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University of Minnesota Human Rights Faculty Receive Grand Challenges Grant to Tackle Global Barriers to Equality and Justice

Grant will support interdisciplinary initiative to understand and propose solutions to recent backsliding in human rights around the world

[MINNEAPOLIS, MN] --Today, the human rights faculty at the University of Minnesota--Twin Cities announced they have received a \$325,000 Grand Challenges Research Grant. The grant will support "The Minnesota Model," an interdisciplinary initiative to understand and propose solutions to the recent backsliding in human rights around the world. This project builds on and expands the [Minnesota Human Rights Lab](#).

This group of human rights faculty is one of only six interdisciplinary teams to receive a Grand Challenge Research award for 2019-2021. A key component of the University of Minnesota--Twin Cities' Strategic Plan, the Grand Challenges Research Awards foster collaboration to address the critical challenges of our state, nation, and world.

"This grant recognizes the intellectual contributions of our faculty and propels our collective work to advance protections of free speech, dignity, justice and equality, the principles that undergird the global consensus on human rights," noted one of the four Principal Investigators, Professor Fionnuala Ni Aolain, Regents Professor at the Law School & Faculty Director of the Human Rights Center.

Through 14 different projects, the initiative will bring together faculty and graduate student researchers with human rights partners in the field, including non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations working to advance human rights.

"Drawing on faculty expertise from across the University, and working in partnership with human rights defenders around the world, this critical project will address a spectrum of violations, such as incursions on human security, deprivation of basic needs and the denial of justice. It will simultaneously advance both, human rights practice and scholarship," said Joachim Savelsberg, Professor of Sociology and Arsham and Charlotte Ohanessian Chair who is also a PI on the project.

Over the next two years, the collaboration will hold several public events to discuss research methods and findings at the University of Minnesota, at partnership sites and with international institutions such as the United Nations and the Inter-American human rights system.

“We will be translating our research findings into policy recommendations for governments and human rights advocates. Getting usable information into the public is a critical objective of the model,” noted Jessica Stanton, Associate Professor at the Humphrey School and co-PI of the Minnesota Model.

In addition to the four principal investigators for the initiative, more than 30 professors are involved in the Minnesota Model. Their work spans a diverse spectrum of disciplinary approaches to human rights issues, including Education, Environment, Humanities, Journalism, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Public Policy, and Social Sciences.

“By engaging graduate students with leading faculty and innovative partner organizations, this initiative will mobilize the next generation of human rights leaders to generate solutions to complex challenges such as inequality, discrimination and violations of human rights,” said Principal Investigator Barbara Frey, a Senior Lecturer in Global Studies and the director of the Human Rights Program in the College of Liberal Arts.

Administered jointly by the Human Rights Center in the Law School and the Human Rights Program in the College of Liberal Arts, the Minnesota Model is composed of three types of research projects:

- Six strategic research partnerships between academic researchers and practitioner organizations, producing impactful scholarly and policy outcomes.
- Six new faculty-led projects in the Human Rights Lab, a venue for interdisciplinary human rights research and discussions, which will serve as the core for the Model. These six specific projects will give priority to faculty and graduate students from units not previously involved in the human rights collaboration.
- Two NGO-led projects also through the Human Rights Lab, reframing research engagement by inviting partner organizations to initiate projects.

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