



## **David Lipsky**

April 27, 1939 – January 17, 2023

Good leaders are remembered for their accomplishments. Great leaders are remembered for shaping the soul of their institutions.

Professor David B. Lipsky, who passed away on January 17, 2023, at the age of 83, was the soul of the ILR School and a Cornellian through and through. Raised by a working family, he learned about labor under the red skies of the furnaces of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He learned about work by assisting in his father's haberdashery shop. He learned about overcoming adversity, not only from his own experience, but also from the steelworker family of high school sweetheart, Sandy Lipsky, with whom he shared his entire adult life.

Born April 27, 1939, Dave, as he was affectionately called, began his undergraduate education at Lehigh University and spent his freshman year (1957-58) in the College of Engineering. He transferred to Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, starting his sophomore year, completing his BSILR in 1961. When Dave arrived at the ILR School in 1958, he represented the core values on which the ILR School was founded. He had a deep appreciation for work and labor and the role that they played in advancing economic mobility. This would be the beginning of a lifelong commitment to the school that he would lead.

Dave continued his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he received his doctorate in economics in 1967, then taught at the State University of New York at Buffalo. It was almost inevitable, if not predestined, that Dave would return to ILR in 1969 as a faculty member and emerge as its leader.

The ILR School was established in 1945, with the goal of addressing labor-management relations in the wake of World War II. When Dave joined the school as an undergraduate student, the founding faculty continued to teach and embody the central animating mission of the institution. Dave's friendship with each of these scholars – Vernon Jensen, Jean McKelvey, Milton Konvitz,

and Maurice Neufeld, gave him not only grounding in his leadership of the school, but also a vision for what the school could be. He was immensely proud of ILR's legacy.  
(<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/8c10aaa7-e8a6-4dac-9a55a36bfdc9b3f7/content>)

Dave, who was the Anne Evans Estabrook Professor of Conflict Resolution, was a superb academic, and a leading scholar in the fields of collective bargaining, mediation, and arbitration. He was committed and passionate in his 50-year role of teaching undergraduates and was an empathic and supportive supervisor of many graduate students.  
(<https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/news/about-ilr/professors-care-made-all-difference>)

Dave is the author of over eighty articles and book chapters, and the author or editor of eighteen books and monographs. He is the co-author (with Ronald L. Seeber and Richard D. Fincher) of *Emerging Systems for Managing Workplace Conflict*, published by Jossey-Bass in April 2003. He is also the co-editor (with Thomas A. Kochan) of *Negotiations and Change: From the Workplace to Society*, which was published by the Cornell University Press in February 2003. He is also the co-editor (with Ariel C. Avgar and J. Ryan Lamare) of *Managing and Resolving Workplace Conflict*, published by Emerald Group Publishing in 2016. Dave's many co-authors and collaborators would marvel at his ability to bring out the very best in everyone he worked with. He was a generous and generative colleague who relished the opportunity to advance ideas with others.

Among his many scholarly awards and accomplishments, he was President of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) and was selected as a Fellow of the organization for his "exceptional contributions to the study of Labor and Employment Relations" in 2009. He was a recipient of LERA's lifetime achievement award as well as one from the American College of Civil Trial Mediators. He was a member of the inaugural class of Fellows of the National Academy of Human Resources and served on the Academy's Board of Directors.

In 1998, he was the recipient of the Judge William B. Groat Alumni Award for professional accomplishment and service to the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell. He received the General Mills Foundation Award for Achievement in Teaching from the ILR School in 2003 and the General Mills Award for Exemplary Graduate Teaching from the ILR School in 2011. In 2012, he was awarded a Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellowship "for effective, inspiring and distinguished teaching of undergraduate students and for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education."

Dave's mentoring and discussions with students are legendary, and no one was more focused on the field of industrial relations than he. Adding to his long list of talents, Dave was a gifted administrator. When Robert Doherty, then-dean, reached out to Dave to be his associate dean, he decided, after some deep reflection and consideration, to take the position. It was not because of his ambition, but because of his commitment to the ILR School, its community, and its emerging role within the university. Indeed, when he took on the position, he never expected it to extend to a long tenure as ILR's dean. Seeing the ILR School at the crossroads between two generations,

Dave recognized the opportunity to grow the school's presence, and most importantly, to adapt and adjust to the changing employment relations landscape and the role of the school.

As dean from 1988 to 1997, Dave was instrumental in advancing the effort to renovate Ives Hall to build a new home for the Catherwood Library and add additional classroom space. He also took a special interest in fostering the school's relations with its alumni. He succeeded in broadening and deepening ILR's global reach, both in research and teaching.

At the university level, Dave played a critical role in the emergence of eCornell, serving as director for the Cornell University Office of Distance Learning from 1997-1999. He also understood the essential importance of the ILR School's New York City presence, was instrumental in establishing a new master's degree based in NYC, and reinvigorating ILR's relationships with state government and local communities throughout the state. Dave found the perfect balance between ILR's commitment to the global importance of labor relations and the land-grant mission of the founding faculty of the school.

Dave was a transformational dean. He took the ILR School from its New Deal-post-World War II roots to the complex, impactful institution that it is today. Under Dave's guidance, ILR faculty were able to apply the best tools of social science to issues pertaining to labor, management, and the contemporary workplace. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDvLD1Orsk0>)

He was able to honor the ILR School's founding purpose and stay true to its core mission while also elevating its social science footprint at Cornell and beyond.

In appreciation for all that he did for the school and the state as dean, the New York State Senate passed a resolution in 1997 honoring Dave "for his distinguished contributions as Dean of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations [at] Cornell University."

After his deanship, Dave continued to make meaningful contributions to the ILR School through his research, teaching, and institution building. Most notably, Dave founded the Institute on Conflict Resolution that would become the Scheinman Institute, of which he was the inaugural director. This gave focus to his work in alternative dispute resolution. It was during this period that Dave pioneered scholarship around alternative dispute resolution and conflict management systems. His contributions to this area of research are continuing to influence the ways in which we understand organizational approaches to conflict and its management. The David and Alexandra Lipsky Professorship in Dispute Resolution, endowed by the estate of Lipsky and his wife, Sandy, will help extend those contributions.

(<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2023/05/lipsky-professorship-extends-legacy-ilr-school-leader>)  
(<https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/news/about-ilr/endeared-memories>)

In reflecting on David Lipsky's career, one can focus on the countless accomplishments, celebrate his writing, and acknowledge his profound institutional contributions, all of which are deserving of praise. What his friends and colleagues will miss is his presence – his ability to energize others, his talent to see further into the future than many, his patience, his humor, his

determination, and most of all his generous spirit and big heart. David Lipsky will always be part of the ILR School's soul.

Written by Ariel Avgar and Sam Bacharach