

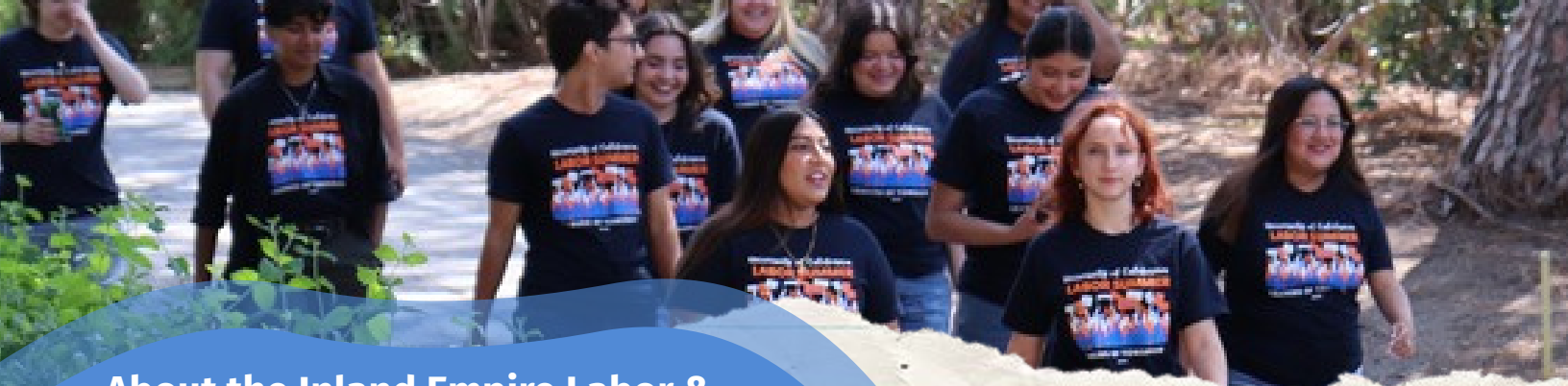


Inland Empire Labor
and Community Center

EXECUTIVE REPORT

2025-2026





About the Inland Empire Labor & Community Center

Established in 2023 through the **UC Worker Rights Policy Initiative's** historic investment in UC Labor Centers, the Inland Empire Labor & Community Center at UCR (IELCC-UCR) builds on decades of relationships and trusted partnerships between faculty, staff, and students, and local policymakers, labor, and community leaders. Housed within UCR's **College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences**, the Center addresses **critical issues facing working people in the Inland Empire** and California through public-facing **educational and leadership-building activities** and **applied policy-relevant research** in partnership with regional unions and community-based organizations.

Mission

The IELCC at UCR brings together **workers, students, faculty, labor and community organizations**, and **policymakers** to address critical issues facing working people and their communities in the Inland Empire and California. Through our research and our engagement with local communities and UCR students, we seek to promote **good jobs** and to improve employment opportunities for all workers in the region and state and to do so in ways that are beneficial to our communities and are **environmentally sustainable**. Through our activities, we also strive to educate and **empower the next generation of community and labor leaders**, to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our regional and state economy, and to expand and improve the **rights of workers and immigrants**.

By the Numbers

47

Labor Summer Fellows placed in unions, worker centers, and community organizations since IELCC-UCR's founding



500+

Community members and students engaged through public events in 2025-2026



\$320k

Invested in the local labor movement through paid fellowship placements since 2023



15

Organizations supported through the California Workplace Outreach Project



\$30k

In labor scholarship opportunities since IELCC-UCR's founding



Research for Social Impact

In the 2025-2026 academic year, IELCC-UCR launched its **policy brief series**. Recognizing the fast-paced nature of today's environment, the Center's policy briefs share research and **evidence-based** policy advice with the general public. Guided by labor and community partners, policy briefs draw attention to pressing issues and recommended **policy strategies** for the Inland Empire and beyond.

Policy Brief Series

Protecting Workers from Climate Hazards in Southern California's Inland Empire



Featured by the *Press-Enterprise*, this inaugural policy brief summarizes key climate-related hazards facing regional workers and estimates the number of workers in impacted occupations. <https://ielcc.ucr.edu/worker-climate-hazards>

Protecting Workers in the Age of AI: Addressing Workplace Surveillance



The Center's second policy brief examines the growth of workplace surveillance technologies and their implications for worker rights and privacy. <https://ielcc.ucr.edu/ai-workplace-surveillance>

9

500+

Applied research reports addressing Inland Empire-specific topics released since 2023



Community members and students engaged through public events in 2025-2026



Strengthening the UCR Labor Studies Program

This academic year, IELCC-UCR supported the UCR Labor Studies Program to **educate 267 undergraduate students** through courses in **labor history, policy, and organizing strategy**. Beyond the classroom, IELCC placed students in the **Labor Studies Internship** course, which provides opportunities for **direct engagement** with labor and community partners across the region.

2025-2026 Labor Studies Courses:

- LABR 001: Introduction to Labor Studies
- LABR 002: Labor Organizing
- LABR 175: Transforming Toxic Jobs: Health and Work in the United States
- LABR 198I: Labor Studies Internship



Educating the Next Generation of Labor and Community Leaders

Labor Summer

IELCC-UCR is committed to equipping students with the skills, relationships, and hands-on experience they need to **advance labor and community organizing** projects. This commitment is anchored by the **Labor Summer Fellowship**.



Since 2023, the Center has placed **47 fellows** with local organizations and unions, infusing **\$320,000 into labor and community organizations** through paid fellowships to students. In 2026, IELCC-UCR partnered with Riverside City College's **Community Action Leadership Academy** for orientation training and teach-in days. With a cohort of 20 students, fellows travelled throughout the Inland Empire, hearing **directly from workers**, organizers, and community members and participating in organizing training programs.

Bill Perez Labor Scholarship

The Center worked with the Inland Empire Labor Council to recognize **emerging student leaders** in the labor movement through the **Bill Perez Labor Scholarship**. The Bill Perez scholarship has now distributed **\$30,000** to 10 UCR students over its three years.



Building Community



IELCC-UCR hosted **seven campus and community events** that engaged over **500 students, faculty, and community members**, including the Center's first-ever webinar, "Where does AI Live: Data Centers and Community Impacts," which drew participants from across the globe; a book talk with Walda Katz-Fishman and Jerome Scott on the League of Revolutionary Black Workers; a screening of "Made in LA" co-presented with the IE Labor Council; "Out At Work," an LGBTQ+ community event co-hosted with the Inland Empire Prism Collective; and the continuation of "Know Your Rights in the Workplace" trainings.

In 2025-2026 IELCC-UCR employed and supervised **nine graduate and undergraduate students** in research, communications, and programmatic roles, and mentored four Minority Serving Institution Research Academy fellows who contributed to policy briefs and background research for the Center's topical events.



Cultivating Leadership for Workers' Rights

In 2026, IELCC-UCR partnered with the Inland Empire Labor Council as the **Regional Co-Lead** for the Inland Empire **California Workplace Outreach Project** (CWOP) initiative. CWOP empowers community-based organizations to be **trusted messengers** for the California Department of Industrial Relations and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, delivering crucial information on **workers' rights and safety measures** to workers, employers, and their communities.



As Regional Co-Lead, IELCC supports **15 direct outreach organizations**, expanding the Center's capacity to provide technical assistance and workplace rights resources throughout the Inland Empire, including the High Desert and the Coachella Valley. The Center brought CWOP to UCR through a "Know Your Rights in the Workplace" training series. IELCC-UCR collaborated with student clubs and the Amazon Teamsters for "**Know Your Rights in the Workplace: the Right to Organize**" and with the UCR Underground Scholars and Starting Over, Inc. for "**Know Your Rights in the Workplace: Pre-Employment Rights.**" Now an established annual series, the "Know Your Rights in the Workplace" trainings empower young workers and students to be advocates for themselves and others in the workplace.



Leadership



Cheylynda Barnard | Executive Director

Cheylynda Barnard is the Executive Director of IELCC. An 18-year resident of Moreno Valley, Cheylynda grew up in the Inland Empire and attended Cal State San Bernardino, graduating with Political Science and Criminal Justice degrees. Cheylynda was a social worker in Riverside County for almost a decade, and during that time she served as Vice President for SEIU Local 721, where she negotiated quality contracts for her union. Cheylynda also served as an executive board member of the Inland Empire Labor Council. Outside of her work in labor organizing, Cheylynda serves on the board of directors for the Riverside Community Health Foundation and as the District 4 councilmember for the City of Moreno Valley. Currently, Cheylynda is serving as the Mayor Pro Tem for Moreno Valley. She lives by the philosophy of doing good, even when nobody's looking. Mayor Pro Tem Cheylynda Barnard, or “Chey” as she is known to her loving husband, Jay, is the proud parent of two wonderful young boys.



Jesús “Chuy” Flores | Policy & Strategy Director

With over a decade of experience in the urban planning and policy field, Chuy brings an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to his work with organizations committed to improving the lives of working people, their communities, and the environment. His previous work included advising public agencies, multi-sector coalitions, and other groups in developing actionable, inclusive economic development and climate-resilient strategies throughout the state of California. Proudly born and raised in San Bernardino, he firmly believes in centering frontline workers and communities to develop holistic and effective policy solutions that enhance their quality of life. Chuy received a Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Environmental Policy from Occidental College, a graduate certificate in Applied Policy and Government from CSU-Sacramento, and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. In his spare time, Chuy enjoys attempting to cook family recipes, visiting local panaderías, and supporting community arts.



Marissa Brookes | Faculty Director

Marissa Brookes is Associate Professor in the Political Science Department at the University of California, Riverside and Faculty Director of the IELCC. Her research focuses on the political economy of work and employment in the US and internationally, transnational labor activism, workforce development, and qualitative methods. Her research has appeared in outlets such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *Development and Change*, the *Global Labour Journal*, and *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*. Her book, *The New Politics of Transnational Labor: Why Some Alliances Succeed* (Cornell University Press) analyzes the causes of success and failure in transnational labor campaigns. Marissa earned her BA in Political Science from Boston University and her MA and PhD from Northwestern University. Marissa teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in international political economy, labor studies, and research methods and has lived in Riverside since 2013.

Honoring our Co-Founder

The Center extends its **immense gratitude** to Dr. Ellen Reese, who **co-founded** the Center and finished her tenure as Faculty Co-Director at the end of December 2025. She also transitioned her role as Director of UCR's Labor Studies Program to Dr. Todd Sorensen after **22-years of service**. Ellen led efforts to secure funding for the establishment of the IELCC-UCR, and her contributions to its research, student engagement, and community partnerships leave a lasting foundation. Dr. Marissa Brookes now serves as the Center's Faculty Director.



Building a Foundation for Long-Term Impact

The IELCC-UCR continued to strengthen its financial foundation this year, securing new multi-year support. Our work would not be possible without support from our **funders** and **collaborators**:

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
California Department of Industrial Relations
The Center for Ideas and Society at UCR
Inland Empire Labor Council

The James Irvine Foundation
Just San Bernardino
Inland Empire Labor Institute
The Office of the Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at UCR
Riverside City College, Community Action Leadership Academy
UC Worker Rights Policy Initiative

We are grateful to our **labor, community, and campus partners** who have hosted fellows, provided internships, or served on our **Community Advisory Committee** for their continued support:

Chicano Student Programs at UCR
HealthCorps
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Inland Congregations United for Change
Inland Empire Black Worker Center
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Coalition
Inland Empire Labor Council
Inland Empire Labor Institute
Ironworkers Local 433
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Peoples Collective for Environmental Justice
Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest
Pomona Economic Opportunity Center
R'Garden at UCR

SEIU 121RN
SEIU 2015
SEIU 721
Student Disability Resource Center at UCR
Teamsters Local 1932
TODEC
UAW 4811
UDW-AFSCME 3930
UFCW Local 1167
Undocumented Student Programs at UCR
University Council-AFT Teaching Faculty and Librarians
Warehouse Workers Resource Center
Women's Resource Center at UCR

Looking ahead, the IELCC-UCR is well-positioned to deepen its role as a **regional hub** for **applied research, education, and community-building**. As the Inland Empire continues to experience rapid economic transformation, the IELCC-UCR is uniquely positioned to support **growth that uplifts working people** and their communities. Continued investment in the Center supports critical research, informed public dialogue, and equitable economic opportunity for one of California's **fastest-growing** and historically under-resourced regions. Together with our partners, we look forward to building **a worker-centered future** for the Inland Empire.





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