

THE FORMATION OF A HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON: AN IMPARTIALITY ANALYSIS OF
INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FOR BRIDGING THEORY AND
PRACTICE

BY
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This research examines the justifications and implications of my efforts to establish a Human Rights Center (HRC) at the University of Oregon (UO), which started in May 2024. In the work leading up to this thesis, I assessed the potential impact of the center on protecting the sanctity of the University of Oregon's academic freedom and aligning with the principles of impartiality. I also outlined development models and pedagogical approaches to support students in applying human rights knowledge in practical contexts, with specific reference to the theories of Paulo Freire. The current literature on institutional voice and impartiality remains unsettled, leaving significant room for my interpretation of how to best foster free inquiry and expand access to power through cultural capital. Through a literature review of case studies and academic reports from across the country, I examined how the formation of such centers influences academic freedom and used comparative methods to propose potential programmatic structures. Ultimately, this center aims not only to prepare students—regardless of major—to "bridge theory and practice" in human rights work, but also to ensure the university avoids chilling research by issuing inconsistent or insufficient statements intended to serve as moral commentary on social issues involving human rights.

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Introduction

My research critically examines the efforts of the coalition for a Center for Human Rights at the University of Oregon (UO), which I led alongside Sophia Barghouti, aiming to establish a Center for Human Rights at the UO (UO HRC) during the 2024-2025 academic year. This movement grew out of concerns surrounding growing polarization at the university after the Spring 2024 encampment that aimed to support Palestinians amidst the conflict between Hamas and Israel. At the university level, there was limited curriculum support and few opportunities for students to engage in informed discussions about human rights and the conflict. This left activists, the unengaged students, and everyone in between unprepared to understand and act on larger, nuanced conversations about global social issues involving human rights.

In the wake of the protests, students clashed with the university, and the results of the encampment present one case study among several examples where the university's role in supporting human rights at home and abroad was questioned. Outside of this one issue, the City of Eugene and its residents are witness to one of the most significant crises in the right to adequate housing in the United States. At the same time, we are also seeing an unprecedented violation of the rights of migrants in the United States under the Trump Administration. While the encampments and ongoing conflict in Gaza are hot-button topics politically, the university has also shown its propensity to be disengaged on the local and national scale. Ultimately, the university must reengage with its local and global communities and prepare its students to protect the dignity of their neighbors rather than contributing to its destruction through inaction.

Through my work in this thesis, I will consider arguments for defining what serves as the "core function" of the university, dictating the context that defines an HRC's aims in conjunction with the university that will support it. When the university acts contrary to its intention to protect its function, it loses validity in the eyes of its members due to confusion surrounding its true aims or an inadequate understanding of alternative aims that do not align with its members' interests. Some argue that the university, in this new age, has a fiduciary responsibility that supersedes its responsibility to academic freedom. In contrast, others contend that the emphasis on academic freedom and the advancement of knowledge takes precedence over this responsibility to investors. Either way, its actions dictate reactions from the university community and influence their trust in the institution to do what many are paying for it to do: provide opportunities for education.

In the spring of 2024, Sophia Barghouti and I recognized that the University of Oregon lacked a centralized institution to support students and faculty in studying human rights and their practical applications on local, national, and global scales. While sparse opportunities exist to investigate these topics, they are often student-run or developed by faculty who face challenges in securing adequate financial and technical support on their own. Additionally, the university still offers few spaces for informed, collaborative discussions on human rights and the value systems that inform them. Existing programs and clubs, often student-led, can struggle due to a lack of institutional backing. Although they do incredible work, this can lead to burnout, and coupled with graduation, often results in their quick dissolution. This gap hinders the university's and students' ability to develop nuanced, multidisciplinary scholarship and perspectives, which are essential for addressing the world's most significant challenges.

Given the urgency of the various social issues involving human rights today, it is crucial to equip students with the tools and platforms to contribute to the understanding of

human rights within the UO community and the broader world, regardless of the profession they pursue. We realized that at the University of Oregon, there were different streams of information trickling down small networks, but what was needed was a realignment of these resources (faculty, students, money, internship opportunities, spaces for discussion) into a larger flow, which is then able to make the greatest collective impact possible. Looking to address this problem, Ms. Barghouti and I, with the help of many faculty members in the coalition, spoke to the directors of the human rights centers at the University of Utah, Michigan, Stanford, and Harvard to understand the structures of their units and their capabilities to address this gap. As we spoke with a diverse set of student groups, including those on both sides of the Palestine-Israel debate, we realized that there was a clear need for a space that fosters informed, impartial discussion and provides opportunities to investigate the reality of applied human rights.

We then worked with students individually and through an Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) working group to create an effective set of goals for a potential center; this working group resulted in a unanimous resolution stating ASUO's support for the establishment of a center (See Appendix). Together, we also worked to gain the support and participation of the Eugene Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a pioneering program in the United States that collaborates with the local Eugene Police Department to primarily facilitate hate crime reporting. Their support is noted in the Appendix and establishes their participation in and support of the formation of an HRC.

Taking the next step, we initiated conversations with the overseers of the Carlton Savage Fund, guided by the principles of non-violent resolution and reason, as a potential source of funding for a unit with these goals. Additionally, ongoing conversations with the incoming ASUO administration suggest that there will be multi-year support for the center

and its programs, funded through student incidental fees. We expect both sources of funding to be the primary funding streams for the center within the first two years.

With momentum to establish a human rights minor, which will increase curriculum support over the next 2-3 years, a center to promote discussion and education about human rights was in order. However, throughout all these discussions, one critical phrase emerged: "bridging theory and practice." Throughout all our conversations, students, faculty, administrators, and community members were interested in how the theories of human rights, which are inherently subjective, are tangibly applied outside the academic space to foster real change and action in support of universal dignity. This phrase has become our mantra and now sits at the center of our developing task force, comprising students and faculty, which is seeking to establish a center that addresses the needs of the entire university community.

After six months, over 300 emails, 40 in-person meetings with faculty and student groups, and numerous hours of writing, we presented a finished proposal to the Provost, Dr. Chris Long, and the Vice President for Student Life, Angela Chong, in Winter 2026. This proposal is referenced in the Appendix and is complete, including a proposed structure, our outlined sources of funding, potential affiliated faculty, support from ASUO and the EHRC, and an outline of other comparable models for development. Our proposal led to the establishment of a task force comprising students and faculty, which will build upon the groundwork we have laid and submit recommendations to the Office of the Provost in winter 2026 for the establishment of a center.

My research investigates the interest of students and the university in supporting a unit that seeks to bridge theory and practice, offers education on non-violent resistance as a method of action for human rights, and fosters dialogue about human rights on campus (See Appendix). This is prefaced by considering the university's role in protecting its core function. Where the university, defined here as the administrative arm, faces pressure to fill

gaps through statements or fractured events, we see a chilling effect take root, compounded by the frustration of the student body at inadequate responses to contemporary issues. I address this by examining how a unit focused on human rights can help fill this gap and adequately protect the validity of free inquiry at the University of Oregon.

The first part of this joint-project thesis has established the structures, support, and information to form a human rights center by 2026. A human rights center at the University of Oregon would be able to address both the current and future needs of students in the face of social issues affecting them at home and abroad. As a byproduct of this aim, I argue that this is supported by the university's increased capability, with such a center, to protect its "core function," ensuring the sustainability of trust in and the validity of the institution.

Background on Human Rights at UO

It is worth noting the long history of human rights work and study at the University of Oregon before examining the major changes in our current context. Whether through the Center for Latina/o and Latin American Studies (CLLAS), Wayne Morse, or UNESCO Crossings, human rights are not a completely obsolete topic on our campus, and different units are doing great work at different scales regarding their topical foci. That modern orientation, which is currently in need of more support from the university, can be traced back to the founding of UO as a coed, nonsectarian institution in 1876—the only one in the state and part of 30% of such institutions in the country at the time. The UO has produced graduates early with this progressive orientation, including Carlton Savage, a Department of State employee who played a role in drafting the UDHR and the Marshall Plan and devoted his life to promoting world peace and human rights. 1935 UO graduate Senator Richard Neuberger, who helped pass the 1964 Wilderness Bill; 1939 UO graduate Edith Green, who initiated and helped draft the 37 words in Title IX; 1932 UO graduate Wallace J. Campbell,

who helped to found CARE International; and a 1952 UO graduate who filmed Martin Luther King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.

It is essential to acknowledge the past to envision the future, and the University of Oregon (UO) has a strong history of action on human rights. Currently, the university hosts one of the most extensive prison education programs in the country, engaging in multiple classes each term with students from the Oregon State Penitentiary (UO Prison Education Program, 2016). Additionally, groups such as Carnegie Global Oregon and the Environmental Leaders ARC, two of many first-year programs, encourage students to think about their positions in a changing world and lead them to participate in programs such as the Global Justice Program and further engage undergraduate students in the organization of and participation in programs such as "Preventing Genocide & Mass Atrocities" (2012) and Special Initiative on Constructively Engaging the Conflict and the Pursuit of Peace in Palestine/Israel (2024-2027) (UO Global Justice Program, 2024) ("Call for Proposals," 2015).

Statement of Problem

The University of Oregon lacks an institution dedicated to exploring the concept of human rights, resulting in gaps in students' ability to address them effectively, regardless of their major, and limiting their local, national, and global involvement. At the same time, the university has struggled with how to initially address larger social issues involving human rights while preserving academic freedom. That challenge creates a congruent opportunity to address both problems through the potential creation of a Center for Human Rights at the University of Oregon.

Methods

To address the research question and develop a visioning statement for the task force, I will conduct a systematic and balanced literature review on the contemporary role of human rights as taught and presented in educational spaces. I will also seek to understand the role of the university in addressing social issues involving human rights and explore the comparative opportunities for other students to participate in these conversations around the country. These sections will be complemented by reviews of case studies at universities that have struggled in the face of social issues involving human rights. This will be done using scholarly articles, books, published memos, proposals, or reports. Then, spurred by the conclusions in my comparative analysis, I will be looking at the form of comparable centers at other universities in the new BIG10 conference to act as an index of programs capable of better supporting university discourse around the Israel-Hamas conflict and, eventually, other social issues that will require similar support for the UO student body. I did supplementary interviews with Maggie Gates of the Carr Center for Human Rights, Penelope Van Tuyl of the Stanford Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Aleta Airmet of the University of Utah's Barbara and Norman Tanner Center for Human Rights, and Nataša Gruden-Alajbegović and Wesley Wright of the University of Michigan's Donia Human Rights Center. I did not take formal notes on our interviews, and they served to inform my research into and development of the center, as noted in the Appendix.

Education and Human Rights

To begin our analysis of how the university can best support students in applying human rights theories in the social landscape, it is helpful to map how they are understood and applied in various spaces. Human rights, broadly defined, are a fluid, ever-changing set of concepts that, when taught or expressed through the structures of higher education, must be adequately addressed as such. Rawls takes a pessimistic view of the pluralist system with "different doctrines of justice," arguing that there may never be significant overlap and consensus on the meaning of justice (Barrett, 2022, p. 2). With so much inaction in the world surrounding human rights and loose systems of enforcement accompanying them on the international and national stage, he may be right. Kant's perspective is that each human is endowed with intrinsic value, "which should always be respected by other people." This makes understanding each other an end in itself and adds a new dimension to how we conceptualize the development of human rights education as fluid (Barrett, 2022, p. 3).

These concepts, which argue for addressing alternate views in all cases of alleged human rights violations or social issues, are reflected in the stance of the European Court of Human Rights, which routinely acts with a margin of appreciation. That flexibility, even in some of the highest courts, reflects that there are ever-changing and developing questions surrounding the key concept of "dignity," who it is ascribed to, how they may "earn" or "keep" it, and whether it is possible to be owned by non-human entities (Barrett, 2022, p. 2). In a system with seemingly so much flexibility, the rest of Kant's argument comes to mind, where the educational space finds its role. He notes "that this respect which we accord to other people's dignity ought to be reflected in how we behave in relationship to them" (Barrett, 2022, p. 3). However, regarding the different notions of dignity, which can differ from person to person, how do we contend with those differences, and who are the actors that can most effectively facilitate that conversation?

The facilitation of bridge-building toward shared dignity has been most effectively structured through university programs that emphasize effective citizenship and empathy for fellow human beings. Utilizing Paulo Freire's concept of transformation in relation to teaching citizenship and membership in a political community, he argues that people can better conceptualize and critically perceive their position in the world through "authentic reflection," letting go of preconceived notions about the world and understanding your own, culturally informed place in your communities (Freire Institute, 2024). This type of education can help students begin to understand the impact of "moral communities that respect human rights (which) are created through collective empathy and compassion for the plight of others" (Feldman & Simmons, 2024, p. 4).

Freire's theory of Conscientização translated as "conscientization" in English, advocates for similar methods to achieve effective, liberating education. Conscientização is the "process of moving from naive or passively received understandings of self, others, and the world to more critical and active understandings" (Lawton, 2022) and is operationalized by inviting deliberation and active practices of reflection and critical reflection on intersectional issues. This process of learning to perceive injustices is subsequently applied through "praxis," which is the ongoing process of "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Smith, 2013). He deeply advocates for the effective development of this dynamic because, as he quotes, "a mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality—precisely because it is not a true perception" (POO).

Gaining support from the University of Oregon's new experiential learning priorities, inequities, and human rights issues (those of the oppressed) must be critically evaluated and challenged in practice (Freire Institute, 2024). That should be the main goal of a potential center in advocating for this process of critical reflection and application among its

participating members. This process presents as an alternative to "banking," which is a result of the classic Western model of the taught being provided knowledge to "keep" by the knowledge havers, establishing a relationship of right and wrong instead of one that is inherently complex.

That set of concepts characterizes the root of any center dedicated to multi-perspective, nuanced discussions about human rights and their multiple interpretations. Calling back to Kant, understanding the inherent value of others can help students further understand their position in the world and agency in addressing human rights at home and abroad. The active learning in this space, facilitated by discussions, experiential learning, and opportunities that allow the student to put themselves in the shoes of others, creates a needed space for active unlearning as well.

Human rights education is dialogic and should facilitate personal. However, also group reflection encourages "becoming" an othered group through empathy and solidarity, "recognize(ing) the human dignity of excluded others and share(ing) experiences of in injustice," and ultimately, "expand(ing) (ones own) sense of community and agency" (Brown-Nagin & Beerbohm, 2024, p. 2). This encourages adequate self-reflection in this context as well, especially in spaces like the University of Oregon that operate on land taken from Indigenous peoples, and on top of that, in the context of a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) (Blanchard & Nix, 2019, p. 2).

Human rights education would be most effectively facilitated through a physical space that encourages critical dialogue and a plurality of experiences or a dialogic space, as referred to by Freire. With physical space being a requirement, I argue that communities that "agree to be open, yet remain in dialogue, and to welcome different and even conflicting ideas and perspectives" better equip students to recognize the humanity of those with different experiences by acknowledging them face to face (Boyd & Sherry, 2024). In practice, this

begins when a facilitator poses questions for collective inquiry and invites discussion, in contrast to the more common narrative lecture format (Shor & Freire, 1987). When combined with praxis or emphasis on experiential learning, students are encouraged to engage not only in empathetic but transformative action on behalf of human rights.

The physical presence of a center to facilitate this is necessary, as is the cultivation of a sense of place at a physical center. This requires the inclusion of a diverse group of students and faculty, which can create social environments in space where students are encouraged to ask difficult and complex questions, ideate a variety of solutions within and outside accepted methods of human rights work, and evaluate all arguments for and against achieving universal human dignity or flourishing. These spaces do not exempt students and their ideas from productive criticism or rebuttals; instead, they encourage individual growth in ideological and methodological soundness. This "co-creating of dialogic space" is only effective, however, if students are willing and able to participate, necessitating a commitment to dialogue and deliberation in the centers' enshrined values and fostering institutional knowledge for successive participants to do the same.

Otherwise, where students are treated as customers in a neoliberal education market, the unit that seeks to promote this type of education should steer away from falling into the trap of commodifying experience (Sen, 2021, p. 3). Despite the best intentions, universities can prioritize profit structures over genuine understanding, as evidenced by the concern that "civic values are diluted by an emphasis on skills for employability" (Barrett, 2022, p. 2). That presents an interesting challenge: How do you prepare students to creatively and effectively address human rights in social issues through their respective fields in a way that does not conform to the structures of institutions that "routinely reproduce inequality and promote a narrow individualistic form of competition" (Jerome, 2018)?

Innovative approaches to combating individualistic mindsets in approaching human rights have encouraged the application of different mediums of storytelling, de-academicizing these spaces in language and tone and removing the role of the researcher and the researched to promote a more empathetic understanding (Blanchard & Nix, 2019, p. 10). With the emphasis of the new strategic plan, "Oregon Rising,"- the task force implementing the center should be wary of promoting employable skills above critical investigation. That emphasis can dilute complicated conversations. Referring back to the literature cited above, we should instead focus on imparting empathetic practice—an employable skill in itself. The practice of teaching human rights should be carefully understood through the development of a curriculum at the UO, with the intention of establishing a set of majors and minors centered on human rights. However, the empathetic, boundary-crossing goals of effective human rights education can also be supplemented by a center that engages students in dialogue and deliberation around related issues. Seeing other humans and their perspectives as deserving of the same dignity that we ascribe to ourselves is a moral action, one that must be encouraged by the university from the top down. In the next section, I will examine the consequences of failing to permit multiple perspectives on human rights to flourish in the university setting, as exemplified by its core function of safeguarding academic freedom, using case studies from across the country.

Power and the Role of the University in Addressing Social Issues Involving Human Rights

Institutional impartiality, a concept born out of the 1967 Kalven Report and updated by universities for their policies over the last year, requires that "we give equal and/or adequate consideration to the interests of all concerned parties... well beyond the requirements of the merely formal notion." Impartiality, as a concept, suggests that a university would not shy away from spurring discussions on social issues in an equitable manner (Jollimore, 2021, p. 417). It also recognizes that the context of the university is woven by the faculty and students who maintain its functions, and those actors have diverse interests, calling for an impartial stance to recognize and support those diverse interests congruently.

This statement lays the groundwork for a debate on the power of a university's top officials and how their actions can either support or hinder effective discourse about and subsequent progress in human rights. Thomas Kleven's 1992 scholarship on different types of relationships of power and their implications for free speech allows us to position the university as a power broker in a larger dialect with other groups seeking to communicate and act on behalf of their concerns (Kleven, 1992). Foucauldian theories note that power is a method of pacification that seeks to impart truth – in this case, applied to free speech through top-down systems (Avelino, F. 2021). Accepting one definition of the economy of power, Bourdieu speaks to the importance of accumulating cultural capital, which can be consciously or unconsciously deployed to "impose the legitimate vision of the world, and thereby to reinforce – or to challenge – social divisions" (Christensen, 2023). In the university case studies, I will subsequently examine, this exchange is largely unconscious, masked beneath the desire to take "moral action" on behalf of social issues involving human rights. However, it results in comparatively less agency for deliberation to flourish within the university

environment, leading to inherently less egalitarian outcomes regarding human rights across departments and between faculty and students. With the expansion of who has the ability to accumulate cultural capital through means such as the formation of a human rights center, we can envision a university environment where multiple perspectives are able to express “legitimate visions of the world”.

While it is easy to frame the university and its power brokers, namely the Board of Trustees and those with financial interests and stake in the university, as imparting their power through financial and structural means to inhibit free speech, this reinforces primarily Western conceptions of power as exercised from a monolith against a powerless class (Christensen, 2023). Rather, the discussion of how and why plurality in human rights is being drowned out due to power differences is a question of intention. In the contemporary environment, the university's core function is to uphold financial interests in parallel with the interests of students, enabling them to engage in uninhibited education. Unfortunately, these two functions can come into conflict with each other, requiring a reevaluation of who holds social capital and the agency to modify the university's structure. The communication of values is a form of power expression to uphold its interests, as we will see in the following sections (Foucault, 1982). With an excess of communication that considers the university's multiple goals, those interests in protecting free expression can be quelled. One possible solution to remedy this requires "some curtailment of the speech of those with disproportionate access to the means of communication" or an expansion of those with relatively less (Kleven, 1992). This is the first case for a human rights center that offers an alternative communicative and deliberative medium for building cultural clout and power to communicate the interests of students and faculty beyond purely financial and operational concerns.

Instead of attempting to fight against the university, accepting a "power over" or "power to" relationship, a center accepts a "power with" relationship (Avelino, 2021). A "power with" relationship encourages collaboration among units, allowing them to express their interests and reject collective, values-based statements on human rights issues. The following statements are examples of these and can quell faculty and student agency. Instead, continued learning and education, in this case on human rights, provide needed cultural capital through resources and support to those who are most qualified to speak on social issues involving human rights. Within this, smaller relations of cultural capital and who controls knowledge must be considered (Foucault, 1982), especially among the faculty-student relationships. With structures that foster deliberation on complex issues, students and faculty are better able to "develop an understanding of others' preferences, with the result that they are more accepting of proposals that reflect others' interest(s)." That proposed dynamic, embodied in a center, fosters "becoming" through Freire's process of reflection, encouraging Conscientização and the empathetic practice necessary for effective human rights action.

UO Response to October 7th

On October 13, 2023, the current President of the University of Oregon, John Karl Scholz, released a statement condemning "the horrors of the genocidal actions of Hamas" that had occurred the week prior, noting that he had "been slow in finding the words to convey the depths of...sadness and concern in a way that captures the magnitude of the terror and the unfathomable loss of life." In this statement, he powerfully states that he "condemn(s) genocide" and "the killing of innocent civilians." To begin with this distinction, I, as a private citizen and student, agree with what President Scholz has to say in this statement. Scholz continues by reaffirming that "we are also a community that must stand in solidarity against hate and violence wherever it happens in the world." The condemnation of the horrible actions of Hamas in this statement reflects a position of partiality in its content. Ultimately,

this statement had demonstrated consequences, despite its well-meaning and supportive message, on the free composition of ideas and research in the university environments, specifically when compared to proceeding statements that do not follow a policy of impartiality (Scholz, 2023).

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

In 2022, the Division of Global Engagement at the UO, which oversees study abroad and many of the global operations run through the university, issued a statement proclaiming:

"The University of Oregon condemns the unprovoked violence perpetrated by the Russian government against the people and sovereignty of Ukraine. This violates the principles of national autonomy, democracy, human rights, and negotiated conflict resolution that we hold dear" (Galvan, 2022).

The statement ends with an expression of "unwavering support for the victims of this aggression," taking a stance against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Recognizing this statement that the "UO helped lobby in favor of the recent decision to grant Temporary Protected Status (extension of visa deadlines) to Ukrainians in the U.S." while "advocate (ing) for this same status for Russian community members whose opposition to this war may put them at risk should they return home." For example, I, as a private citizen, agree that the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia is against international laws and norms, and I recognize that this irresponsible action has cost hundreds of thousands of lives in both Ukraine and Russia.

Although the Division of Global Engagement recognizes that "we have faculty, staff, and students from Ukraine, Russia, and the wider region," urging "everyone to be broadly supportive and mindful not to target anyone based on their nation of origin," their statement takes a direct position and action against Russia's decision to invade, taking a partial stance (Galvan, 2022). Written in cut-and-dry terms, as in right and wrong, this statement and the previous one notably fail to recognize a potentially opposing viewpoint. One, perhaps, is of

the late diplomat George Kennan, who might blame the US for this incursion, noting in his time that "expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era." Kennen thought that this expansion could be "expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western, and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion" (Conetta, 2024).

Protecting the Core Function

The fact that there are opposing opinions is the same regarding the statement on October 13th, especially in the context of close to 70 years of direct conflict between Palestinian and Israeli interest groups and their governments. The potential impact of a partial statement in this situation is that it fails to recognize less common or potentially controversial viewpoints. Decades of established doctrine, drafted and dialogued by those with the utmost knowledge of free speech on campuses, suggest that to protect the university, its students, and faculty, alongside its "core function," the university should not release statements that take positions on larger social issues.

The University of Oregon states its core function through a publicly released statement that reads:

"the UO is an educational institution devoted to the creation and transmission of knowledge. We do so with an unwavering commitment to academic freedom, creative expression, and intellectual discourse, along with the commitment to foster equity and inclusion in a welcoming, safe, and respectful community" ("Timeline of engagement," 2024).

American legal scholar Cass Sunstein would add to this mission, which promotes the free exploration and education of the student body, by noting two extra dimensions. These are the university's role in protecting free speech where it is permitted, balanced with its role as an employer and property owner. Each role it takes on has different responsibilities and bounds. He argues that acting outside of the responsibilities that allow the university to stay in operation should be generally unpermitted because it threatens free speech and the ability to be adequately upsetting, as a whole, "like Socrates" (Sunstein, 2024, p. 92).

The approach to defining the core function of the university can be incongruent in the details with ever-changing administrations. However, the precedent that the previous two statements set, that the university will protect against and speak out on perceived genocide and human rights violations, contradicted itself in 2024 during negotiations with the student encampment protesting the conflict in Gaza. In a statement publicly released by the University, they stated the following guiding principles for the process of dialoguing:

“While our community members are free to hold and to express their individual political views, as an institution, our leaders will not take positions on political issues that do not tie directly to the university’s operations. This is essential to fostering the climate of free speech that is central to the university’s purpose” (“Timeline of engagement,” 2024).

This is a diversion from the statements made about the events in Ukraine and Israel, vowing not to make the same public declaration of support on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who died due to arguably disproportional uses of force by Israel. The question is, “what then constitutes tying ‘directly to the university’s operations,’ and who gets to decide?”

Former UO president Michael Schill, now president of Northwestern University, made the following statement regarding the October 7th attacks, where he recognizes that:

“Kidnapping, beheading, murdering people—children and adults, civilians and people in the armed forces — is horrific and inhuman, pure and simple. This sort of behavior is entirely unacceptable regardless of one’s political convictions or grievances... That is the view of Mike Schill, citizen, Jew and human being.”

However, he follows this up with a statement noting that he is “not planning to put out a statement officially stating a university position” while qualifying that he “didn’t give up those parts (jew, citizen, and human being) of (him) when (he) assumed the presidency of Northwestern” (Schill, 2023).

In this letter, he makes a clear distinction on what constitutes a private action, as he “stood with our students at a Vigil for Israel in Deering Meadow” but did so as Mike Schill. He follows up by noting, “I will continue to personally support, when my conscience demands it, issues that I care deeply about, always making the distinction in roles (president

and private) as clear as possible.” Critically, he gets to the point that he supports the separation of the university—embodied in his role as the president and leader—and a position on larger social issues. He makes this distinction by clarifying:

“...when I put out an official statement on a political matter, an atrocity, a catastrophe, people read it not as the views of Mike Schill, but as President Michael Schill speaking for the university. As such, the decision to exercise speech takes on different meanings. We are a university which celebrates free expression, diversity of people and diversity of viewpoints. This is essential to our role in society” (Schill, 2023).

At face value, this statement aligns with the UO’s expressed values, celebrating “free expression, diversity of people, and diversity of viewpoints,” naming it “essential to our role in society” (“Timeline of engagement,” 2024). However, the UO’s approach does not align with those values. Schill finalizes his statement by stating that he does “not foresee that (he) will be issuing statements on political, geopolitical, or social issues that do not directly impact the core mission of our university, the education and futures of our students, or higher education” (Schill, 2023).

He expresses this sentiment for the same reason: “If you work for a company that takes a strong stand on, say, immigration issues, you might as well hesitate before expressing disagreement” (Sunstein, p. 93). This stance protects students from being subject to a potential, unintended silencing of their views or research, no matter how controversial, in the public university, because *they* (students) *are protected* and important to an environment of active discourse. While the university has an interest in “teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior,” this does not protect them from limiting the “undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views” (Sunstein, p. 49).

Doing away with the collective statement sets the bounds for the greater inclusion of all students and faculty who may hold a diversity of views, as there is no possible way a university could reach a collective, nuanced position with all its stakeholders, especially through a single statement (Sunstein, p. 11). President Schill’s statement is consistent in its

approach to managing the role of the university in promoting free inquiry outside of protecting the core function of the university. The University of Oregon and its top departments have not been consistent in their approaches to doing so, as evidenced by their conflicting statements and comparison with those of Northwestern. This is not the fault of administrators or university leaders; rather, there is seemingly no consistent framework they follow and ability to be reliant on faculty and units to address these issues without alienating any group. Top-down actions coming from administrators can allow the greatest diversity of perspectives to flourish if applied to supporting units below them to work with students but have instead silenced those perspectives through their relative, communicative power through collective statements and actions.

The question remains of how to promote the most effective functioning of the institution and who is qualified to speak out on these critical social issues (Kalven, 1967), but President Schill's statement to the Northwestern student body sets the grounds for the development of a policy precedent that I believe will soon be adopted by every university in the nation. Achieving consensus, although attractive, can never be an adequate way to hold productive dialogue and encourage action on human rights because of their subjective nature and the nuanced contexts in which concerns about human rights arise. If there is a consensus, it should be on achieving universal human dignity, which is multi-variable and complex in itself. Additionally, statements expressing values in times of social crisis have been cited to have "little practical effect, beget ever more statements, or produce unnecessary controversy within the university" where current resources should be used to wade through murky, complex issues, not further complicated by the university as a monolith (AAUP, 2025).

However, the core function of a university manifests in a university's visioning statements, the function remains centered around the principles of protecting academic freedom and preserving the opportunity to pass down knowledge to paying students. The

University of Oregon has scrambled to understand how their administrators can best protect this core function in times of crisis that elicit multiple responses from its members. Time after time they have failed to adhere to a consistent doctrine, jumping between hard moral stances and neutrality. Alternatively, new scholarship on “impartiality” presents a new way forward that acknowledges the frustration, fear, confusion, and passion brought up in crises while also protecting the university and all of its functions, most importantly academic freedom. At the same time, per the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), “universities bear ‘direct responsibility for the way in which invested income-bearing resources are managed,’” especially considering their effects on academic freedom and overall societal impacts (AAUP, 2025). Considering this long-held stance, the university must move to allocate resources to best align with principles that best support its core function, defined and implied.

Ongoing conversations about institutional impartiality and the framework it can provide universities have added a new dimension to understanding the justification for a center that investigates human rights. Impartial versus neutral stances result in very different outcomes for allowing the free exchange of ideas, academic freedom and flourishing of a diversity of opinion around human rights, most applicable to the world outside of the university. With the inconsistent statements we have seen from the University of Oregon, contrasted with those from Northwestern, support for centers that foster the dialogue and deliberation that lead to productive bridge-building among students is only justified under an impartial stance. Understanding the differences between each of these is critically important as I seek to justify how a center serves as a tool to protect the universities core function and empathetic capabilities of students. I also add my interpretation to ongoing debates around impartiality stemming from Harvard, Yale and the University of Chicago.

The Principles of Impartiality and Neutrality and Their Implications

“‘Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard.’ There are different types of graveyards. All of them are quiet.” (Sunstein, 2024, preface XII)

The concepts of impartiality and neutrality are often confused due to their synonymous connotations but have wildly different implications for engaging students in productive dialogue and action on human rights. Each also has implications for the formation of a unit to support each of their goals. Impartiality "requires that we give equal and/or adequate consideration to the interests of all concerned parties... well beyond the requirements of the merely formal notion." It also means that although a deciding or powerful body, such as a university, would have no explicit, vested interest in the outcome of an issue or debate, they do not shy away from participating or operating in the context of the situation in an equitable manner (Jollimore, 2021, p. 417).

The context of the university is woven by the faculty and students who maintain its functions, and those actors have diverse interests, calling for an impartial stance to recognize those diverse interests and not alienate them. An impartial stance is characterized in Schill's statement, which notes that the university and its leaders will not take a position on the conflict in Gaza and Israel, yet will support students in dialogue, deliberation, and understanding their capabilities to advocate for a side in this issue through peaceful protest.

Where impartiality means not favoring one group over the other, neutrality means taking a position of non-interference or action. In conflict, neutrality is seen where a state "remains inactive during hostilities; exempted or excluded from the sphere of warlike operations" (Donald, 2003). Where impartiality precludes actionable efforts to engage in a non-judgmental manner, neutrality views all sides of the conflict as inherently unworthy of discussion or deliberation. When impartiality is applied to the university setting, the binding principles include protecting its core function and the subsequent free speech and open

inquiry of its members. Silence on an issue is expressive freedom itself, but only when allowed by the institution, in this example, governing speech. This contrasts with the concept of neutrality, which "involves a chosen or imposed silence" that dictates and chills from the top down so as not to make waves in response to an issue (AAUP, 2025). Neutrality can take root in times of crisis, where a university seeks to isolate itself and its members from disrupting controversial, discursive spaces in order to preserve its structure or maintain peace on campus. Using these definitions and assuming the adoption of an impartial stance, the question arises: "What does a university do when it is presented with a social issue, and who, if anyone, is authorized to make statements on behalf of the university?" Two documents positioned almost 70 years apart, one at the height of the Vietnam War and the second at the height of protest in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, influence current discourse in this field.

A committee charged with preparing "a statement on the university's role in political and social action," headed by Harry Kalven Jr. of the University of Chicago, produced the famous 1967 Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action. Utilizing the expertise of the top legal and social scholars in the world at the time, the report defines the mission of the university as "the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge" and measures "a university faithful to its mission" by its ability to "provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions" (Kalven, 1967).

To add to the quote, "it is the institution" and the people within it who create "discontent with the existing social arrangements and propose new ones." What could be taken as a statement encouraging universities to take collective action against a larger status quo is a call to support "the instrument of dissent and criticism" in "the individual faculty member or the individual student," clarifying that "the university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic." This report does not mention impartiality directly, but

advocates for a position alternative to neutrality, dissuading collective action "at the price of censuring any minority who do not agree with the view adopted" and calling on institutions to not be "diverted from its mission into playing the role of a second-rate political force or influence" (Kalven, 1967).

The Kalven report advocates for the modern principle of impartiality in its structure by originally protecting the university and its faculty from "the ire of businessmen and politicians who found the views of reform-minded professors distasteful, if not subversive, and whose financial investments in the university gave them the right, they insisted, to fire its professors and dictate its policies." Protecting academic freedom has always been at the core of the development of these principles, but the university administration, a key player in upholding these principles, was largely set in the background until 2014. It was at that point when a wave of student protests encouraged the development of a set of principles at Chicago that recognized that "those who disagree with such statements (of the university) may or may not feel able to express their opinions publicly, depending on the administration's tolerance for dissent—that is, on the prevailing conditions for academic freedom"; a development in how these principles may lead to ideological capture and a chilling effect on research and outspoken activism (AAUP, 2025).

A more recent set of working groups, who produced two separate documents, were set into action by Harvard in reaction to the mass encampments on college campuses in the spring of 2024. Embracing "excellence in discovery and learning," the university sought remedies to their approach to understanding "the ability to advance ideas and explore them fully, to challenge accepted wisdom, to disagree productively, and to recognize that we will often make mistakes as we learn" (Garber et al., 2024). This was accomplished through the leadership and hands-on research of the working groups on "Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue" and "Institutional Voice."

The findings of this group reinforced that the purpose of the university is to "pursue truth"; yet, as a result, "the university as an institution can never be neutral, because we believe in the value of seeking truth through open inquiry, debate, and weighing the evidence, as opposed to mere assertion or unjustified belief" in the absence of opportunity (Feldman & Simmons, 2024). Again, noting that the university can speak out to promote its core function, as subjectively defined, should always allow researchers, instructors, and students to engage in an environment of "reasoned disagreement, engage a spectrum of ideas, and facilitate robust intellectual exchanges" (Brown-Nagin & Beerbohm, 2024). Still, a rebuttal to this theory could be that the university loses its sense of community or authority when it fails to perform the function of a political entity, or to the pressures of neoliberal influences.

In the absence of an ascribed position, it is possible to form a stronger, collective identity committed to open discourse. The working groups specifically outlined how this is impossible in an environment where the university takes a position, noting:

1. "First, the integrity and credibility of the institution are compromised when the university speaks officially on matters outside its institutional area of expertise."
2. Second, what determines when and where a statement will be issued, and can the university be held responsible for issuing statements on other issues?
3. Third, choosing a side in a debate inherently undermines those in the opposite or conflicting community and the inclusivity of the institution.
4. Finally, statements that are short and/or not sufficiently recognizant of the issue created can do more harm than good (Feldman & Simmons, 2024).

In the original statement, produced in May 2024, the university advocated for relying on its "pastoral arms" to train staff in contact with affected community members and encourage the operations of centers, clinics, and institutes to engage in advocacy work. Though not considered to speak on behalf of the university or "beyond their domain of expertise, the centers, at the level of faculty and students," can increase the breadth of cultural capital and resources, power, allowing more free inquiry, research, and full inclusion of all perspectives (Feldman & Simmons, 2024). This promotes free inquiry while taking the burden off the university: a potential solution.

However, in a September 2024 clarification, Harvard's policy was further understood to include department chairs, program directors, and university units, including their three human rights centers, which were disallowed from taking positions presumed to be on behalf of Harvard (Chen & Robinson, 2024). Some have questioned the university's ability to be truly impartial, acting in its capacity as a private institution with investments (Robison, 2024), while one of its human rights center directors, Matthias Risse, reiterates the need for the centers to be able to speak on behalf of issues, due to the interconnectedness of the world and the inability to truly separate the core function from the issues at hand (Risse, 2024).

Statements by Departments/Centers

Calls for institutional neutrality that focus solely on what institutions say have the potential to overlook the many other ways colleges and universities take positions that are not neutral. Admission and financial aid policies; criteria for faculty hiring, promotion, and tenure; changes in the curriculum; efforts to promote diversity and inclusion; the naming of buildings; decisions to open or close departments or research centers; and, most recently, guidelines for acceptable student protest, especially those that favor one side in political controversy—all potentially affect the climate of academic freedom at a given university, just as a university's statements (including on those issues) might (AAUP, 2025).

First, when departments draw on their distinctive disciplinary expertise to make a statement on a matter of social or political controversy, they avoid the criticism often levied against institutional administrators who weigh in on subjects beyond their area of expertise. A ban on statements by departments potentially deprives society of the collective voice of experts in the fields most relevant to the controversy at hand, constituting an internal restraint on academic freedom.

To treat a university's mission as necessarily threatened by certain forms of protest is to assume that the mission does not include preparing students for democratic citizenship—for expression that takes the form of protest when discussion or deliberation fails to achieve just ends (AAUP, 2025). The debate on what constitutes impacting the core function is ongoing. However, it must include threats to students and faculty, as these pose a direct challenge to academic freedom and a fiduciary basis. If the UO were to continue with this policy, encouraging free inquiry at the highest level, it would need to establish clear guidelines for its policy, communicated to those it serves (Office of the Provost, n.d.).

Yale adds to this interpretation by offering three presumptions that shall guide the university and its leaders, including units, in dealing with complex social issues. These include:

1. "Refraining from issuing statements concerning matters of public, social, or political significance, except in rare cases."
2. "When events of public, social, or political significance directly implicate the university's core mission, values, functions, or interests, it may be appropriate for university leaders (units) to speak..."
3. "Statements of empathy or concern in response to events outside the university, but leaders should issue such statements infrequently and only on matters that are, in their judgment, of transcendent importance to the community..."

They expand on these presumptions by noting the potential impact of social media and the immediacy required by many students in producing statements or programs, which may force administrators or units to make hasty, uninformed decisions. That is expressed in the following which states:

"The frequent issuing of statements by leaders of the university runs contrary to the deliberative process inherent in study, research, and the production of knowledge, all of which are essential to the mission of the university."

This report continues by noting the role of the unit, academic department, or center as especially important due to their greater interaction with and potential impact on students. As noted, centers are more adept at engaging students; however, the potential limitations of a center, and as will be discussed, ideological capture or carelessness at the unit level can be

particularly detrimental to academic freedom due to their close interaction with students. This has significant implications for envisioning how a center at the University of Oregon should operate, given its enumerated goals of preserving academic freedom and fostering engaged students. The UO center, as a result, must adopt a doctrine of "measured plurality," reflected in its faculty and administrators, to support as many students as possible (Della Rocca & Rodríguez, 2024).

Considering other views, the President of Wesleyan recently criticized the new interpretation of the Kalven principles, blasting it as a strategy aimed at pleasing the American political right. On national television, he went on to state that Harvard's new policy was "an educational disservice at best and cowardice at worst" and that they adopted it because they thought Trump was going to win the presidency, and "if they make statements defending basic academic freedom, they will anger the Trump administration" ("Wesleyan President," 2023). However, in a statement announcing the end of the encampment at Wesleyan, the President also committed to understanding the importance of "'maintain(ing) a safe enough environment on campus for people who disagree with one another and who embrace opportunities to learn from people with various points of view'" as they weighed their investments in companies associated with ties to Israel (Roth, 2024).

While "at least 20 colleges and universities, including Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania, have adopted new policies that appear to be inspired by Harvard's Institutional Voice Working Group" ("Wesleyan President," 2023), there is legitimate concern by students and faculty that this can act as a way for the university to skirt responsibility for their involvement in social issues. Following Risse's sentiment that the interconnectedness of the world predetermines the university's position as inherently involved, there are legitimate arguments for the university to make more substantial statements.

In a situation where the UO world rejects these principles, considering the extent of their involvement, who would make the statement and with what criteria? The question also arises of whether they would face additional pressure to make statements "from multiple, competing sides on nearly every imaginable issue of the day" and face further pressure to make nuanced statements about complex issues that span back centuries, in the case of Israel and Palestine ("Wesleyan President," 2023).

The "Proposal for the Establishment of a Human Rights Center" (See Appendix), which was brought to Provost Long in the Winter of 2025, presents the following:

"Informed by the University of Chicago's Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression and Harvard's 2024 Report on Institutional Voice, a Human Rights Center at the University of Oregon would help secure the university's core function during moments of human rights crises. That function is to serve as a site for unfettered research, dialogue, debate, and the discovery and creation of knowledge. A Human Rights Center would provide the university with sustained educational opportunities to research, dialogue, and argue and debate about issues of international, national, and local human rights issues that present themselves and to prepare members of the university community to take respective action."

This argument attempts to reconcile the unclear separation between who can speak for the university or not, recognizing that some students and faculty desire the university to speak out for a variety of issues, but also encourages careful consideration of how to preserve unfettered, nuanced research, free inquiry, dialogue, education on, and exploration of, in this case, human rights.

We come to the final question: In an environment where the university, a business with legitimate interests in sustaining itself, does not speak out on social issues, what and who decides whether a center or faculty can speak out or do research? Presenting an alternate argument to the answer on who can speak out lies in previous arguments on power difference and the ability for there to be effective disagreement in the university environment.

Expanding on those arguments, when officials make statements, their control of the resources positions them as less able to be challenged. Contrarily, faculty members can be

brought to debate by their peers and students. These micro-interactions, within the larger arena of communicative power, expressing values, are less clear when a center or organization makes a statement. Encouraging plurality, through impartiality in this instance requires considering whether there is another body to challenge or present a different view on its position. In the case of the UO, there is not, but this does not eliminate a commitment to free inquiry and discussion through the funding of such programs within a center that can promote greater balance of cultural capital, leading to greater free inquiry.

When any organization or actor makes absolutist statements in the university environment, a prohibition on contradiction exists (Arendt, 317). When there is a predefined premise to an idea, in this case, a social issue, deductions about what can and cannot be said (the chilling effect) are bound to arise—essentially creating an authoritarian system. As an antidote to this phenomenon, universities across the country have advocated for the adoption of impartial principles, but they must be accompanied by action to promote plurality, open discourse, and dialogue by students and faculty.

The way forward suggests continued investment in smaller organs, which are more willing and capable of crafting spaces where nuanced visions of social issues emerge. When supplied with a clear vision, this approach is more impactful in the day-to-day lives of students. However, with ongoing discussions about investment and the university's relationship with the outside world, this discussion remains complicated. Aligning itself with free speech practices, the establishment of a center for human rights at the UO would allow the university to mobilize resources and coordinate nuanced responses to complex social issues involving human rights for its diverse community. The university, in essence, is a "democratic society composed of many individuals, identities, experiences, and viewpoints." Its actions should reflect that fact, suggesting a greater investment not in its own "anodyne" statements but instead in resources for students and faculty to exercise open inquiry, action

on behalf of human rights as they are broadly defined, not limited by a deduction from the university, and research within accepted academic bounds (Brown-Nagin & Beerbohm, 2024).

In summary, American universities are bound by certain principles of the Constitution that protect free speech, but they largely operate within the context of the world and the norms and sanctions imposed on them as an institution. However, being bastions of research, professional, and academic development, I argue that universities have significant cultural capital and communicative power in our society. Considering this power, to what standard are they held in making use of their position, and how does this affect the ability of students, no matter their major, to make a difference in the field of human rights? Three concepts should be considered when discussing this question:

1. Selectivity: Who is supported, who is not, and who decides?
2. Internal dispute: How do power and varying views contend with the outcomes of different views?
3. Self-interest: Is entering into public debates on behalf of its student body and faculty the function of the university as an entity? (Sunstein, p. 91)

President Schill of Northwestern stated, "I do not foresee that I will be issuing statements on political, geopolitical, or social issues that do not directly impact the core mission of our University" (Schill, 2023) for the same reason that "if you work for a company that takes a strong stand on, say, immigration issues, you might as well hesitate before expressing disagreement" (Sunstein, p. 93). This stance protects students from being subject to potential silencing of their views, no matter how controversial in the public university, because they (students) are protected and important to challenge or listen to. While the university has an interest in "teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior," this does not protect them from limiting the "undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views" (Sunstein, p. 49). Centers should be held to preserve the same intentions and may dissuade them from making statements that could result in the same chilling effect. The

university shall determine this, including opportunities for dissent against the center itself and the collective positions of the faculty.

Overall, eliminating a collective statement on issues involving human rights that do not impact the core function of the university sets the bounds for the greater inclusion of all students and faculty who may hold diverse views. There is no possible way a university could reach a collective, nuanced position with all of its stakeholders, especially through a single statement (Sunstein, p. 11). With the acceptance of an impartial stance that acknowledges inevitable differences and preserves the ability for these differences to be shared and expressed, moral action must be taken by the university to provide students and faculty with actionable support to do so. As we have seen, one way to achieve this is through a center that directs resources and implements programming and bridge-building events, such as teach-ins and workshops. This prepares university members, particularly students, with empathy-driven skills and knowledge to bridge the gap between theory and practice in human rights work. With the formation of a center for human rights at the UO in its initial stages, understanding the successful programs of other centers is one critical step to ensuring the protection of academic freedom while also setting the stage to recommend programs that could have better addressed the crises on the UO campus over the 2023-2024 academic year after the October 7th attacks on Israel.

Comparative Justification and Review of Programs

While there is still ongoing discourse about the "statement", the structure of the academic unit, like a center, uniquely allows for a transition to “power with” relationships to develop while offering directed uses of university resources to support the free inquiry and debate around larger social issues. Additionally, if informed by a diversity of perspectives, it offers an actionable outlet for the university to protect its core function by refusing to compromise its institutional voice, research agenda, and status as a bastion for critical investigation into our world and its systems.

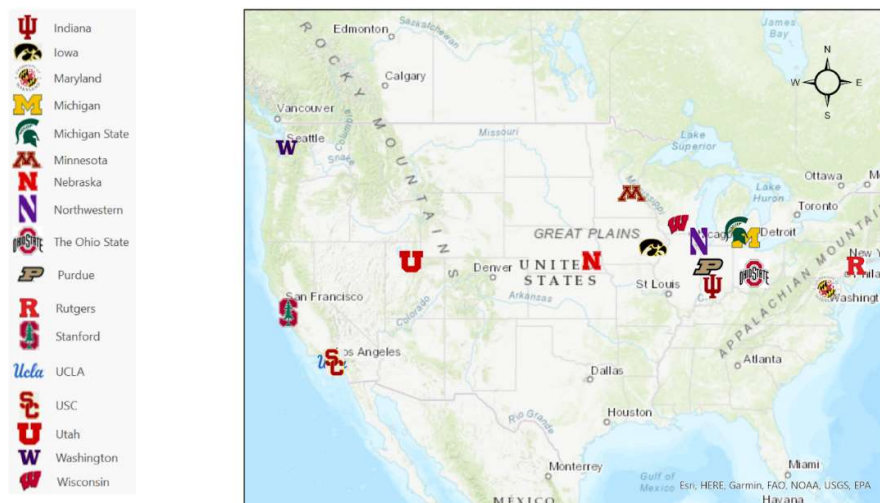


Figure 1: “Academic Rivals With Center, Institute, Program or Institutionalized Community on Human Rights or Peacebuilding”

Note. This map was created using ArcGIS online using data from university websites.

The intractability of human rights in human experience, subjective and personal, begs that the university find a manner to support students and fulfill its core function simultaneously through an academic unit. Across similarly sized and academically positioned schools around the country, this has been expressed in the form of a center, further supporting the case for a center. As seen in the figure above, the UO is one of three of eighteen schools in the new BIG10 that does not host a center, institute, community, or program on human rights for students, undergraduate and graduate. This puts our university at a disadvantage

compared to our partners and rivals and is leading us down a path of unpreparedness when another major social issue involving human rights galvanizes students on campuses across the country. Concern, however, should be paid to the relative size and funding capabilities when making this comparison, which is rectified in this section.

The question remains: What form do these centers, associated values, and programming take that allows them to accomplish the above goals and support students on their campuses? In this section, we will provide a brief evaluation of the structure, guiding values, and programming of centers at universities of comparable size to outline the development of the center at UO.

University of Iowa

The University of Iowa, with 32,000 students, academic standing in the BIG10, and R1 research status, is home to the UI Center for Human Rights (UICHR), which aims to host collaborative events and programs, teach about human rights, and engage "in scholarly work reaching the UI community, the state of Iowa, and beyond."

One of the main tenets of this center is experiential learning, as is at the UO, and their programs are "designed to highlight and consider, constructively and critically, the problems and prospects of human rights worldwide" while supporting trans-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration. One way they do this is through the inclusion of "artistic and literary viewpoints with legal, political, and socioeconomic human rights discourse." In accordance with their values of removing silos and centralization of knowledge, they seek to actively share "information with human rights specialists and the general public about its activities and human rights issues and developments generally."

The programs meant to accomplish these goals include:

- From Conflict to Lasting Peace: The Role of Human Rights (Webinar Series)
- Rex Honey Internships
- Scholars at Risk Program: Supporting Academic Freedom Amidst Conflict
- Annual Essay Prize
- Student Advocacy Seminar in Partnership with the Scholars at Risk Program
- Iowa Network of Human Rights Academics
- Monthly Newsletter
- Annual Report on Programs and Impact

The outcomes of these programs are documented in their annual report, which highlights the effectiveness of their nine student interns, 11 affiliated publications, and over 50 activities in the 2023-2024 period. Six students during that time were awarded the Kenneth J. Cmiel Human Rights Internship funding, and one law student the Burns H. Weston Internship funding, totaling \$12,500, to support students "summer internships with organizations pursuing human rights promotion and/or protection."

Affiliated with the School of Law and staffed by six faculty members, with three director positions, a program manager, and a Student and Education Support Specialist, this center is partially funded by the UI-Stanley Foundation Support Organization and the Burns H. Weston fund. It also seeks donations from the community and other potential donors through its Center for Human Rights Fund. After recently celebrating its 25th anniversary, this storied center boasts numerous programs to its name and, above all, continues to uphold its commitment to human rights education and student support in Iowa (UI Center for Human Rights, n.d.).

University of Utah

The University of Utah, a former Pac 12 and current R1 school, is home to 35,000 students and supports the Barbara C. and Norman L. Tanner Center for Human Rights. This center, which was established in the early 2000s, operates with the following principles in mind to pass on to students: human rights are universal and inalienable, human rights are

interdependent and indivisible, universal rights are equal and non-discriminatory, and human rights are both rights and obligations.

Their mission, which reflects the Normans' life missions, is to "encourage University of Utah students, faculty, staff, and local community members to seek a life of human rights advocacy and peacemaking through inspiration, education, and participation." They also seek to inspire by showing that peace, nonviolence, and human rights are attainable, rational, and essential while affirming that "human rights are both the process and the product of our efforts." Finally, they work in conjunction with the university to provide "academic programs for students, campus and community forums, faculty and graduate student research symposia, secondary and primary school outreach, and relevant resource materials" to support their goals.

Their notable programs include:

- Speaker Series
- Educational Outreach to K–12 Schools
- "Human Rights for Everyone, Everywhere" themed classroom visits
- Exploring Humanitarian Law Workshop
- Utah Citizens Counsel Project
- Partnership with Amnesty International
- Justice Advocacy Fellowship for Undergraduate Students

Note. They also host a site for the associated publications of their center and library resources.

These programs demonstrate their commitment to community outreach and participation in the center, with the JAF aiming to grow a cohort of 20-30 students annually in their human rights education, selecting students from diverse colleges and varied backgrounds. Each JAF student receives \$3000, interns 8 hours a week at a local organization (e.g., HEAL Utah, YWCA, UHPP, Better Utah, Voices for Utah Children), and participates in continuous cohort reflections and discussions.

This center is housed in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, has two full-time staff members in director positions, and a faculty advisory board comprising thirteen

faculty members from across the university. This center relies primarily on the funds set aside for its development by the Tanners themselves and continues its operations to this day (Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center, 2019)

University of Nebraska (Omaha)

The University of Nebraska-Omaha (UNO) is an offshoot of the University of Nebraska and hosts just over 15,000 students. The University of Nebraska is an R1 institution and a member of the Big Ten, making this center comparable to the University of Oregon and a potentially great model for the development of its human rights center, drawing on the example of the Goldstein Center for Human Rights (GCHR).

This center seeks to compound "existing strengths across multiple UNO colleges and departments," such as the religious studies program, and "is intended to foster the interdisciplinary partnerships essential to the study of human rights." This unit prides itself on being nonpartisan and nonsectarian, seeking to promote "the understanding of issues through teaching, research and creative activity, and community engagement both locally and globally."

Their programs in pursuit of this aim include:

- Minor in Human Rights Offering
- Human Rights Internship Scholarship
- Efforts to Highlight Faculty Research
- A Human Rights Research Guide
- The Annual Goldstein Lecture on Human Rights
- Human Rights Week Celebrations
- Essay Contest
- Research, Teaching, and Community Engagement Initiatives such as "Landscapes of Belonging: Refugee Experiences in Nebraska and Beyond," sponsored by the Goldstein Family Community Chair in Human Rights.

This UNO center also sponsors the International Dialogue Scholarly Journal and multiple media projects, including Siyasa, which is a forum on Islamic and Middle Eastern politics, and the University of Nebraska Omaha Service-Learning Academy, which supports

"UNO faculty members in developing service-learning courses in collaboration with community organizations, governmental agencies, businesses, and P-12 faculty".

The center's structure is faculty-led and governed, and it is largely privately funded in tandem with the Goldstein Family Community Chair in Human Rights. Founded in 2017, this center "extend(s) the Goldstein family's fervor for human rights to future generations" and does so through its executive committee of 10 faculty and help of project design manager (Goldstein Center for Human Rights, 2025).

University of Rhode Island

With only 17,000 students, a state university, and a designation as an R1 institution, the University of Rhode Island (URI) stands out as the best match for the University of Oregon, given its relative size. Their Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies is designed to meet the university's needs and focus, an important lesson in specialization for the region and university resources.

The values of this center are expressed as "promote (ing) mutual understanding, reconcile conflicts, and build peaceful, sustainable, and inclusive communities." As across the other centers, forming interdisciplinary partnerships is a major priority and remains a core value in URI's center. Through these methods, they aim to "institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence" and "foster mutual understanding among people" to promote sustainable community development. As a byproduct, they hope to strengthen relationships with existing organizations, government departments, and institutions working on nonviolence and peacebuilding at the local to global scale.

Their programs include:

- International Nonviolence Summer Institute
- "Forgiveness is Freedom" Academy
- Nonviolence and Peace Studies Course Support
- Interdisciplinary Minor Offering
- Student Scholarship Support
- Kingian Nonviolence Training
- Gandhi Essay Contest
- CIRIRGHTS Human Rights Database (Largest in the World)
- Annual "Peacemaker" Award

Among the available information, their structure is ambiguous in detail but faculty-led, with a few core faculty members present in each of the programs it runs. A student-oriented center addressing a multitude of issues, it has found a home on the URI campus in the Multicultural Student Services Center (Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies, n.d.).

Conclusion

Considering the goals to support students and, subsequently, the core function of the university, the University of Oregon must continue to take steps to implement practices of impartiality and take moral action to support its core function. That moral action, at its base, is rooted in our collectivist duty to know each other in our globalized world. Supporting informed education, dialogue, debate, and argument are moral responses to the issue of human rights, and these must now be put into practice by the diverse coalition of students and faculty working with the Office of the Provost and the University on the establishment of the human rights center.

The proposed structure of the center and those involved will inevitably change. However, the hope is that the original intention will remain intact, providing the university the ability to implement best practices, such as Michael Schill did with his statements. Student orientation should also be understood as fostering support for both faculty and students, including graduate and undergraduate students, with the primary aim of positively impacting students through its program. However, this does not exclude support for faculty and cannot if it wants to be successful. Faculty at a university are the lifeblood of centers, and the diverse perspectives they augment require their active participation. The working documents of Harvard, Yale, and Chicago will continue to be challenged, as they are at the University of Oregon in practice. However, they share the same intention: to take action while not minimizing the potential for dissent among opinions and research.

Once again, this center shall not be a single-issue unit. However, those implementing it are doing so at a time and with the momentum of conversations surrounding the ongoing conflict between forces in Palestine and Israel. Unfortunately, referred to as a "forever war" by prominent scholars and having gained political traction from various "sides" in the US, a

human rights center could have been uniquely positioned to support the university and its students. This results in further progress within conversations about how this complex region has evolved, where it is headed, and how it impacts us all as new global citizens; however, there was no such center.

As a final case study, I draw on the example of Dartmouth's response to student protests on campus to illustrate the principles of free speech, institutional voice, programming implementation, and support for free inquiry. I suggest a set of programming that should have been implemented on October 8th, a day after the attack on Israel, and over the 6 months following. There is no utopian solution to addressing complex issues, and units such as these should not be viewed as scapegoats for administrators to defer tough questions. However, when carried out fairly, with consideration of law and principles, but also with an empathetic lens, it adds a dynamic tool for the university and its students to protect their speech and its core function.

Referencing Cass Sunstein's scholarship, protest is an institution in the United States as much as is the Supreme Court, and they act in dialect, ideally as checks and balances for power and influence in our country. At times, protest is most effective when it employs non-violent methods to challenge systems of oppression. From the history of SNCC to the student protests during the Vietnam War to those that took place in 2023-2024 in response to the conflict in Gaza, students have been at the forefront of protest movements that have employed different methods over the years.

In the case of Dartmouth, their President, Sian Beilock, took the stance that "there's a difference between protest and then taking over a shared space for one ideology and excluding another," and Sunstein would agree. Protest within the university environment is restricted due to time, place, and manner, and permanent encampments have historically fallen under this restriction because they force the university to take a position, thereby

inhibiting its core function. Within these restrictions, it is the university's responsibility to set clear guidelines in accordance with common principles, allowing students to know what to expect when they protest.

A human rights center seeks not to be an alternative outlet for that energy but rather to teach about the history of nonviolence in the movement for civil and human rights, using the University of Rhode Island as a model. The tradition of protest should be respected, and students should be made aware of the risks they take when engaging in civil disobedience. Protest and non-violent resistance, when taught through workshops or cohort models, prepare students to take acceptable, effective action on behalf of human rights.

This comes back to our discussion of the distinction between impartiality and neutrality and takes on a different life in a "public" university outside of Dartmouth. Public universities report to students and taxpayers (state or federal), regardless of the amount provided to them. This puts more weight on their decisions to take similar actions and purport either their neutrality or impartiality. What shifted Dartmouth's hardline stance toward spatial neutrality, however, was the President's aim to implement "Brave Spaces" on campus, embracing "controversy with civility" over "the illusion of safety." Utilizing existing resources, the university held "two campus-wide seminars" which engaged different perspectives on the issue, "which were not only well attended, (but) took place almost right after the attacks (the first was on October 10)," setting the standard from "which Dartmouth would not deviate in the weeks and months to come."

This action aligns with the principles of impartiality, enabling students to engage with these topics alongside experts while avoiding any bias that might lead to the university's position dominating the narrative or marginalizing alternative perspectives. Despite language mentioning community building, these programs would have been bolstered by increased student participation in crafting these events, an outline of guidelines for their structure, and

discussion-based, evidence-based, and culturally relevant programs if that was appropriate for the needs of the student body, as determined by the student body. One claim about these programs is that they utilize the academic sphere to operationalize a complex issue, possibly overlooking the emotional aspect of the conflict and its implications. This should be carefully weighed, and a center implementing programs should allow students to exercise their free speech within the bounds of protected speech while also respecting their freedom to express themselves emotionally. Community building through empathy needs to be carefully facilitated, however. This, on the UO campus, could have been accomplished using the curriculum of the Holden Center or a multitude of resource centers for collaborative training; however, there needs to be a unit dedicated to understanding these dynamics and coordinating efforts outside of individual efforts.

Finally, one thing Dartmouth did not have that would have supported the university is an emphasis on providing students with opportunities to apply human rights work, thereby bridging theory and practice. Programs, such as those at the University of Utah and the University of Iowa, which provide support in funding, finding, and discussing applied work experience at law clinics, international organizations, food justice organizations, and groups doing work on civil rights, help students understand the reality of human rights work and provide them with important advocacy skills. The UO HRC should adopt the models of these programs and seek to implement them with available funding, given their value-added benefits for students. At the same time, these programs align specifically with the University of Oregon's new strategic plan, which allocates resources and effort to enhance experiential learning opportunities.

If we had had a center in Fall 2023, when Hamas forces horrifically attacked and killed over a thousand civilians in Israel, the university would have leaned on its faculty and units to prepare for the future. Referring to doctrine on impartiality, they would have made a

statement depending on whether the attack affected its core function and would have been clear about that distinction. Subsequently, when the retaliatory conflict erupted in Gaza, they would have acted in line with their previous statement, being transparent about the conflict's impact on academic freedom and the core function, if warranted. An HRC would have engaged students in "brave spaces," as did Dartmouth, fostering discussion amongst students and events where diverse perspectives on the history of the conflict were acknowledged. These would have been immediate, in the form of teach-ins and speaking series, preparing all students with the necessary context to engage productively in the issue, thereby demonstrating a moral action on behalf of the university.

At the same time, students would have been engaged in the study of non-violent resistance through ongoing workshops. In this regard, they would also have been able to pursue internships with organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, gaining insight into the work involved in protecting global human rights. However, these are all outcomes of a center that engages students in a unit designed to reach a broad audience, considering contemporary issues while also remaining committed to the study and practice of human rights, a daily concern globally, nationally, and locally. This center is not just for addressing current issues but also to prepare the university, its students, and its faculty for the inevitable fight for human rights tomorrow, which requires structures and doctrines that support applied support for all students through an impartial stance.

APPENDIX

Proposal for the Establishment of a Human Rights Center at the University of Oregon

Prepared by the University of Oregon Coalition for a Human Rights Center

This proposal was presented to the UO Provost, Chris Long, Vice President of Student Life, and Dean of the Division of Global Engagement on February 14th. The work embodied in the following piece is the culmination of seven months of work to understand student needs on campus, and present one, potential workable solution to the gaps in human rights education verified by our experiences as students at the University of Oregon. This work informs the analysis conducted by the proceeding thesis.

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- a. Recommendations for Task Force Members
- b. Endorsements & Student Support
- c. [Comparable Models for Development](#)
- d. [Detailed Charges of Task Force & Resource Requirements](#)

MISSION

This proposal seeks the *Office of the Provost* to support a task force of students and faculty that will establish a student-oriented Human Rights Center at the University of Oregon. Eventually, the center

would serve as a **physical space** for advancing the study and practice of human rights, providing students from all disciplines with opportunities for **academic, professional, and experiential learning**. Through programming, events, and community-building initiatives, the center could empower students to engage with local, national, and global human rights challenges, fostering a campus culture of informed dialogue, action, and leadership. This task force will ensure the University of Oregon can meet the growing demand for human rights education and its practical applications while supporting nuanced understandings of larger social issues.

This center will educate on multiple traditions of human rights, emphasizing the understanding that human rights are universal, inalienable, interdependent, and interrelated. These principles highlight that all human rights apply to everyone and rely on one another to ensure the full dignity and freedom of every individual. By exploring these various traditions through various programming, the center will promote the practical, nuanced education of the student body while bridging theory with practice.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The University of Oregon faces a critical gap; it lacks a dedicated institution that centralizes and promotes applied, multidisciplinary human rights education. This deficiency limits students' understanding of local, national, and global human rights issues, impeding their ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions and actions surrounding human rights from an informed perspective. Students are eager and energized to learn about human rights, but without proper institutional support, their ability to drive meaningful progress remains stifled.

BACKGROUND

In the past year, increasing activism on campus, online, and in public spaces has highlighted the growing student interest in human rights. Despite this, the University of Oregon lacks a centralized institution to support students and faculty in studying these concepts and their applications on local, national, and global scales. While sparse opportunities exist to investigate these topics, they are often student-run or developed by faculty who face challenges securing adequate financial and technical support alone. Additionally, the university offers few spaces for informed, collaborative discussions on human rights and the value systems that inform them. Existing programs and clubs, often student-led, can struggle due to a lack of institutional backing, and though they do incredible work, this can lead to burnout and quick dissolution. This gap stifles the capability for the university, and the students who invest in its services, to formulate nuanced, multidisciplinary scholarship and take action on our world's greatest challenges.

Given the urgency of social issues today, it is critical to provide students with the tools and platforms to contribute to the understanding of human rights in the UO community, and the larger world, in whichever profession they pursue. Looking to address this problem, we [spoke](#) with many diverse students and their representatives, on-campus organizations, and faculty, coming to understand that there is a clear need for this type of space, fostering informed, impartial discussion and providing opportunities to investigate the reality of applied human rights.

With momentum to establish a Human Rights Minor within the School of Global Studies and Languages, funded by an outside grant, there will hopefully be greater curriculum support for students

in the next 2-3 years. It is in the interest of students, preparing for careers, and the university, to synergistically support a unit that can help bridge theory and practice and offer extracurricular opportunities in this field.

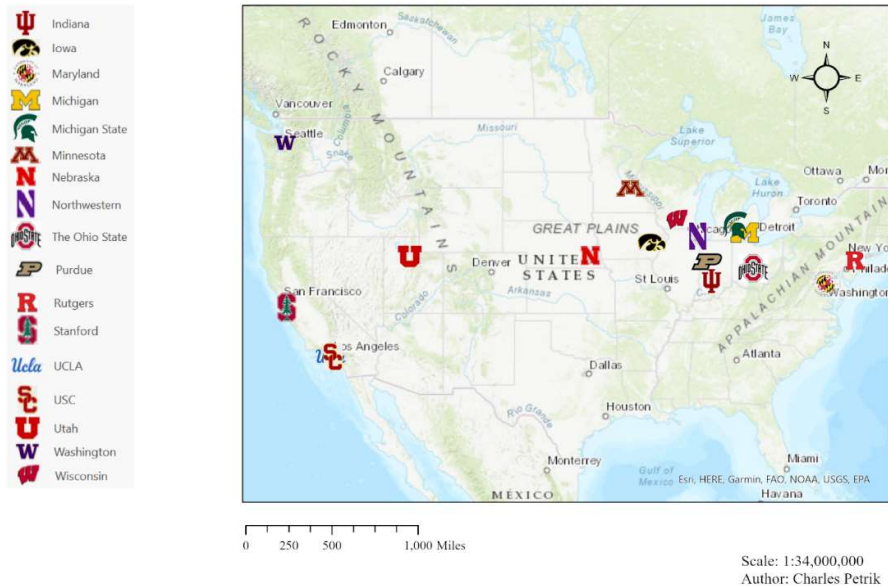
Informed by the University of Chicago's Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression and Harvard's 2024 *Report on Institutional Voice*, a Human Rights Center at the University of Oregon would help secure the university's core function during moments of human rights crises. That function is to serve as a site for unfettered research, dialogue, debate, and the discovery and creation of knowledge. A Human Rights Center would provide the university with sustained educational opportunities to research, dialogue, and argue and debate about issues of international, national, and local human rights issues that present themselves and to prepare members of the university community to take respective action.

To avoid duplication, we have consulted with several centers on campus, including the Wayne Morse Center for Law & Politics, the Oregon Humanities Center, the Center for the Study of Women in Society, and the Center for Latin American Studies. While these organizations address specific human rights issues within their areas of expertise, they do not provide a comprehensive approach to human rights. This absence of dedicated, cross-disciplinary spaces has caused frustration among students, who are left to organize their own educational experiences independently.

The undeniable energy of students to speak on issues of human rights is matched by the success of those who have sought similar educational opportunities outside the university. When UO students participate in programs like the Oxford Consortium for Human Rights, their abilities and potential are recognized. Many have earned prestigious awards such as the Rhodes Scholarship, the Scoville Peace Fellowship, and national Phi Beta Kappa Scholarships. These accomplishments highlight the incredible potential of UO students, which could be fully realized with the proper institutional support.

COMPARATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Academic Rivals with Center, Institute, Community or Program in Human Rights



Student demand for education and action around human rights has surged in the past few years, but the university lacks the resources to meet this need. Meanwhile, peer universities have developed robust human rights programs, putting UO at a competitive disadvantage. To show how imperative it is to find a solution to the gaps in human rights education at UO, we can compare ourselves to academic rivals in the BIG10 conference. Out of this conference, plus Stanford and Utah, **Oregon stands with Illinois and Penn State as the only universities to not have a specific program, robust course offering, or center that focuses on human rights education, research, or community action.** Half of UO's competitor institutions have a center that directs research, local and global activism, and educational opportunities for students to widen their perspectives with the support of their school.

The UO Coalition for Human Rights Center has engaged in discussions with human rights centers at the University of Utah, the University of Michigan, and Stanford about their programming and their urgent support of establishing a similar initiative at UO.

See the [Appendix](#) for a detailed analysis of competitor institutions' programming.

GOALS

1. Enhance Understanding of Global Human Rights Frameworks

- Fostering student interaction with international human rights concepts and practices.
- Measured by: The number of diverse speakers brought to UO, internships secured by students, and qualitative surveys assessing career readiness among program participants.

2. Expand Opportunities for Students

- Increase student access to internships, fellowships, and research in the human rights field.
- Measured by: The number of student-faculty research projects generated and the number of students engaged in summer or post-grad internships and fellowships.

3. Create a Platform for Ethical Discussion on Global Human Rights Issues

- Provide a dedicated space for informed, ethical discussions on pressing human rights topics.
- Measured by: Faculty involvement across departments, the number of public events hosted annually, student engagement, and data-driven outcomes

All of the aforementioned goals have not and will not be accomplished effectively without the presence of an institutionalized community on the University of Oregon campus. Faculty are undeniably busy, and without adequate financial and material support, institutionalized and guaranteed through a center, the university cannot expect them to take the lead on establishing further opportunities for students to study how to promote human rights. Similarly, students cannot be held to that standard either, and thus, cannot adequately learn about, and seek outside opportunities to apply what education they do have in human rights.

PROPOSED TASK FORCE

On October 30th, 2024, the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) Senate unanimously passed a [resolution](#) of support, calling upon the Office of the Provost to support the establishment of a Human Rights Center task force. The resolution was the culmination of a month-long process where feedback was given on the proposal and potential structures were workshopped with student representatives. The ASUO's resolution **reflects widespread student support** for and understanding of current needs in this realm. This proposal codifies that support into a workable plan of action.

We propose that the Office of the Provost should support a task force to establish a Human Rights Center at the University of Oregon. This task force should include an equal number of students and faculty who, committed to establishing a student-oriented and multidisciplinary space, can develop the center's objectives, organizational structure, and preliminary programming while incorporating the aforementioned goals. Once the task force has defined these goals and coordinated with the relevant departments and staff, they will assess the center's risks, find a housing institution, understand funding, resource/space needs, and set out a timeline for development over the next 3-5 years. After these tasks are complete, we recommend the task force should transition into advisory or affiliated roles to guide the center and maintain its vision. We encourage the task force to implement preliminary, pilot programming (eg. hosting teach-ins, workshops, or student-oriented events). This would allow the task force to better understand faculty and student commitment, plus programmatic and resource needs.

Though the decisions in these matters are opportunistic, and a strict adherence to a “doctrine” outlined in this proposal will limit the capability of the center to develop innovatively, therefore, we strongly recommend that the task force operate with the following values in mind: a commitment to multidisciplinary education (expressed in programming and via the housing institution), sustainability in a resource-constrained environment, and a strict orientation towards the needs of students

Please refer to our [appendix](#) which includes a list of contacts for students and faculty who have been involved or have expressed interest in this project, as well as those with relevant expertise. This list can grow or shrink as new connections are made, **however, student leadership must be central to the center’s development and oversight to ensure that the center remains student-oriented and maintains its integrity.**

Additionally, a detailed analysis of potential task force charges can be found in the appendix. Information about administrative structure, Facility & Administrative Costs (F&A), Full-Time Equivalent FTEs, and overall resource requirements can be found in the Appendix.

POTENTIAL PROGRAMMING WITHIN THE CENTER:

- a. Speaker Series & Visiting Fellows: Host events with figures like Combatants for Peace, local activists, or other visiting fellows.
- b. Student Fellowship Program: Offer internships or cohort-based workshops, similar to models from Utah, Stanford, and Michigan, integrating hands-on experience.
- c. Topical Teach-ins: Conduct sessions led by faculty or students on current human rights issues.
- d. Scholarships & Internships: Support opportunities for practical experience, leveraging university and personal connections.
- e. Annual Human Rights Agenda: Guide research, scholarships, and center activities with a clear focus.
- f. Human Rights Conference: Organize a conference with BIG10 schools.
- g. Research Hubs: Develop research hubs focused on topics like homelessness, incarceration, and local issues specific to Eugene and Oregon.

CONNECTION TO VALUES

Oregon Rising is the University of Oregon's 10-year strategic plan, set to be implemented in 2024, with goals to “enhance graduation pathways”, become a “leader in career preparation”, create a “flourishing community,” and “increase global impact.” The proposed Center for Human Rights **fulfills** these goals providing students with practical learning opportunities that enhance graduation pathways and career readiness. It fosters an inclusive campus community through interdisciplinary collaboration and discussions on global human rights issues while contributing to efforts to support individual and group **flourishing**. Additionally, the Center empowers students to apply human rights frameworks to real-world challenges, accelerating the university’s global impact and preparing students to become leaders capable of addressing societal challenges. The plan states, “We will build on strategic successes with new ideas, create avenues for broad constituent input to inform potential changes, and adjust course when a strategy proves to be less effective.” The Center aligns with this approach by introducing a new initiative that supports the university's evolving mission and values.

Outside of the strategic plan, the University of Oregon depicts one of its main values as:

“...devoted to educating the whole person, and to fostering the next generation of **transformational leaders** and **informed participants** in the global community. Through these pursuits, we enhance the social, cultural, physical, and economic well-being of our students, Oregon, the nation, and the world.”

Across all majors, there is a discrete emphasis on investigating humanist perspectives. However, inextricably missing from this long-established academic focus is a significant opportunity to learn about human rights, their applications, and how they can be integrated in a multidisciplinary manner, at home and abroad. Students are passionate and concerned about the inability to seek individual eudaimonia at home and abroad, as shown by large mobilization independent of the university.

To create truly “transformational leaders” and remain consistent with its values, the UO must satisfy that student desire and support the faculty duty to develop the whole student by fostering knowledge building about international and local systems of human rights advocacy and action for achievable peace.

The formalization of a center would not only realize the university’s goals by supporting human rights education on campus but also by promoting multidisciplinary collaboration between students and faculty through human rights programming. By advancing equity in its educational value and incorporating a variety of perspectives on the study of rights and justice, the college’s support of the center would be one of the most significant steps to promoting lasting transparency about what the university can do to help students tackle complex issues using their knowledge and impactful, informed study

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING/SUPPORT

The center or task force could expect to receive funding or resources from the housing or contributing institution(s), including but not limited to The Office of the Provost, the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Global Studies and Languages (GSL), the Law School, and Political Science. Ideally, different schools or departments would contribute resources or funding to a center, buying into its operations. As for the preliminary stages, the task force should be encouraged to follow up on the connections or opportunities listed below. Recognizing that this is a unique proposal, presented without preliminary funding, the task force should also be encouraged to investigate opportunities for funding via grants or development offices.

School of Global Studies and Languages (GSL): Executive Director Aneesh Aneesh has communicated enthusiastic support in terms of staffing to assist in the center's startup and involvement in the task force. While not providing full funding at this stage, GSL's support is crucial for operational growth, and there is potential for future funding as the center gains traction.

College of Arts and Sciences (CAS): Has expressed initial support for housing or partially funding a Human Rights Center. For more information, please contact Dean Harry Wonham (Humanities) at

ddhumanities@uoregon.edu, Bruce McGough (Social Sciences) at adsocialsci@uoregon.edu, or Dean Chris Paulsen (Arts and Sciences) at poulsenc@uoregon.edu.

Private Donors and Philanthropic Donations: The University of Oregon Advancement and Donor Relations & Outreach can contribute to seeking individual donors, foundations, and philanthropic organizations that support human rights education. This is evidenced by preliminary conversations held with the Law School and its associated office. Please contact Bernard B. Kliks Professor of Law and member of the proposed task force, Michelle McKinley at michelle@uoregon.edu for further information.

Campus Resources: Leverage shared resources from other centers and departments within the university to supplement operations, especially during the early stages of the Human Rights Center. Collaborating with other campus initiatives could provide logistical, financial, and infrastructural support. The centers mentioned in the [appendix](#) have offered their resources and support.

Global Justice Committee (Carlton Savage Fund): Carlton Raymond Savage was a UO graduate and dedicated State Department employee who served as a delegate to The United Nations Conference on International Organization. In 1987, Savage donated \$500,000 of his acquired wealth to the University of Oregon, establishing the Carlton Savage Fund, which set aside money for bringing prominent leaders in human rights studies to campus. However, the money he donated, soon matched by the Oregon State Legislature, through its new “Endowment for Excellence Program” was also appropriated to start a new center or institute. To further cite the MOU for the fund, Savage’s vision for his gift included sponsoring: “a ‘Center’ and ‘International projects’” as he hoped “that the ‘University of Oregon would become a major center for the study of international relations and peace, influencing students to come to the University who are interested in the cause of peace.’ He was also hopeful that students would “be able to work on some international project that will contribute toward international peace. Such projects would help students ‘to discover what helps us gain peace...what the conditions or underlying principles are for a lasting peace’”.

Carlton Savage MOU: <https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/6/6757/files/2014/07/Memorandum-of-Understanding-vpvyh4.pdf>

CONCLUSION

The formation of a Human Rights Center must equip future generations of University of Oregon students with paralleled human rights opportunities as our academic counterparts from our knowledgeable faculty, fellows, and connections. The institutionalization of a center, as compared to simply implementing sparse programming, will effectively consolidate the energy, resources, and connections of faculty, departments, and students to coordinate innovative and engaging programs and research best. Doing so will recognize the fact that our world and community are ever-changing, thus we must grant students the knowledge and support to fit productively within the challenges that reality brings. Most impactfully, this space would provide a productive forum for students from all disciplines to channel their energy toward advancing human rights at all scales. **In doing so, the university can ignite a generation of students committed to human dignity, empowering them to shape a world where human rights aren’t just a cause, but a universal reality.**

APPENDIX A

University of Oregon Coalition for a Human Rights Center [Student Organizers](#);

Charles Petrik (Senior), *Global Studies and Geography*

Sophia Barghouti (Junior), *Political Science, Middle Eastern & North African Studies, Arabic*

Recommendation for Task Force Members:

Affiliated Faculty Contacts - [Faculty Profiles Linked Here](#);

Dr. Michael Fakhri, *Professor of Law and UN Rapporteur on the Right to Food*

Dr. Michelle McKinley, *Bernard B. Kliks Professor of Law*

Dr. Yvonne Braun, *Professor and Department Head of Global Studies*

Dr. Smadar Ben-Natan, *Assistant Professor of Human Rights, Global Studies*

Dr. Jasmine Samara, *Professor of Law, Undergraduate Legal Studies*

Dr. Leilani Sabzalian, *Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, College of Education*

Dr. Jennifer O'Neal, *Assistant Professor of Native American Studies*

Dr. Miriam Chorley-Schulz, *Assistant Professor of Holocaust Studies*

Dr. Gabriela Martinez, *Professor of Journalism & Communication*

Affiliated Student Contacts - [Student Profiles Linked Here](#);

Sophia Barghouti (Junior), *Political Science and Middle Eastern & North African Studies, Arabic*

Samantha Wiesner (Sophomore), *Global Studies and PPM and minor Arabic*

Obafemi Akintayo (Second-year Graduate), *Conflict and Dispute Resolution*

Lee Gray (Second-year Graduate), *History*

Erin Luedemann (Junior), *Business Administration and minors in Spanish and Environmental Studies*

Beatrice Kahn (Junior), *History and English*

Faculty Supporters:

Dr. David Frank, *Professor of Rhetoric, Clark Honors College*

Dr. Allison Gash, *Professor and Department Head of Political Science*

Dr. Erin Beck, *Associate Professor of Political Science in the College of Arts and Sciences*

Dr. Steven Shankman, *UNESCO Chair in Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace*

Dr. Carlos Aguirre, *Professor of History, Latin American Studies*

Dr. Julie Weise, *Associate Professor, Department of History, IRES, Latinx*

UO Institutional Supporters:

The University of Oregon Senate, *Senate President Alison Schmitke*

College of Arts & Sciences, *Dean Chris Poulson; Divisional Deans Harry Wonham; Bruce McGough*

College of Design, *Dean Adrian Parr Zaretsky*

Robert D. Clark Honors College, *Dean Carol Stabile*

UNESCO Crossings Institute, *founding Co-Director, Peter Laufer*

Multicultural Center, *Program Director Dinorah Ortiz*

Center for the Study of Women in Society, *Director Leah Middlebrook & Assoc. Director Jena Turner*

Center for Latino/a & Latin American Studies, *Associate Director Erin Beck*

US-Vietnam Research Center, *Founding Director Tuong Vu*

Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, *Director Dan Tichnor*

UO ASUO-Recognized Student Group Supporters:

Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO)

Jewish Voices For Peace

Student Justice for Palestine

Muslim Student Association

JStreet

Ducks 4 Israel

United Nations Association

AAU Established Contacts & Supporters

Utah Barbara and Norman Tanner Center for Human Rights

<https://humanrights.utah.edu/about/index.php>

Link/Contact: **Aleta Airmet**, *Director*

Key Programs: Justice Advocacy Fellowship, Community Outreach Programs

Funding structure: Private

Stanford Center for Human Rights and International Justice <https://humanrights.stanford.edu/>

Link/Contact: **Penelope Van Tuyl**, *Associate Director*

Key Programs: Student staff, minor in human rights, paid human rights fellowship (applied research and work opportunities), research opportunities, trial monitoring, and human trafficking research

Funding structure: Mix of private and university funding

Michigan Donia Human Rights Center <https://ii.umich.edu/humanrights>

Contact: **Nataša Gruden-Alajbegović**, *Manager*, **Wesley Wright**, *Academic Program Specialist*,

Key Programs: Nine separate fellowship programs, annual Wallenberg Lecture, resource centralization

Funding structure: Private

APPENDIX: COMPARABLE MODELS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Concerning the student population and comparable resources, we have outlined the following models for the development of a center, topically and structure-wise, however, it should **remain student-oriented**.

University of Iowa Center For Human Rights

Link: <https://uicr.uiowa.edu/scholarships/conferences>

Mission Statement: “The UICHR hosts diverse collaborative events and innovative programs, teaches Human Rights courses, and engages in scholarly work reaching the UI community, the state of Iowa, and beyond”

Structure: Staffed and with faculty advisory board

Operations: Certificate and curriculum support, volunteer internships (funding opportunities), a network of human rights activists, [scholars at risk](#) program, monthly events, scholarship advocacy (grants, publications, conferences)

Key Programming: Webinar series on Industrial Agriculture, yearly literature pick “One Community, One Book”, Podcasting, Human Rights Education Training, [Link to Past Programming](#)

University of Nebraska Goldstein Center for Human Rights

Link:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/goldstein-center-for-human-rights/academics/internship-scholarship.php>

Mission Statement: “Designed to facilitate and catalyze increased human rights-related academic offerings, research, as well as local and international community outreach, partnerships, and programming. The GCHR builds on existing strengths across multiple UNO colleges and departments, and a longstanding lectureship in human rights sponsored by UNO’s Religious Studies program. It is intended to foster the interdisciplinary partnerships essential to the study of human rights”

Structure: Faculty-led unit in the College of Arts and Sciences

Operations: Associated Human Rights Minor and curriculum support, support for research journal, sponsoring international media projects, resources for vulnerable groups (women’s rights, academic freedom, LGBTQIA+)

Key Programming: Goldstein Lecture on Human Rights, Human Rights Week, Essay Contest, research, teaching, and community engagement on refugee experiences in Nebraska, service learning academy.

University of Utah Barbara and Norman Tanner Center for Human Rights

Link: <https://humanrights.utah.edu/>

Mission Statement: “To encourage University of Utah students, faculty, staff, and local community members to seek a life of human rights advocacy and peacemaking through inspiration, education, and participation...To provide internships, field experiences, and student engagement in the design and conduct of workshops and projects...To collaborate with related groups and organizations in Utah and beyond...To continue meeting the challenges of an ever-changing world with innovative ideas in education and participation to foster nonviolent human rights advocacy.”

Structure: Staff and advisory board of faculty and community/local human rights leaders

Key Programming: K12 Educational Outreach programs, Utah Citizen’s Council, Amnesty International U of U chapter, Justice Advocacy Fellowship for Students, [Past Programming](#)

Appendix: Contacts

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Dr. Smadar Ben-Natan, *Assistant Professor of Human Rights, Global Studies*

Dr. Jasmine Samara, *Professor of Law, Undergraduate Legal Studies*

Dr. Leilani Sabzalian, *Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, College of Education*

Dr. Jennifer O’Neal, *Assistant Professor of Native American Studies*

Dr. Miriam Chorley-Schulz, *Assistant Professor of Holocaust Studies*

Dr. Gabriela Martinez, *Professor of Journalism & Communication*

Affiliated Student Contacts - [Student Profiles Linked Here:](#)

Sophia Barghouti (Junior), *Political Science and Middle Eastern & North African Studies, Arabic*

Samantha Wiesner (Sophomore), *Global Studies and PPM and minor Arabic*

Obafemi Akintayo (Second-year Graduate), *Conflict and Dispute Resolution*

Lee Gray (Second-year Graduate), *History*

Erin Luedemann (Junior), *Business Administration and minors in Spanish and Environmental Studies*

Beatrice Kahn (Junior), *History and English*

Faculty Supporters:

Dr. David Frank, *Professor of Rhetoric, Clark Honors College*

Dr. Allison Gash, *Professor and Department Head of Political Science*

Dr. Erin Beck, *Associate Professor of Political Science in the College of Arts and Sciences*

Dr. Steven Shankman, *UNESCO Chair in Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace*

Dr. Carlos Aguirre, *Professor of History, Latin American Studies*

Dr. Julie Weise, *Associate Professor, Department of History, IRES, Latinx*

UO Institutional Supporters:

The University of Oregon Senate, *Senate President Alison Schmitke*

College of Arts & Sciences, *Dean Chris Poulson; Divisional Deans Harry Wonham; Bruce McGough*

College of Design, *Dean Adrian Parr Zaretsky*

Robert D. Clark Honors College, *Dean Carol Stabile*

UNESCO Crossings Institute, *founding Co-Director, Peter Laufer*

Multicultural Center, *Program Director Dinorah Ortiz*

Center for the Study of Women in Society, *Director Leah Middlebrook & Assoc. Director Jena Turner*

Center for Latino/a & Latin American Studies, *Associate Director Erin Beck*

US-Vietnam Research Center, *Founding Director Tuong Vu*

Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, *Director Dan Tichnor*

UO Student Group Supporters:

Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO)

Jewish Voices For Peace

Student Justice for Palestine

Muslim Student Association

JStreet

Ducks 4 Israel

United Nations Association

AAU Established Contacts & Supporters

Utah Barbara and Norman Tanner Center for Human Rights

<https://humanrights.utah.edu/about/index.php>

Link/Contact: **Aleta Airmet**, *Director*

Key Programs: Justice Advocacy Fellowship, Community Outreach Programs

Funding structure: Private

Stanford Center for Human Rights and International Justice <https://humanrights.stanford.edu/>

Link/Contact: **Penelope Van Tuyl**, *Associate Director*

Key Programs: Student staff, minor in human rights, paid human rights fellowship (applied research and work opportunities), research opportunities, trial monitoring, and human trafficking research

Funding structure: Mix of private and university funding

Michigan Donia Human Rights Center <https://ii.umich.edu/humanrights>

Contact: **Nataša Gruden-Alajbegović**, *Manager*, **Wesley Wright**, *Academic Program Specialist*,

Key Programs: Nine separate fellowship programs, annual Wallenberg Lecture, resource centralization

Funding structure: Private

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