



HART Program
Houston Action Research Team
Engaged Research Opportunity
Spring 2024

Institutional Advocacy for the SA Labor Commission

Student employees are often overlooked when considering workplace inequality. In addition, first-generation, low-income (FGLI), and underrepresented student groups often face heightened barriers to accessing educational, fairly compensated work. This issue affects most, if not all, higher education institutions, including Rice University. The lack of financial compensation for many leadership positions at Rice often makes student leadership positions inaccessible to FGLI students. With little data about job listings, salary range, and peer employment statistics, Rice students have a difficult experience navigating the on-campus job market and advocating for themselves for a promotion or raise. To address this gap, the Rice Student Association formed the Labor Commission in 2023 to investigate student employment conditions and advocate for student employees. Without a deliberate advocacy plan, institutional change will not occur.

Institutional Advocacy for the SA Labor Commission will develop an actionable plan and toolkit for student-led advocacy at Rice University, with a specific focus on the Labor Commission's objective of improving student employment. Through the Center for Civic Leadership's HART program, a team of students will partner with the SA Labor Commission to understand current student employment dimensions, as measured by the commission survey and focus groups studying student employee wages and working conditions. The team will also gain an expertise in non-governmental advocacy through conducting a literature review of relevant work on institutional advocacy and higher education. The team will work together to create a toolkit of resources that any student organization at Rice University can use to influence campus-level change, including but not limited to: planning tools, stakeholder map, relevant resource directory, and a meeting guide. Finally, the team will collaborate with the Rice University Labor Commission to form an advocacy plan for the 2024-2025 school year. The advocacy toolkit will be shared with the Rice student body.

The significance of this collaborative research practice cannot be underestimated. Students, faculty, and staff from Rice University will practice civic professionalism through the research they will conduct with the SA Labor Commission. The students will strengthen their professional communication, writing, and research skills as they work together with the community partner to create lasting change at Rice University. Students will also gain valuable insight into how institutions change, gaining life-long skills in generating change where they live and work.

The Student Association will be the community partner of this project. Dr. Eden King will serve as the faculty advisor. The team will have the opportunity to present their findings to the

Rice Senate before the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

During the Spring semester of the 2023-2024 school year, this Houston Action Research Team will:

- Review the data collected by the SA Labor Commission and complete a literature review of work on institutional advocacy
- Create an advocacy toolkit for student-led institutional advocacy for the Rice Student Body
- Create an advocacy plan for the SA Labor Commission
- Deliver a public presentation to community partners and Rice University stakeholders highlighting research findings. Students will also submit a reflection that synthesizes their experience during the semester.

This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Fall 2023. An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important skills, knowledge, and experience, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 8-10 hours per week on this project under the guidance of Dr. Eden King, the CCL, and a graduate student team advisor and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from **all fields of study** with interest and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply: Institutional advocacy, organizational psychology, labor and labor markets, economics, and community-engaged research. **This position is work-study eligible.**

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Sunday, January 7th at 11:59 pm

[Apply Here!](#)

To inquire or apply contact Dr. Verónica Reyna vr33@rice.edu
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>