Advancing the field of Labor Relations in China (ALR Project) - Outline

Three leading Labor Studies institutions in the USA (City University of New York (CUNY), Harvard University, and University of California/Los Angeles) are working together with Chinese university counterparts to offer an innovative Labor Relations Exchange Program in China. The program's mission is to strengthen labor relations programs at selected Chinese universities so that they may serve as resource centers to those in academia, government, unions, legal services, and the broader community advocating on behalf of workers and working class communities. The key components of this two-year program will be joint curriculum materials and certificate programs (for credit) in labor relations, as well as broad labor education classes and workshops (non-credit, extension services.) Funding for this project from the City University of New York and the US Department of State will make it possible to offer scholarships to up to 150 students to complete the CUNY graduate certificate program in labor relations.

It is hoped that this project can advance the institutionalization of new courses and broader networks to support unions and labor relations programs at partner universities in China and to continue and replicate joint educational efforts beyond the two-year grant period. This work will enrich and deepen the knowledge about China’s labor movement among workers, unions, and labor studies experts in the USA.

Scope of Work:

This project will seek to achieve two primary objectives: 1) build the capacity of higher education institutions in China and the U.S. to engage in labor relations education and training; and 2) build the capacity of non-academic organizations that advocate on behalf of workers. The program will focus on four topic areas: (a) comparative industrial and labor relations models, (b) comparative labor law, (c) comparative collective bargaining and contract administration practices, (d) comparative labor organization (including union structure and function, leadership development and training, and worker organizing).

Specific activities include:

First Year:

1) Curriculum Development: Labor relations material will be developed and translated to be used in both academic and non-academic settings. A curriculum team composed of lead faculty from CUNY, Harvard, UCLA, and our Chinese university partners will coordinate these efforts. The curriculum development team will seek broad input from scholars and practitioners around the country and internationally.
2) University-based labor relations certificate program: Three cycles of a Graduate Certificate Program in Labor Relations will be offered at one or more of the partner Chinese universities. Courses will include: Comparative Labor and Industrial Relations Models, Comparative Labor and Employment Law, Comparative Bargaining and Contract Administration, and Comparative Union Organization and Function. Participants will include students pursuing careers in labor relations, faculty seeking to broaden their fields of expertise, and labor practitioners (attorneys, union leaders and staff, government officials, and NGOs) seeking professional development.

Second Year:

3) Labor Advocate Trainings: Short term training programs will be offered for trade unionists in various locations. Ideally, these collaborative workshops will be offered in Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing and other cities, and will be conducted in collaboration with the ACFTU and the Change-to-Win Federation. Trainings will focus on collective bargaining and consultation, and on union organization and function. They will consist of three workshops in each of four areas a) collective bargaining, consultation and contract negotiations, b) contract administration and enforcement, c) dispute resolution, d) union organization. Educational material developed in the earlier stage of the ALR Project will be used in this series. Instructors and technical advisors for this component of the project will be drawn from partner institutions, extension faculty from other programs, and union staff from the Change-to-Win Federation and other US unions.

4) Labor Extension Services: Technical assistance will be provided to at least one of the partner Chinese institutions to develop a permanent non-credit labor extension program for labor advocates, which will serve as a model for other universities in China. Special attention will be given to developing programs, providing services, and offering technical assistance to organizations advocating on behalf of migrant, women, and young workers. These efforts will also include facilitation of union-to-union exchanges and information sharing.

5) End of Project Conference: The Project will culminate with a conference designed to solidify networks among stakeholders; showcase the project, share materials and results, and develop a network that will sustain the project after it ends. The conference will be held in China and will focus on several topics, including: comparative labor relations models; comparative labor law; collective bargaining and consultation; union organization; pedagogy; service to the community; establishing labor relations programs and labor extension services; and building an on-going network of labor educators. The conference will be targeted to faculty, students and practitioners from other localities who are interested in establishing labor relations programs and networks.

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Advancing the Field of Labor Relations seeks to broaden and strengthen communications and exchanges between China and US universities and unions. This program aims to meet the needs of labor educators, union leaders, labor relations students, and labor practitioners in China, and to build the capacity of higher education institutions in China to engage in labor relations education and to support union to union exchanges.

This program is coordinated by The Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies at the City University of New York (CUNY) in partnership with the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education and the Harvard University Labor and Worklife Program.

Program components include:

- English/Chinese website (www.ALRexchange.org) to post and share readings and curriculum materials for the study of labor relations in the U.S. and China
- Workshops, lectures, discussions and exchanges offered in China on topics such as comparative labor relations models; contract bargaining, consultation and negotiations; contract administration and enforcement; dispute resolution; union education, organizing and research
- CUNY Labor Relations Certificate Program offered jointly with leading Chinese universities
- US-China Labor Relations Conference in 2015

Why Study Labor Relations?
The study of Labor Relations provides a theoretical and practical understanding of employment relations, labor law, and unions, focusing on how the interests of workers are defined, challenged, and defended in contemporary workplaces. The global economy has profoundly impacted labor relations around the world, and the study of comparative labor systems and issues can help to prepare labor leaders and educators to respond to current and future challenges.

For more information, please contact:
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