

25 YEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CELEBRATES A QUARTER CENTURY OF MAKING A VITAL DIFFERENCE

In a world facing ongoing conflicts and critical human rights concerns, the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR) is key in educating and advocating for human rights at local, state, and global levels.

For the past 25 years, the UICHR has played a vital role in educating students and the broader public, as well as fostering scholarship around these pressing issues. The center was originally conceived by a dedicated group led by Professor Burns Weston and began with “Global Focus: Human Rights ’98.” This initiative commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and featured lectures from Nobel Laureates such as South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The UICHR’s interdisciplinary focus connects faculty and educates students across the University of Iowa. Since 2013, it has been a unit of the College of Law, enhancing its role as a hub for human rights education statewide. Under the leadership of Associate Dean Adrien Wing, six staff members contribute to the center’s work, including two Iowa Law alumni—Professors Brian Farrell (98JD) and Amy Weismann (00JD).

Education is central to the center’s mission. It offers undergraduate courses in human rights and administers the UI Human Rights Certificate, the only undergraduate

credential awarded by the College of Law. The certificate program recently reached an all-time high of 77 declared students from various majors. Many certificate students aspire to legal careers and often apply to law schools nationwide, including Iowa Law.

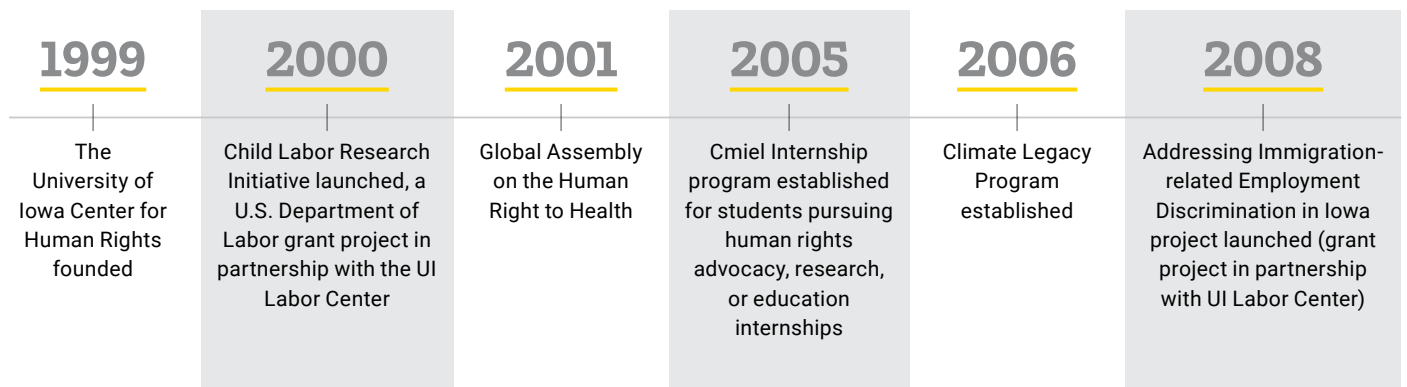
The UICHR is also a catalyst for research and scholarship. Its early projects, such as a federally funded major child labor initiative, set a high standard for impactful work. More recently, research assistants have conducted research on international human rights, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law, including the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The center routinely hosts scholarly conferences and is a co-organizer of the annual Iowa Human Rights Research Conference, which features presentations from students across Iowa. The 2024 conference, hosted at the Boyd Law Building, attracted over 125 registered attendees.

Additionally, the center furthers the College of Law’s mission of public service. Its public programs reach thousands annually. In 2022, the UICHR began administering a federal grant to establish the Afghan Legal League of Iowa, which provides legal services to Afghan nationals in Iowa.

As the UICHR celebrates its 25th anniversary, it remains dedicated to its mission while looking to the future.

To learn more, visit uichr.uiowa.edu.

MILESTONES IN UICHR HISTORY





Above: UICHR founder Burns Weston (third from left), with the organization's early board members. Left: Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, UICHR director Adrien Wing, and former University of Iowa President Mary Sue Coleman, during the archbishop's 1999 campus visit.

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2009

Courage of Conviction Award initiated

2011

UI Certificate in Human Rights established for undergraduate students

2013

UICHR became a unit of the College of Law

2014

Iowa Network of Human Rights Academics established

2017

Addressing Mental Health Care Challenges and Refugees project launched, a grant project in partnership with UI College of Public Health

2022

ALL Iowa project established, a \$1.5M grant project from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, and several partners around the state, including Drake Law School Refugee Clinic, Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice, Catholic Charities, and Iowa Law Legal Clinic