ILCA in Pittsburg in 2009.

5) **Labor & Immigration Conference flyer**

LES brought together diverse, even some opposing groups to open a dialogue on a very contentious issue among workers who would not ordinarily talk with one another.. This is an example of how LES leverages its position at the University to bring credible teaching, research and outreach to bear on a problem in the broader society.

6) **Rep. Keith Ellison speech & conversation flyer**

An example of LES bringing important social issues to the attention of University students and giving them the opportunity to discuss and interact with activist leaders.

7) **Flyers for 2008 &2009 "Untold Stories" lecture/film series**

Collaboration between the Friends of the St. Paul Library and other organizations, including LES. Barb Kucera, Workday editor and LES P&A is a series co-founder and prime mover. The annual series illustrates the role LES plays in bringing together scholars, filmmakers, workers and the general public to explore and learn about the history of working people in Minnesota, a subject seldom addressed by any other entity.

This year, the series includes a public premier of the LES documentary, ***Twin Cities Assembly Plant: A Job and a Family***, commissioned by the United Auto Workers local and the Ford Motor Company. All of the 3,500 current and retired salaried and hourly

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employees of the St. Paul plant received DVD copies of the show. The program has generated wider interest as well, including possible public TV broadcast, as it is the first comprehensive history of an important institution in the local and regional economy.

8) **Minnesota Union Women's Leadership Retreat Flyer**

Illustrates LES role in gathering together wide-ranging members of the labor movement from across the state, emphasizing our commitment to diversity and civil rights.

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A confirmation of receipt shall accompany all submissions.