

# History of the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies

By Ian Harris, Dick Ringler, Kent Shifferd, and William Skelton

The Wisconsin Institute for the Study of War, Peace, and Global Cooperation, now the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, began in the early 1980s, a period of considerable peace activity in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Most specifically, in response to the breakdown of arms control talks and saber rattling by President Ronald Reagan, a worldwide peace movement had emerged, focusing on the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the heightened tensions of the Cold War. In addition, U.S. involvement in Central America had spawned various “cells” of nonviolent activists across the United States who demonstrated against military oppression in Latin America and sent peace delegations to countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. In a broader historical context, however, the formation of the Wisconsin Institute also reflected trends in the fields of peace studies, peace education, and peace research that had developed during the twentieth century.

## The Rise of Peace Education and Research

Peace education has always had a reciprocal relationship with peace movements. In the nineteenth century, most of the impetus to establish courses and programs to teach peace on college and university campuses came from concern about the horrors of modern warfare. After the large-scale slaughter of the American Civil War, peace clubs sprang up on various college and university campuses throughout North America and Europe. These clubs were often aligned with various peace societies that sponsored national speakers who would travel from campus to campus denouncing war and war preparation and promoting the establishment of organizations like

the future League of Nations that were designed to outlaw war.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including those in the peace movement, were early advocates for peace education. Peace societies came together at world peace conventions, the first of which took place in The Hague, Netherlands, on May 18, 1899, a day thereafter commemorated as peace day and celebrated on campuses and schools throughout the United States. In Wisconsin, there was considerable resistance to the First World War by the German settlers who did not want the United States to enter into war against their “fatherland.” Much of the opposition also came from socialists opposed to fighting “a rich man’s war.” After World War I, peace activists and educators promoted “education for international understanding,” whose purpose was to humanize different cultures around the world so that they could not be converted to enemies and hence become the focal point for war propaganda. This thrust is currently seen on campuses and in schools as “international education” or “global studies.”

World War II created new interest in a variety of peace education known as “education for world citizenship” that was focused on politics practiced by the dominant world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, that led to the Cold War with its concomitant buildup of weapons of mass destruction. The creation of the United Nations in 1945 spurred new interest in ways to avoid the scourge of war. In 1948, the first academic program in peace studies began at Manchester College, a small Brethren college in North Manchester, Indiana.

The field of peace research developed as a “science of peace” in the 1950s to counteract the science of war that had produced so much mass killing. The first Pugwash Conference was held in 1957 in the village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada, birthplace of the American philanthropist Cyrus Eaton, who hosted the meeting. The stimulus for that gathering was a Manifesto issued in 1955 by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein and signed by other distinguished academics that called upon scientists of all political persuasions to assemble to discuss the threat posed to civilization by the advent of thermonuclear weapons. Pugwash Conferences bring together from around the world influential scholars and public figures concerned with reducing the danger of armed conflict and seeking cooperative solutions for global problems of war and peace.

In 1959, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) was founded in Norway under the leadership of Bert Roling, Johan Galtung, who has become a leading figure in the field of peace research, was active in PRIO, an organization that publishes two academic journals, *Journal of Peace Research* and *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, that have helped develop the field of peace research. In Britain, the Lancaster Peace Research Center, later to become the Richardson Institute, was also formed in 1959. These early efforts laid the foundation of a new academic field, peace research, that blossomed during the 1960s, an era when the world was focused on the U.S. war in Vietnam.

In 1962, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, which had its origins during the First World War, set up an International Consultative Committee on peace research that was headed by Elise Boulding, who in 1963 started publishing an International Peace Research Newsletter. Her efforts, with support from her husband Kenneth

Boulding, Bert Rolling, Johan Galtung, and others, culminated in the first International Peace Research Association (IPRA) meeting held in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1965. Since that time, IPRA has played a leading role in stimulating the growth of peace research through its biennial conferences and twenty commissions.

The field of peace research began with the study of wars—why they occur and what can be done to stop them. This approach to peace became known as “negative peace,” e.g., stopping some form of violence. Partly under the leadership of Johan Galtung, but also through concern for the problems of underdevelopment that plague countries in the South, peace researchers in the 1960s began to discuss concepts of positive peace that focused on human rights and justice. This impetus came from Gandhian scholars in India who were concerned about peacelessness and the challenges of development. Also in the 1960s, building on the success of Gandhi in overthrowing the yoke of the British empire in India and the nonviolent tactics of the American civil rights movement inspired by the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., scholars began to focus on the use of nonviolence as a creative tool to deal with oppression.

This expansion of the field of peace research points to an important symbiotic relationship between peace movements, peace research, and peace studies. The activists lead, developing strategies to oppose violence, whether it be wars between nations, colonial aggression, cultural, domestic, or structural violence. Academics commenting on these developments further the field of peace research. The activists, seeking a way to broaden their message, seek to educate others through peace education. Teachers observing these activities promote peace studies courses and programs in schools and colleges to provide awareness of the challenges of war and

peace in their classrooms. Peace researchers seek to promulgate their findings about the success or lack of efficacy of different peace strategies through peace studies programs. This creative recycling of insights into the causes of violence and the conditions for peace through the realms of peace action, research, and education provides dynamism for peace studies.

At the end of the decade of the 1960s, in a time of world-wide questioning of state policies promoting violence and patriarchal power relations, peace researchers in the United States came together to form an organization, the Consortium for Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED) that brought together scholars and activists to discuss and analyze their practice. COPRED was the North American affiliate of the IPRA. COPRED held annual conferences that brought together grassroots activists, teachers, scholars, and researchers.<sup>2</sup> It provides a forum for academics and educators concerned about wars, ethnic conflicts, and human rights to exchange insights about efforts to promote peace. In 1978, COPRED became an official cosponsor of *Peace and Change*, an academic journal started in 1972 by the Conference on Peace Research in History (CPHR, founded in 1964), now called the Peace History Society. This journal publishes scholarly articles related to the creation of a peaceful and humane society.

Courses about peace, human rights, and global issues began to proliferate on American campuses in the late 1960s. As a response to the Vietnam War, Manhattan College began a peace studies program in 1968 and Colgate University initiated a peace studies program in 1969. At this time, several universities in Sweden established peace research institutes. In 1973, Bradford University in England established its peace studies program focusing on peace and security studies, conflict resolution, and social change. By the end of 1970s, several dozen

colleges and universities in the United States had peace studies programs, while many more had courses focusing on the problems of war and underdevelopment. Most of the academic programs were minors or certificate programs<sup>3</sup> created by faculty responding to student demands to create courses of study that had relevance to their lives. During this decade, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point established a concentration in peace studies.

In the 1980s, the decade in which the Wisconsin Institute was born, peace studies saw a huge growth on college campuses as a result of growing alarm about the Cold War and the production and threatened use of nuclear weapons. Concern about the fate of the planet created new courses and programs aimed toward promoting global survival. At this same time, international nongovernmental organizations reaching out across national boundaries fostered citizen-to-citizen exchanges (known as "track two" diplomacy), so the focus of peace studies shifted somewhat from state actors to peace movements and peace organizations that contributed to the dissolution of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. During this decade, a wide variety of conflict resolution programs appeared. These ranged from neighborhood centers to resolve marital conflicts, to public hearings for environmental disputes, to university-based training and research programs, to peer mediation programs in primary and secondary schools, and to the development of national and international organizations.

This interest in alternative disputes mechanisms expanded the field of peace studies further. From an original concern in political science departments about the international dimensions of conflict, professors from a wide variety of disciplines offered courses that covered issues of environmental, structural, domestic, and civil violence. Professors began to challenge concepts

of national security based upon military might and to investigate concepts of collective security, environmental security, and comprehensive security. In this time period, the growth of peace studies paralleled interest in women's studies, Black studies, and environmental studies.

Another trend of the 1980s was the emergence of regional peace studies organizations, one of which was the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies. Other statewide organizations included the Ohio Peace Education Network (OPEN) and the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC).<sup>4</sup> OPEN was created under the leadership of Richard F. Celeste, a Democratic governor of Ohio who was a returned Peace Corps volunteer. It was a loose network of schools and universities in Ohio trying to establish a peace curriculum for elementary schools. In 1989, it became the Commission of Dispute Resolution formed in partnership with the Department of Education. This centralized organization, located in Columbus, the state capital of Ohio, no longer involves universities in its structure. Staff in this organization focus most of their energies on K-12 education and do not directly serve faculty and institutions of higher education. It gets its funding from the Ohio state budget and was recently written out of the budget by a Republican governor, but reinstated after people across the state lobbied against its closing.

IGCC was founded in 1983 by nuclear physicist Herbert F. York, a Manhattan Project participant and the first chancellor of UC-San Diego. It serves as a research center for the universities in the University of California system. The institute uses revenue from the Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos laboratories to provide dissertation and fellowship support on international studies in the United States. IGCC supports individual faculty and

graduate student research throughout the UC system as well as international affairs programs on each UC campus. IGCC's original emphasis on security and nuclear nonproliferation has broadened with time. Researchers there are currently exploring the causes of ethnic and religious conflict and studying conflict resolution initiatives in troubled regions of the world.

### **The Founding of the Wisconsin Institute**

The Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies reflected the broad movement toward peace studies programs discussed above. More immediately, though, it grew out of the widespread public concern in the early 1980s about the nuclear arms race and the possibility of nuclear war. Quiescent throughout most of the 1970s, the antinuclear movement underwent a major revival in the early 1980s, a response to the breakdown of arms control talks between the Soviet Union and the United States, the deployment by the superpowers of new and more accurate missile systems, and talk by the administration of Ronald Reagan of fighting and "prevailing" in a nuclear war. The debate took on new urgency in 1983, when President Reagan announced his support for the Strategic Defense Initiative, meaning the development of antiballistic missile technology to provide a comprehensive defense of the United States and its allies, a proposal that threatened to overturn the ABM Treaty of 1972 and open a whole new arena of arms competition. Spearheaded by groups such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Randall Forsberg's Nuclear Freeze movement, a grassroots international movement emerged, warning of the critical dangers of nuclear war and calling for the immediate curtailment and even reversal of the arms buildup. In Wisconsin, peace activists, concerned physicians, academics, and other citizens participated in the general

antinuclear movement. An early leader in this activity was Dick Ringler, professor of English and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prompted into action by increasing international tensions and reckless statements by national leaders, he wondered if there was something he could do—as an individual—to help the situation. With this in mind, he engaged in a series of activities that resulted in the founding of the Wisconsin Institute. He participated in meetings and retreats organized by college and university faculty who designated themselves the Wisconsin Higher Education Peace Studies Network. He organized and coordinated a team-taught multidisciplinary course, “Perspectives on Nuclear War,” at UW-Madison, which attracted hundreds of students over the four years it was taught. And he helped found a statewide chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility. These and similar activities brought him into frequent contact with educators throughout the state who shared his interests and concerns.

In 1983, Ringler published an article in *Academe* (the bulletin of the American Association of University Professors) calling on colleagues throughout the country to devote more time to teaching these controversial issues. This article came to the attention of James Cracraft of the University of Chicago, editor of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, who asked Ringler to solicit contributions to and edit a special 32-page supplement to the *Bulletin*. The resulting collection of articles, entitled *Nuclear War: A Teaching Guide*, appeared in the magazine in 1984 and was published and distributed separately in pamphlet form.

While working on this project, Ringler received an inquiry from the Office of Outreach at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Motivated by the same anxiety as so many other Americans, the staff of this office was considering organizing a conference on

the issue of the nuclear peril and had identified Ringler as someone who could help with the planning. Ringler discussed the matter with Edward T. Linenthal, professor of religious studies at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, whom he had met through their mutual work with Educators for Social Responsibility. Between them, they were familiar with many of the academics in Wisconsin who taught about these issues, so they were confident that they could put together a program covering relevant approaches and disciplines and involving faculty and administrators from most of the state’s public and private colleges and universities. They also hoped that the conference would be the catalyst for creating something more substantial and permanent: an ongoing organization that would encourage statewide collaboration and resource sharing among institutions of higher education. With this in mind, they determined to include high-level administrators, both to legitimize nuclear war and weapons issues as subjects of academic concern and to smooth the way for establishing a statewide association. They also planned the conference so as to allow time at the end for a preliminary discussion among attendees on the feasibility of such an association.

The conference, entitled “Nuclear Age Education,” was held at UW-Green Bay on November 17, 1984, and attracted an unexpectedly large audience of educators from around the state. The program featured special interest sessions on such topics as “Nuclear Weapons and Political Purpose,” “Psychological Resistances to Confronting Nuclear War,” and “Religious and Ethical Dilemmas,” as well as presentations by college presidents and other administrators and the speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly. Of special significance, Ben R. Lawton, M.D., president of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, gave a stimulating address, challenging the audience to do more

than just *talk* about the nuclear threat, and G. Allen Greb, administrative director of the California Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, explained how a successful cooperative effort had been organized among the public universities of California. The conference ended with an open forum to discuss cooperative goals, followed by a second forum to discuss cooperative strategies and establish a statewide committee. At the conclusion, the group agreed to pursue the goal of a statewide organization and decided that unofficial representatives of Wisconsin's colleges and universities should meet again to discuss ways and means.

On February 3, 1985, faculty members from seven private colleges and universities and ten University of Wisconsin campuses and centers, as well as representatives from UW Extension and the UW System, convened at UW-Stevens Point to begin implementation of the proposed organization. There they drafted a declaration informally founding the Wisconsin Institute for the Study of War, Peace, and Global Cooperation, intended to "encourage and legitimize research and teaching on the roots of organized violence, on security issues, and on the factors necessary for a just global peace, to develop and maintain a resource base for peace studies, and thereby to increase the probability of the survival and enhancement of life in the nuclear age."

The representatives selected a Charter Committee that subsequently drafted a complete charter for the organization. The Institute was defined as an independent nonprofit, nonstock corporation open to membership on an equal basis to both public and private institutions of higher learning in Wisconsin. The governing body was to be an Executive Council composed of campus representatives selected by the presidents and/or chancellors of the member institutions and up to four (later changed to six) at-large members chosen by the council. Officers, elected

by the Executive Council, were to include an Executive Director, Associate Director, and Executive Secretary. To establish balance between the private and state institutions, one of the knottiest problems confronting the participants during the organizational meetings, the charter initially specified that the executive and associate directors were not both to serve simultaneously from either of the categories. Meeting in Madison on April 27, 1985, representatives from twenty colleges and universities formally and unanimously adopted the charter and selected Dick Ringle as executive director and Kent Shifferd, professor of history and director of the Peace Studies Program at Northland College, as associate director. The choice of these officers was an extremely fortunate decision, as they would supply the commitment, energy, and organizing skills to sustain the Institute through its early years.

During the spring and summer of 1985, Ringle and Shifferd, with the help of Charles Rumsey of the UW-Stevens Point History Department, negotiated an agreement with the UW-Stevens Point administration to provide space for a central Institute office, located in the University library. The UW-Stevens Point Foundation also agreed to act as the organization's fiscal agent. The officers initially hired Kathy Smith as executive secretary, a half-time position with responsibility for administering the central office, but she resigned shortly afterwards to take another position. Her replacement, appointed in the fall of 1985, was Sharon Roberts, who would continue in the office until 2001. She administered the Institute's affairs and budget with great competence and dedication, and became the organizational heart and soul of the Wisconsin Institute.

### **Initiating Institute Programs and Activities**

On September 13, 1985, the first meeting of the Wisconsin Institute

Executive Board occurred at UW-Stevens Point. The campus representatives were drawn from a wide variety of disciplines. Historians and political scientists initially predominated, but others represented such fields as physics, chemistry, education, philosophy, religious studies, literature, and psychology. At the original meeting, the board took one of the most important programming steps in its history: approval of the "Campus Visitors" program, a list of expert speakers on peace and conflict issues to be made available without charge for appearances on all member campuses. The original list consisted of only four speakers offering talks on such subjects as "Evolution of U.S. and Soviet Nuclear Strategy," "Nonviolent National Defense," "Environmental Dimensions of Gun Violence," and "Star Wars and Its Cultural Consequences." Over the years, however, the program grew dramatically and became one of the central Institute services, providing hundreds of presentations to campus audiences, classes, and public gatherings across the state. The speakers list for 2004-2005, for example, included twenty-two speakers and a choice of forty-nine separate talks, ranging from international relations to religious, philosophical, and artistic perspectives on war and peace.

At the September 1985 meeting, the Executive Board also launched another permanent program when it agreed to sponsor the first of a series of conferences on critical issues, geared to faculty and informed members of the general public. The original conference, held on April 19, 1986, and hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, set a very high standard. Entitled "Tensions and Common Ground between 'Security' and 'Peace' in the Nuclear Age," the conference featured addresses by Randall Forsberg, organizer of the national Nuclear Freeze campaign, national security commentator Keith Payne, and Congressman Les Aspin, as well as sessions and workshops on a variety of

nuclear weapons and arms control issues.

The following year, the Institute co-sponsored two such academic conferences: "Is Nuclear Disarmament Possible? Or Desirable?" in April at Lawrence University, and "Central America: War or Peace?" in October at the UW-Center at Fond du Lac. Thereafter, the professional conferences became annual affairs, scheduled in the fall and frequently involving collaboration with host campuses or other academic organizations. The subject matter gradually broadened from the core field of nuclear arms and national security to include such topics as "Ecological Resistance Movements: Religion, Politics, Ethics" (UW-Madison, 1995); "Religion, War, and Peace" (Ripon College, 1996); "Women, Peace, and Conflict" (UW-Platteville, 1999); and "Challenges and Paths to Justice" (Marquette University, 2004). Conferences normally included one or two featured speakers and a variety of panels and workshops. As in all Wisconsin Institute activities, organizers were very careful to insure that the programs maintained balance among contrasting points of view, and it became common to pair peace advocates with military figures or other supporters of a strong military posture.

In 1987, the Wisconsin Institute initiated a third permanent program, a series of annual student conferences held in the spring. The first such conference, entitled "Critical Issues in the Global Village" and organized by Leonard Gambrell of the UW-Eau Claire Political Science Department, established the basic pattern. Students from campuses across the state met at Eau Claire to present papers, either written for their classes or specifically for the conference, and to participate on panels relating to important world topics, with small cash prizes awarded for the best presentations. Although subsequent conferences varied somewhat in size and number of participating institutions, the overall

trend was toward growth. The 2002 conference at Edgewood College, for example, involved 88 student attendees, 53 of whom delivered individual papers. Conference themes were generally worded as broadly as possible to encourage participation, and most conferences featured a prominent keynote speaker, including military journalist Gwynne Dyer (UW-Stevens Point, 1988), former president of Notre Dame and peace and justice pioneer Theodore Hesburgh (Lakeland College, 1989), and former Ohio governor and peace education advocate John Gilligan (UW-Milwaukee, 1990). Important additions to the conference format were the inclusion of a separate category of student poster art that provided a circulating exhibit for member campuses and recognition of student academic excellence through a Distinguished Student Scholar Award.

One of the major programming achievements of the Wisconsin Institute was the "Dilemmas of War and Peace" project. This venture began in 1988 as a 15-hour, 3-credit public radio seminar entitled "War or Peace? Confronting the Challenge," a joint project of the Wisconsin Institute and Wisconsin Public Radio. Afterwards, Ringler, Shifferd, and Leonard Gambrell cooperated with WPR in obtaining a major grant from the Annenberg Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to fund a multi-disciplinary, multi-media, and multi-use learning resource on issues of war and peace, entitled "Dilemmas of War and Peace." Headed by Ringler, the faculty team that developed the course included Shifferd and Gambrell of the Wisconsin Institute, military journalist and historian Gwynne Dyer, Patricia M. Mische of the Global Education Associates, and Colonel David G. Hansen, a retired professor at the U.S. Army War College. In a series of meetings in Madison, some rather heated because of the effort to balance contrasting viewpoints, the group developed an audio program consisting of thirteen half-hour segments, a 900-

page anthology of readings, and a 650-page "Companion to Studies" designed to coordinate and integrate the various project components. Broadcast over WPR in the fall of 1992, the audio program included segments on such topics as "The Bombing of Dresden," "Propaganda Battlefields," "Movements of Peace," "Nuclear Terror," and "Nonviolent Revolution in Eastern Europe." It attracted a wide listening audience and in 1993 received an Ohio State Award for Excellence in Broadcasting. The "Dilemmas of War and Peace" program as a whole, completed in 1993, was granted the Distinguished Course Award of the National University Continuing Education Association's Division of Independent Study.

Beginning in 1988, the Institute published a semiannual newsletter, *Bulletin of the Wisconsin Institute*, intended to inform administrators and faculty of member schools of the organization's programs and activities. In 1991, the Institute launched another ongoing program: publication of an annual journal, originally entitled *Viewpoints on War, Peace, and Global Cooperation* and in 1997 renamed *Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict*. Edited by Kent Shifferd (1991-1992, 2001-2004) and by Gary Boelhower of Marian College (1993-2000), the journal was interdisciplinary in approach and published articles on a wide variety of subjects, including international relations, military affairs, social justice, conflict resolution, pacifism and nonviolence, and peace education, as well as book reviews and poetry. Contributors included academics from member campuses but also from colleges and universities across the nation, Canada, and other countries, and the quality of the articles was generally high. Regrettably, the journal long experienced difficulty selling subscriptions and otherwise achieving a wide circulation of paper copies. Through cooperation with Memorial Library at UW-Madison, however, the journal was made

available on-line and, beginning with the 2004-2005 issue, it appeared on-line at the Institute's website as well, a move designed to expand its readership considerably.

One final Wisconsin Institute activity deserves mention: the granting of awards. In 1990, the Institute established the Distinguished Faculty Award, soon afterwards renamed the Dick Ringler Distinguished Peace Educator Award in honor of the Institute's principal founder. Each year the board selected a scholar whose teaching and scholarship promoted the fields of peace and conflict studies. In 1990, the first to be honored was Ian Harris, an advocate of international peace research and founder and head of the peace studies certificate program at UW-Milwaukee. Among the subsequent awardees were Paul Boyer of UW-Madison, historian of the impact of the atomic bomb on American culture (1991); Edward Linenthal of UW-Oshkosh, Wisconsin Institute leader and historian of the commemoration of American wars (1994); peace and justice theologian Daniel Maguire of Marquette University (1997); and World War II memoirist Agate Nesaule of UW-Whitewater (1999). In 1991, the Institute introduced the Distinguished Student Scholar Award, granted annually to a student or students at member institutions for outstanding scholarship and leadership in peace related activities.

### **The Challenge of Funding**

From the start, the Wisconsin Institute operated on a budgetary shoestring, and an ongoing concern was broadening its financial support. Unlike the statewide organizations in California and Ohio, the Institute lacked a consistent source of external support. Basic funding came from annual campus membership fees, originally set at \$1,000. With the number of member institutions fluctuating between twenty and twenty-eight, this fund was barely sufficient to cover the salary and

benefits of the executive secretary, contribute toward mailing and office expenses, provide minimal support for the annual conferences, and underwrite expenses for the travel of speakers in the Campus Visitors program.

Soon after the founding of the Institute, Dick Ringler, Kent Shifferd, and others, with the dedicated support of Sharon Roberts, energetically pursued grants from foundations and other agencies to fund programming and administrative expenses. With the major exception of the "Dilemmas of War and Peace" project, however, the results were disappointing. While the Institute managed to garner a few small grants for special projects, including several from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, it failed to obtain significant ongoing funding to supplement the membership fees. An effort to sell individual memberships had only limited results, though personal donations did help somewhat to relieve the financial burden and support the establishment of a small endowment fund, administered by the UW-Stevens Point Foundation.

With so much depending on the campus membership fees, the Wisconsin Institute's financial situation remained chronically precarious. Recurrently, financial pressures at private colleges and state budget cuts at the public universities led administrators to drop or suspend their memberships. Campus representatives and other faculty were frequently required to launch urgent appeals to their presidents, chancellors, and provosts to retain their institutions' support. On several occasions, the Executive Board adjusted fee levels to respond to financial concerns and thereby preserve the membership base. Nevertheless, the Institute managed to weather the fiscal storms and continue to maintain its basic services.

### **An Ongoing Tradition**

On the evening of October 8, 2004, a gala dinner was held at the Three Brothers Restaurant in Milwaukee to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Wisconsin Institute's founding. The gathering, which was funded by an anonymous well-wisher, followed the Institute's highly successful fall conference at Marquette University. Most of the current members of the Executive Board attended, as well as many of the Institute's founders and others who had been involved with the Institute over the years. The mood was festive and a bit self-congratulatory, with the participants recognizing their extraordinary achievement in sustaining a statewide interdisciplinary organization for two decades on volunteer efforts and a shoestring budget.

Several factors contributed to the Wisconsin's Institute's success. One was the organization's success in developing cooperative arrangements with member campuses and other academic institutions that helped alleviate the financial constraints. By far the most prominent example of such cooperation was the arrangement, reached in 1985, by which the UW-Stevens Point administration agreed to provide rent-free office space in the University library, have the UW-Stevens Point Foundation serve as the Institute's fiscal agent, and otherwise supply essential services. Without this institutional support, which amounted to a substantial subsidy in kind continuing over more than two decades, the Wisconsin Institute could not have survived its infancy. In addition, most of the Institute's conferences were cooperative events, subsidized in large part by the host campuses with the Institute providing organizational skills, publicity, and limited financial contributions. Key to these arrangements were the campus representatives and other interested faculty at the local level who were willing to solicit support from their

presidents, chancellors, and other administrators and oversee the vast amount of organizational detail necessary for running a successful conference.

A second ingredient in the Wisconsin Institute's success was the strong level of staff support provided by the central office. The appointment in 1985 of Sharon Roberts as executive secretary (a title later changed to administrative director) was an extremely fortunate step. For the next sixteen years, until moving to Boston in 2001, Roberts sustained the organization through her energy, administrative skills, and personal commitment to the Wisconsin Institute and its goals. She handled financial matters skillfully, squeezing the absolute most out of a very limited budget and pursuing grants, private contributions, and other alternative sources of funding. Moreover she provided the initiative and administrative continuity to sustain the Institute's permanent programs through the frequent changes in executive officers, insuring that the conferences would be efficiently held, the Campus Visitors Program staffed and maintained, the journal issues regularly published, and the Executive Board meetings smoothly run. Her successor as administrative director, Sarah Stillwell, proved to be an exceptionally qualified replacement and carried forward the tradition of managerial efficiency, budgetary wizardry, and personal dedication to the Institute. Largely through the efforts of Roberts and Stillwell, the Wisconsin Institute managed to maintain its central programs for two decades without a single interruption.

A third factor accounting for the Institute's success was perhaps the most important: the willingness of a core group of participants to devote an immense amount of personal time and energy to supporting the organization and its programs. Originally, this group included Dick Ringler, Kent Shifferd, Leonard Gambrell, Ian Harris, and

others from the founding “generation,” and many of them remained active throughout the course of the Institute’s development. Increasingly, however, the founding group was augmented by a cadre of younger, early- and mid-career academics, among whom were Deborah Buffton (UW-Lacrosse), Marty Farrell and Joe Hatcher (Ripon College), Richard Friman (Marquette), Eric Yonke (UW-Stevens Point), and Geoff Bradshaw (Madison Area Technical College). Although differing widely as to academic specialty and position on the issues, these people shared a strong concern about the dangers of nuclear war and a commitment to promoting peace and conflict education. They were willing to take on Institute offices, organize conferences, serve as campus visitors, and participate in a wide variety of essential and time consuming organizational tasks. In many cases, academic ties to the Institute were reinforced by the development of close personal friendships and the emergence of a social network, centering in the annual Institute retreats, usually held in June on Washington Island or elsewhere in Door County, Wisconsin.

The second generation of leaders includes people who have received academic training in peace studies and have themselves established new programs in that field. In the twenty years of the Wisconsin Institute’s existence, the number of institutions offering academic peace studies programs has grown from two to five.<sup>5</sup> The Wisconsin Institute allows faculty from these and other institutions to share in an interdisciplinary exchange of insights into the study of peace and conflict. While most academics attend conferences solely in their specific disciplines, Wisconsin Institute events permit psychologists to talk with historians, political scientists with sociologists, philosophers with theologians, and education specialists with faculty in criminal justice and social work. Such exchanges contribute a special energy to Institute functions

and help maintain the organization’s dynamism and vitality.

The many accomplishments of the Wisconsin Institute presented in this essay indicate how faculty can link together in a regional framework to keep abreast of the latest developments in a burgeoning academic field. The various conferences, public talks, journal articles, and radio shows sponsored by the Institute provide information on peace and conflict issues not only to academics but also to students and members of the broader community. By providing such community education, the Institute has helped raise public awareness on matters of war and peace throughout the state of Wisconsin.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The United States Institute of Peace was founded in 1984.

<sup>2</sup> In 1986 university professors in COPRED, feeling the need for a more professional organization to promote the growing field of peace studies on campuses, broke away to form the Peace Studies Association. These organizations have subsequently merged in 2001 into the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

<sup>3</sup> Both of these academic programs have similar credit demands, usually between 18 and 24 credits. Minors tend to be within a specific academic discipline, say history, while certificate programs tend to be cross disciplinary, involving departments from many different disciplines.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s, a regional network in New England started to gather bringing in faculty from colleges in New York, Massachusetts, and Maine, but this network has no staff. Nor does it meet on an annual basis.

<sup>5</sup> In 1985, UW-Stevens Point had a concentration in peace studies and Northland College a major in the field. In addition to these, UW-Milwaukee now has a certificate program in peace studies, Alverno College a major emphasis, and Marquette University a minor. Moreover, the UW-Stevens Point program is now a full minor.

<sup>6</sup> Although the Wisconsin Institute has, in the past, performed miracles of programming on a shoestring budget, its desire to broaden and deepen the range of

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its activities has always been hampered by inadequate funds. Hence the Institute always welcomes contributions from well-wishers (tax-deductible of course), especially contributions to the Endowment Fund which has been created to insure the organization's long-term viability.

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